

Summary of March 2006 APS Talk. Baltimore, MD.



Aiming for Professorship at a Research University

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Outline

- Introduction: - What is the department looking for?
- Before the Interview:
 - Cover letter, CV, research/teaching statements.
 - Letters of recommendation.
- The Visit.
 - The "Job Talk".
 - The Committee and Faculty.
 - Department Chair and Dean.
- After the interview.
 - Revisiting the department.
 - Negotiating the start-up package.
 - Accepting or rejecting an offer.



Disclaimer #1

- Not all departments have the “same goals” when they hire new faculty.
- A “Top Ten” department, may have different goals than a “typical department”.



Disclaimer #2

- Even within a single department, individual faculty have different goals in hiring new faculty. Committees vary from year to year.
- Views here are my own (and not necessarily those of others).



AIP:

185 Ph.D. Departments

767 total Departments

University of Florida (UF) Rank: top quartile

UF is a “typical department” (but not a “top ten” department).



Most departments are competitive, even if they are not a top ten department.

Jonathan J. Wilker , an assistant professor in the chemistry department at Purdue University , West Lafayette, Ind., interviewed at a range of places from the top-20 schools down to those ranked in the 70s and 80s by *U.S. News & World Report*. Wilker expected that below the top five or 10 schools, "people wouldn't have so much of an edge and would be more laid back and reasonable. In my experience that wasn't the case. You constantly have to be on and selling your chemistry."

Chemical & Engineering News

SCIENCE/TECHNOLOGY

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University of Florida (UF)



Faculty

- 7 NSF PYI/Career
- 2 DOE OJI
- 5 Sloan
- 3 Cottrell
- 19 APS Fellows

- 50,000 students at UF
- Physics Dept.
 - 50 faculty
 - 130+ undergrads (90 JR/SR)
 - 130 grads
- 24 BS degrees in 2004
- 19 PhD degrees in 2004
- \$12M Research Funding

UF is a "typical" Ph.D. granting department.



What is our department looking for?

1. Someone who will be successful.

(too costly in \$\$ and faculty time to fail for our institution).



What is Successful?

■ Research

- Apply for and obtain grants.
- Train graduate students (undergrads).
- Publish interesting research.
- Interact with other faculty.

■ Teaching

- Teach a variety of both undergraduate/graduate courses.
- Be a conscientious and good teacher.

■ Service

- Be willing to help out with important tasks in the department.



What is the department looking for?

1. Someone who will be successful.
2. Enthusiastic, passionate, exciting and alive.
3. Someone who will be happy to be part of our department and live in our town.



In short, we are looking for:

- A good “Colleague”.
- Even though you are applying for a Physics job, you are trying to establish “chemistry” between you and the department.



Before the Interview

- Prepare for a potential visit.
- Cover Letter and CV.
- Statement of Research Interests.
- Letters of Recommendation.



Cover Letter

- A cover letter geared to a specific place (rather than a generic one) can help get you noticed.
 1. Address to the specific individual.
 2. Tell “Why you are interested in the job at their institution”.
 3. Give a brief overview of your research.
 4. Highlight your achievements.

<http://chronicle.com/jobs/news/2000/03/2000030302c/careers.html>



Curriculum Vita (CV)

- Contact Info <http://chronicle.com/jobs/tools/cvdoctor/03.htm>
- Education <http://www.physics.ohio-state.edu/~wilkins/onepage/>
- Employment
- Honors and Awards
- Research Accomplishments
- Publication List
 - Papers
 - Talks
 - Conferences
- References

The Job Talk

James Garland, *Physics Today*
July 1991.

ADVICE TO BEGINNING PHYSICS SPEAKERS

Public speaking is a necessity of professional life. But what do you do if, like many physicists, you're basically a shy person? Here is some advice on how to give talks that won't wreck your career or humiliate your thesis adviser.

James C. Garland

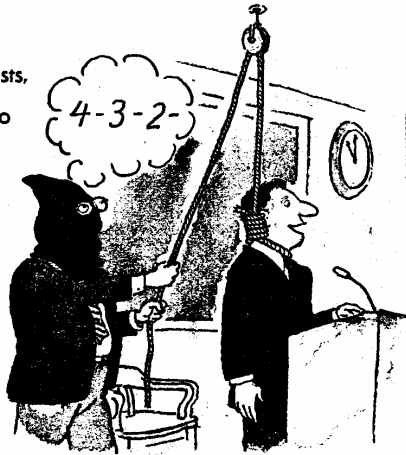
If you're a physics graduate student, it's highly likely that before you receive your degree, you'll be asked to give a talk on your research—possibly at an APS meeting, or maybe just to fellow students. And once you finally graduate, you'll undoubtedly find yourself standing behind a podium. Whatever the situation, it's going to matter that your presentation be well received and that your audience depart with a favorable impression.

Remember: *Whenever you make an oral presentation, you are also presenting yourself.* If you ramble incoherently, avoid eye contact, flash illegible transparencies on a screen, and seem nervous and confused, then your colleagues are not only going to be irritated at having their time wasted, they're also going to question your ability to do your job. However, if you present your ideas clearly and persuasively, with self-assurance and skill, you will come across as a reasonable, orderly person who has respect for the audience and a clear, insightful mind. With this thought in mind, here are a few guidelines to point you in the right direction.

Gauge your audience

The classic dilemma facing scientific speakers is deciding at what level to pitch a presentation when the audience consists of both novices and experts. The most common error is to play only to the experts, the rationale being that the experts' opinions matter the most and that everyone else in the audience will at least leave thinking you're a clever person. Wrong. If you make your talk so technical that only a few can understand it, your audience will resent you not only for wasting their time but also for

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*It's a capital crime to exceed
your allotted time*

violating the implicit contract that a speaker has with the audience to always be clear and understandable.

Experienced speakers generally devote the first half or two-thirds of a presentation to a careful introduction of the topic and save the highly technical material for the last few minutes. In this way, the beginners can understand a significant part of the presentation, and the experts will learn some of the fine points. Most importantly, everyone will end up respecting the speaker as an authority on the subject who is also attuned to the audience and respectful of the varied needs of those in it. I am also appreciative of speakers who summarize at the very end the key points they'd like me to remember. That way, if I've dozed through part of the talk or just failed to understand it, I at least walk out of the room with the major ideas reverberating in my head.

Fit your talk to the allotted time

Many consider it almost a capital crime for a speaker to exceed her allotted time. It is not unusual for a session

- Dress neatly and appropriately.
- Make printing large.
- Stick to the time limit.
- Gauge the audience - colloquium vs. seminar.
- Practice, practice, practice. Talks can make or break the interview.
- Your teaching ability will be judged by your talk.



During the Interview

You will meet many people in a two day period.

Every person you talk to is important!

Indeed, [Heather C. Allen](#), assistant professor of environmental chemistry at [Ohio State University](#), Columbus, recommends that candidates treat every on-campus interaction as an interview, whether it's an official appointment or not. "It's not just your seminar; it's not just the committee," she says. "Every single person you talk to has a say in whether or not you get an offer."

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- Committee
- Chair

- Faculty
- Dean



After the interview

- Follow up with email/letter.
- Receiving an offer.
- Return Visit.
- Negotiating.



Negotiating

Do not be afraid to negotiate for items essential to ensure a successful start,
but

Do not negotiate just to negotiate.

- Start-up equipment.
- Lab Space.
- Student funds.
- Summer salary.
- Time off from teaching.
- Salary.



Accepting/Rejecting Offer

- Make a list with +/- of each institution.
- Discuss with an advisor or senior person without vested interest.

- Accept the offer by phone, then in writing.
- Graciously decline other offers by phone.

<http://www.physics.ohio-state.edu/~wilkins/onepage/>



Conclusions - References:

I have used these sites in parts of this talk and these sites are very useful in obtaining information on job searches etc.

- John Wilkins Web Site:

<http://www.physics.ohio-state.edu/~wilkins/onepage/>

- Chronicle of Higher Education

<http://chronicle.com/jobs/>

- PhDs.org

<http://www.phds.org/jobs>

- Jim Garland, *Physics Today* article, July 1991.