The Academic Job Search: Preparing Your Job Package
Knowing What You Want & Need

- Balance of research, clinical practice and/or teaching
- Type of institution
- Level of competition and expectations
- Resources to do your work
- Geographic preferences (or restrictions)
- Partner and family needs
- Personal needs
The Standard Timeline

- **Early fall:**
  - Decide what you are looking for
  - Seek advice & support of advisors
  - Put together job packet
  - Request letters of recommendation
  - Search and apply

- **Late fall - winter:**
  - Continue applying
  - Prepare for interviews
  - Prepare for job talk
  - Ask mentors to make calls on your behalf

- **Winter - spring:**
  - Campus interviews
  - Negotiate offer(s)
Finding Positions

- From your mentor and scientific network
- From relevant professional societies
- In print or on-line journals
- On-line, including:
  
  http://sciencecareers.sciencemag.org/
  www.newscientistjobs.com
  http://www.academic360.com
  http://www.aamc.org/jobboard/start.htm
What Search Committees Look For

- A track record of excellence -- in research, teaching, and/or patient care
- A strong skill set -- relevant to your goals
- A good “fit” with the needs of the department
- Excellent communication skills
- Evidence of strong teaching and mentoring skills
- Evidence of leadership
- Evidence that you will be a good colleague
Application Materials

- Almost always requested:
  - Cover letter
  - Curriculum Vitae
  - Research and/or teaching plan/statement
  - Letters of reference/list of referees

- Sometimes requested:
  - Representative reprints
  - Transcripts
  - Teaching evaluations, sample syllabi (teaching portfolio)
  - Diversity statement

- Follow instructions for electronic submission of application materials
The Average Search Committee:

- Tenured and tenure-track faculty - in and outside of the hiring department
- Varies in size and power
- Members are often over-committed and very busy
- Inherently skeptical and critical
- May only be peripherally interested in your work
- Trying to get a quick picture of you and your research
- Looking for YOU to make their job easier
The Cover Letter

- **Goals:**
  - introduce yourself
  - highlight your accomplishments
  - state your broad research goals
  - state why you are a good “fit”
  - provide easy to find contact information
- 1-1.5 pages in length; longer in some disciplines
- Tailored to the position
- Well written - no bullets or other organizational formatting
- Not the time to bring up two-body or other personal issues
Sections of a Cover Letter

- Opening paragraph
  - Why you are writing
  - How you heard about job

- Middle paragraph(s)
  - Highlights past accomplishments
  - Describes where you are heading
  - Supports your “fit” for the position
  - Explains your interest in the position

- Closing paragraph
  - Explain enclosures
  - Offer to provide additional info
Your CV

- Contact information (professional)
- Education
- Clinical certifications
- Professional positions (& brief description)
- Honors and awards (pre- and postdoctoral)
- Grant funding
- Leadership and service
- Teaching and mentoring experience
- Invited presentations and seminars
- Publications
Letters of Recommendation

- 3 or 4; typically your PhD advisor, postdoc advisor & collaborator(s)
- Ask far in advance - be sure the letter will be VERY strong
- Provide your CV and other helpful information
- Provide information on the positions
- Follow-up after 1 month
- Consider providing letters even if not requested
Goals of a Research Plan

- Get readers excited about:
  - You
  - Your research
  - What you are going to do

- Highlight your successes and convince them there are many more to come

- Make the reader want to learn more about you
Research Plan - Format & Content

- Average length is 2 - 4 pages
- Narrative written in active voice, first person
- Articulates what you will do and why
- Helps committee see how your plans fit grant applications
- Helpful to:
  - Start with a stand-alone overview
  - Use section headings focused on major research themes to guide the reader
  - Include one or two figures
  - Personalize to the position
- Make it easy to read - wide margins with 11/12pt font; bold key points
- Carefully edit & get significant input from others
Strategies For Writing Your Research Plan

- Consider major accomplishments that you want everyone to know about
- Think how you will develop your work over the next 3 - 5 years
- Then think bigger to help refine your long-term direction
- Look hard for flaws and technical challenges; consider alternatives
- Write an “executive summary” that pulls it all together
What You Are Trying To Convey in Your Research Plan

- Importance of your research
- Focus
- Independence
- Creativity
- Sophistication
- Realism
- Clarity
- Fundability
Common Criticisms of Research Plans

- Overly ambitious
- No clear direction
- Work not placed in a broader context
- Poorly written
- Doesn’t address fit with the department
- Requires facilities/equipment not easily available

See: http://sciencecareers.sciencemag.org/career_development/previous_issues/articles/1820/writing_a_research_plan/
Teaching Statements

- A narrative that includes:
  - your personal beliefs of teaching and learning
  - a description of how you teach
  - a justification for why you teach that way

- May be part of a larger teaching portfolio
  - Class syllabi
  - Student reviews
  - Details of mentorship and non-classroom teaching
Successful Teaching Statements:

- Show clear evidence that you “walk the walk”
- Are student-centered
- Are attuned to differences in learning styles and abilities
- Demonstrate your ability to reflect about your role as a teacher
- Convey your enthusiasm for teaching
- Are well-written, clear and jargon-free
Questions To Consider: Classroom Teaching

- How do I believe students learn best?
- What types of assignments and classroom activities do I use to help students learn?
- How do I evaluate if students are making progress?
- How do I address different learning styles in the classroom?
- How do I help students understand the implications and significance of what they are learning?
- How do I insure that students feel welcome in my class?
- How do I address cultural, social, and/or gender issues in the classroom?
- What have I learned from prior teaching experiences?
Questions To Consider: Lab-based Teaching

- How do I believe students learn best?
- How do I organize interactions with my students?
- How do I select and shape student projects?
- How do I evaluate students progress?
- How do I address the range of learning styles among students in my research group?
- How do I help students understand the implications or significance of what they're learning?
- How do I address ethical issues and help students appreciate the role of research in society?
- How do I insure that all students feel welcome in my research group?
- What have I learned from prior experiences?
Some Details About Teaching Statements

- Generally 1 - 2 pages in length
- No standard formatting or required content
- Should reflect your teaching style and personality - write in the first-person, present tense
- Should show that you have considered the student body at the institution
- Important to give examples throughout
Common Criticisms of Teaching Statements

- Lacks experience to back-up ideas
- Assumes all students learn the same way
- Does not reflect the needs of the students/department
- Demonstrates rigid views of learning
- Does not show ability to self-reflect and learn
- Research goals are inconsistent with student needs
- Poorly written
NIH Resources

- Other Academic CAT Track lectures - here and on other campuses
- IC and OITE writing, grantsmanship, pedagogy, and leadership courses
- Videocasts of prior OITE workshops (training.nih.gov)
Contact Me

- For examples of successful job packets from NIH fellows:
  - Email milgrams@od.nih.gov
  - Subject = SEND EXAMPLES

- To get feedback on your job materials:
  - Email milgrams@od.nih.gov
  - attach your files as a SINGLE MS WORD document
  - Use your last name in the file name
  - Subject = MATERIAL REVIEW