



How to ***STAND OUT*** in The Interview





Interviews Are a Grueling Process

- Hard for both interviewee and interviewers
 - Time, energy, interaction, evaluation on both sides
- Department wants to know if you are right for them
- You want to know if department is right for you





Short Time Frame

- Will interact with a number of people
 - Short, intense period
- Want to stand out — in a really positive way
- ALWAYS BE “ON”!!!
 - Even in casual meal sessions, you are being evaluated and judged
 - Do not “let down” at any time during the process





How Do You Present Yourself?

- Handshake is important first impression
 - Firm, but real (really shake the hand!)
 - Not too firm — may hurt!
- Your level of interest and information is important
 - Gather information about the department (more later)
 - Gather information about the institution (more later)





The Campus Visit

- Most important step in determining whether interview becomes an offer
 - Remember that not everyone you meet will have “studied” your application
- Allows you to interact with those who will make the offer decision
 - Varies between institutions (full professors, entire department, role of dean/provost)





Before the Visit

- Learn about the institution/department/faculty
 - Web pages are a wonderful resource, including family leave and P&T information
 - Ask colleagues who may know someone there
 - Ask for a copy of the department's strategic plan (not having one tells you something!), the school or college's plan, the institution's plan





Before the Visit

- Agenda for your visit
 - Ask for the agenda a little before your visit
 - Prepare for those people on the agenda, but realize that agendas change, so know something about the entire department
 - If you don't get the agenda before you arrive, that tells you something!
 - Ask for 30 minutes of preparation before your seminar
 - Ask to meet with graduate students





Before the Visit

- Think about what you will wear
 - Clothes should be comfortable for you (but not too informal) and make you feel like you look good
 - You will be wearing them for the entire day
 - Do ***not*** wear clothes that make you look like you are a graduate student or on a date
- Think about what you will carry with you
 - You'll be lugging it with you for the entire visit





What Happens on Visit?

- Formal presentations: Exude confidence!
 - Departmental seminar
 - Presentation on your research plans
 - May vary among fields
- Visits one-on-one with faculty, chair, sometimes dean or provost
 - For these shorter visits, an “elevator” speech that summarizes your work is important
 - Practice this with friends before interviewing
 - Have questions prepared to fill the time





The Visit

- Interview visits are a marathon event
 - Do your homework
 - Research area, role in the department
 - Ask Chair and others about research areas prioritized for the future
 - Ask individuals you see about their teaching, what the courses are and how the students are
 - Ask Chair about anticipated future teaching needs of the Department





The Visit

- Ask the same questions, as appropriate, of everyone on your schedule
 - Consistency or lack thereof is information
- Ask about the promotion and tenure process and criteria
- Ask about expectations for generating extramural research support and supporting graduate students
- Ask about the teaching load





Your Technical Presentation

- Consider the audience
 - Faculty in your area, faculty outside your area, graduate students, undergraduates
 - The people making the decision
- Who is most important?
 - THE PEOPLE MAKING THE DECISION!!

TARGET THE PEOPLE MAKING THE DECISION!!





Your Technical Presentation

- Target the introduction (first 10 min) to the entire audience
 - Convey excitement about what you are doing and create excitement in your listeners
 - Ensure understanding the importance of the work and the key background concept
- Target the heart of the seminar (next 25-35 min) to the decision-makers
 - Be exceptionally clear (but not simplistic)
 - Tell them what it *means*, and summarize as you go
 - Establish your expertise in the area





Your Technical Presentation

- Target the Conclusion (last 10 min) to the entire audience
 - What does your work mean to the future of the field?
 - What direction are you taking the work next?
 - This anticipates your more detailed talk about future work
 - Leave the audience feeling a sense of excitement about the future of your area and your ability to contribute
- Be sure to acknowledge colleagues/funders





Your Research Presentation

- Align the talk with your research write-up, which many faculty will have read
 - Think about your audience
 - Is there anything you *don't* want to share for reasons of being “scooped”? Generally, it's best to say what you are thinking, but worth considering your audience
 - What background do you need to provide so that they understand your planned experiments?





General Advice

- Make clean slides, no typos, readable font
- Reference work appropriately
- Provide an outline and follow it
- REHEARSE your talk!!!!!! Get feedback from a knowledgeable audience!
 - Is the level placed well for your audience?
Are you conveying what you wish?
 - Get them to ask questions!!!





General Advice

- Go to the room and check out the projector to ensure it works with your computer or flash drive or CD.
 - Hard to recover if you don't have slides
- Have a well-practiced (and therefore familiar) beginning
- Say "Thank you, I'd be happy to answer any questions" at the end.





Answering Questions

- If someone challenges you....stay calm
 - Acknowledge the question
 - Validate it as appropriate or even, if not, say how you have thought about its relevance
 - DO NOT BE DEFENSIVE
 - If you have not thought about it or don't know what the person is talking about, suggest that you would like to talk with the person individually after the talk on this topic





Answering Questions

- Think about the question(s) you *really don't* want to be asked
 - They will be asked
 - Be prepared to provide an answer
- Don't over-answer – be concise and clear in your responses





Deflecting “Tests”

- Expect the unexpected
 - If someone asks you to “solve” an equation or do something in his/her office....indicate that you have a limited amount of time together and you’d be happy to talk with them further on the issue, but would like to focus on other things in the time available





The Visit

- Ask about impact of national financial context on the institution, on the department
- If you get different answers from different people, ask the Chair to clarify the situation





What To Do When....

- Someone asks a question forbidden by law (e.g., Are you married? Do you have children?)
- Possible responses
 - Refocus (e.g., "My husband's job is very portable")
 - Follow up with a question of your own (e.g., "Can you tell me something about relationships between the department and industry in this area?")
 - Indicate that you would prefer not to answer
 - Note that the question is outside the boundaries you understand for this process...and many more options...chose one comfortable for you





What To Do When.....

- You feel uncomfortable with the situation....
 - Refocus what is happening by asking a question in a different direction or move away with murmured good wishes if that option exists
 - Pull someone else into the conversation
 - Excuse yourself to go to the restroom





Ending the Process

- Thank the Chair (or person with whom you end the process) for their time, the information, and their input.
- Some candidate write brief emails to the individuals they met during the interview (not clear whether this is a good idea or not, so do what feels right to you).





Relax and Enjoy the Process

- Relaxing is not easy, but you will perform better and be more effective if you have a level of calm and your wits about you
- If you can't enjoy the process, try to be present to what is happening (not just responding) and *learn from the process*

