

The academic job interview

**Experiences of Leigh McCue
(actual results may vary)**

Learn something about the University/College/Department

- **Re-read the job posting and make sure you're presenting yourself in a way that meets the needs of the department.**
- **Know how you'd fit (courses to teach—with course numbers, research possibilities, potential collaborators, etc...)**
- **Be able to state what you'd bring to the table**
- **Be aware of unique facilities that would be of use to you (VT examples: ICTAS, System X, etc...)**

Learn something about everyone you will meet

- **Browse the department's website, learn people's faces, and at least one interesting tidbit about everyone you're going to meet.**
- **Browse other departments' websites and come up with names of a couple folks in outside departments you'd like to meet with.**

Have a plan

➤ Research

- Funding
- Collaborators
- Research beyond your PhD

➤ Teaching

- What existing course numbers are you excited to teach?
- Do you want to create a new course?

➤ Service

The seminar

- **You want to show that you can communicate, teach, and excel at research.**
- **Start preparing your job talk when you start applying for jobs. Don't wait until you're invited somewhere to prepare the talk.**
- **Assuming an hour talk, figure:**
 - The first 5 minutes your kid brother should be able to understand
 - The next 10 someone with an engineering degree should follow
 - The next 20 someone with a grad degree in your field should follow
 - In the last 10 wow 'em with something only a few people in the room will sort of understand
 - Save the remaining 15 minutes for Q&A.
- **If you're given a choice, try to give your seminar in the morning of the first day; that way you avoid giving mini-versions of your seminar every time you meet someone new.**

Don't make decisions for the search committee

- **You're qualified to apply for a lot more than your instinct will tell you too. Just apply. What's the worst that will happen?**
- **Everything you've done can be viewed in a positive light. If you think something's questionable (time to graduation, advisor shifts, etc...) either let the committee raise the question or affirmatively describe it as a positive. Don't cast things negatively. Let the search committee do that 😊.**
- **Be realistic, but don't be defensive no matter what you're asked.**

What to wear

- **Dress appropriately, better to be a bit overly formal than the other way around.**
- **Wear dressy but comfortable shoes. (I broke a heel on one interview).**
- **I may be paranoid but I almost always interviewed in an ankle-length skirt-suit rather than a pants-suit. I figured if there was some conservative full professor who might be consciously or subconsciously against hiring a woman, a pants-suit wasn't going to help.**

Illegal questions

(I have been asked each of these!)

- **How old are you?**
- **So will you be bringing anyone with you when you move?**
- **I see you are not wearing a ring...**
- **Do you have a boyfriend?**
- **Do you have any tattoos?**

It is almost guaranteed (in industry or academic interviews) that you will be asked something illegal at some point. Decide in advance how you want to respond so that you're not blindsided.