

AN INSIDER'S VIEW OF THE JOB MARKET, AHA PANEL, 4 JANUARY, 2008

I: INTRO

THE FOLLOWING IS DRAWN FROM MY OWN EXPERIENCES, AS WELL AS THE VERY FINE ARTICLES MADE AVAILABLE BY THE AHA – INCLUDING “Interviewing Strategies: Survival at Interviews” by Melanie Gustafson (*Perspectives*, December 2002) <[Interviewing Strategies: Survival at Interviews](#)>; “Successful Strategies for Interviews at the Annual Meeting,” <[Successful Strategies for Interviews at the Annual Meeting](#),> by Lucy G. Barber and John Wood Sweet.

REMEMBER THAT ALL YOU CAN CONTROL IN THIS JOB MARKET PROCESS IS WHAT YOU DO – YOUR “PERFORMANCE” PER SE – YOU CAN’T CONTROL WHAT SEARCH COMMITTEES OR DEPARTMENTS DO. SO FOCUS ON THAT.

II: INTERVIEWING

1. AUDIENCE!!! ALWAYS KEEP YOUR AUDIENCE IN MIND WHEN PREPARING FOR THESE INTERVIEWS.
 - SOME/MANY OF YOUR INTERVIEWEES MAY NOT BE IN YOUR FIELD OR IN THE FIELD DESCRIBED BY THE JOB ADVERTISEMENT.
 - MOREOVER AT THE AHA OTHERS MIGHT NOT EVEN BE ON THE SEARCH COMMITTEE – MIGHT NOT BE FAMILIAR WITH YOUR WORK OR APPLICATION.

BOTTOM LINE: ASSUME YOU ARE INTRODUCING YOURSELF, YOUR WORK AND TEACHING FOR THE FIRST TIME TO THESE FOLKS IN YOUR RESPONSES.

2. BASICS: THERE ARE A NUMBER OF “COMMON” QUESTIONS THAT ARISE IN BOTH PHONE AND FACE-FACE INTERVIEWS. FOR ALL THESE “COMMON” QUESTIONS YOU SHOULD AS A BACKGROUND/CONTEXT EXERCISE THINK ABOUT HOW YOUR WORK/STRENGTHS AND TEACHING “FITS” WITH THE DEPARTMENT TO WHICH YOU ARE APPLYING:
 - a. RESEARCH: THE “BULLET” – BE ABLE TO DESCRIBE YOUR WORK/RESEARCH/PROJECT IN 3-5 MINUTES – WHAT IT IS, WHY SIGNIFICANT, CONTRIBUTION TO FIELD, ENGAGEMENT WITH OTHERS (IE. HISTORIOGRAPHIC IMPORTANCE), ETC.
 - IN PUTTING TOGETHER THIS “BULLET” THINK ABOUT HOW YOUR WORK AND STRENGTHS “FIT” WITH THE DEPARTMENT TO WHICH YOU ARE APPLYING

- PRACTICE THIS “BULLET” WITH OTHERS – SO YOU CAN BE CONCISE, BUT ALSO COMPELLING/PERSUASIVE IN YOUR “ANSWER” TO THIS QUESTION.
 - TIMETABLE FOR COMPLETION OF: DISSERTATION, PUBLICATION OF MSS,
 - 2ND PROJECT POSSIBILITIES?
- b. TEACHING: FAMILIARIZE YOURSELF WITH COURSES/OFFERINGS/CURRICULA AS LAID OUT IN THE CATALOGUE FOR THE INSTITUTION YOU ARE APPLYING TO. SEE WHERE YOU MIGHT FIT, OVERLAP, BE ABLE TO SPEAK TO WHAT YOU MIGHT BRING TO THE DEPARTMENT.
- WORK ON RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS ABOUT SURVEY COURSES IN YOUR FIELD, SPECIALTY COURSES IN YOUR FIELD, SMALL UNDERGRADUATE SEMINAR COURSES IN YOUR FIELD (BE THEY FRESHMAN SEMINARS OR CAPSTONE SENIOR SEMINARS), OR GRADUATE COURSES IF YOU ARE APPLYING TO A GRADUATE INSTITUTION – IN TERMS OF WHAT YOU MIGHT OFFER TO THE DEPARTMENT.
 - WORK ON RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS ABOUT YOUR TEACHING GOALS/PHILOSOPHY; HOW YOU MIGHT TEACH WRITING? RESEARCH? TO UNDERGRADUATES? TO GRADUATE STUDENTS? WHAT IDEAS DO YOU WANT STUDENTS TO TAKE FROM PARTICULAR COURSES?
 - WORK ON RESPONSES TO QS ABOUT YOUR STRENGTHS/WEAKNESSES AS A TEACHER.
- c. UNEXPECTED QUESTIONS...
- IN SOME INTERVIEWS COMMITTEES ALSO HAVE AN QUESTION OR TWO THAT THEY USE TO GET A SENSE OF APPLICANTS AS INDIVIDUALS – ONE OF THOSE THAT HAS COME UP IN MY EXPERIENCE AS AN APPLICANT AND MEMBER/CHAIR OF SEARCH COMMITTEES FOLLOWS. YOU CAN'T PREDICT THESE QUESTIONS AND JUST HAVE TO RELAX AND DO YOUR BEST TO RESPOND TO THEM.

1) What is the best book you have read outside your field in the last year?

d. QUESTIONS FOR COMMITTEE? DO YOU HAVE QUESTIONS FOR US?

- HERE YOU CAN REASONABLY ASK ABOUT TEACHING LOAD (IF IT IS NOT CLEAR TO THIS POINT), SUPPORT FOR RESEARCH AND TEACHING DEVELOPMENT (DEPENDING ON THE INSTITUTION), TIMETABLE FOR THE SEARCH, ETC.

- ALSO REMEMBER THAT THE SEARCH COMMITTEE IS TRYING TO GIVE YOU A POSITIVE SENSE OF THEIR INSTITUTION AS WELL.

e. WHAT YOU SHOULD EXPECT OR SHOULD BE FOLLOWED BY THE SCHOOL:

- AS MUCH TRANSPARENCY AS IS POSSIBLE – TIMELY AND ADEQUATE NOTIFICATION AS TO THE STAGES OF THE SEARCH PROCESS. YOU SHOULD NOTE THAT SOME NOTIFICATION SCHEDULES ARE DEFINED IN PART OR SET BY STATE OR COLLEGE/UNIVERSITY POLICY, NOT BY DEPARTMENTS.

III: PHONE VERSUS FACE-FACE:

THE GENERAL INFO I'VE OFFERED THUS FAR IS USEFUL IN BOTH PHONE AND AHA INTERVIEWS – A COUPLE OF DIFFERENCES:

- ONE IS THAT YOU CANNOT SEE YOUR “QUESTIONERS” – SO CAN'T GET A SENSE OF THEM IN TERMS OF BODY LANGUAGE, ETC. THEY ALSO CAN'T SEE YOU SO MAKE SURE YOU SPEAK UP AND SPEAK CLEARLY – DON'T RUSH, DON'T MUMBLE.
- TWO IS THAT YOU CAN HAVE NOTES IN FRONT OF YOU FOR THE PHONE INTERVIEW.
- PRACTICE! HAVE COLLEAGUES/FRIENDS CALL YOU AND PRACTICE RESPONDING OVER THE PHONE. PRACTICE IS ALSO A GOOD THING FOR FACE-

FACE INTERVIEWS – MANY DEPARTMENTS SET UP SUCH PRACTICE SESSIONS FOR THEIR GRADUATE STUDENTS, IF YOURS DOES NOT, SEE IF YOU CAN GET SOME OF YOUR COLLEAGUES TO SET UP “MOCK” JOB MARKET INTERVIEWS TO GET SOME EXPERIENCE BEFORE THE “REAL” THING.

- FOR BOTH MAKE SURE YOU TRY TO DO FULL RESPONSES, BUT KEEP THEM FAIRLY BRIEF. IN OTHER WORDS, MOST INTERVIEWS RANGE FROM 20 MINS – 45 MINUTES – OBVIOUSLY THIS MEANS THAT YOU HAVE SOME FLEXIBILITY IN TERMS OF TIME ALLOTTED, BUT GENERALLY SPEAKING SHORTER IS BETTER THAN LENGTHY RAMBLING RESPONSES.