Preparing your academic job search

- **Am I ready?**

- **Planning your strategy**

- **Preparing application materials**

- **Finding job openings**

- **Tailoring your application**

Common excuses that may (but shouldn't necessarily) keep you from applying

- **I *like* being a postdoc, there are fewer hassles.**
- **I don't have any results from my postdoctoral research**
- **I don't have any publications from my postdoctoral research**
- **I don't have my own grant**
- **I don't know what kind of research I want to do**
- **There aren't any good jobs out there**

Consider this…

- **You might not get a job (or job you like) in the first round--practice makes perfect**
- **You may be able to push off your start date by up to a year**
- **Postdoc publications will rarely all be done before you get a job**
- **A grant helps, but you can show promise in other ways**
- **Writing your research statement may help you clarify to yourself your own interests**
- **Jobs come up where you least expect them**

Planning your strategy

- **What kind of department?**
  - Graduate / undergraduate

- **What kind of institution?**
  - The research / teaching split

- **Timeline of your search**
  - The interviewing season
    - Often in the fall, but can be anytime
  - How far in advance?
    - Up to 2 years before desired start date

- **Focused vs. shotgun approach**
  - You might get a similar number of "hits" by pick the institutions most likely to be interested in you.

Goals of a Research Statement

- **This is a marketing tool, not a scientific document!**
- **Introduce your field to the lay scientific audience**
- **Explain your long term research interests**
- **Summarize your research accomplishments**
  - Give your readers ammunition
- **Summarize your research goals**
  - Five year plan, leading to a career trajectory

Writing a research statement

- Start with a summary of what you are about--your overarching research theme
- Use the first person
- Avoid using jargon
- State clearly important questions in the field you have and will address
- Use succinct paragraphs and boldface important points:
  - Research question
  - Important finding
  - Implications
- Cite your own publications
- Provide specific statements about the importance of your research
  - This provides verbatim ammunition for a supportive committee member
- Stick to 2 pages max

Turning an abstract into a research statement

- Get rid of data, methodological details, and secondary questions.
- Details aren't really important; impact is.
- Invert your usual order of presentation: start with the punchline
- Use the words "novel", "innovative" and synonyms as much as possible.

    (pretend you are writing about an esteemed colleague if you are shy about self-promotion)

Teaching Statements

- **Highlight your teaching experience, both formal and informal**
- **Address known teaching needs of the department**
- **Explain your teaching philosophy**
- **Remember:**
  - Research institutions usually don't ask for teaching statements
  - Few postdocs have taught a course

Recommendation Letters

- You may need anywhere from 3-5 letters of recommendation

- Make sure you will get *good* letters

- Give recommenders plenty of notice

- Provide a brief summary of your present and past research to help them remember why you are great.

- If possible, give recommenders specific details about each job that they can use to customize each letter.

Finding job openings

- **Science and Nature online**
  - Database search
  - Weekly email updates
- **Mailing lists**
- **Word of mouth**
  - Talk to people you know
  - Find out if people are moving or retiring from departments you are interested in
  - Send unsolicited applications to expanding departments.

Research each job you apply for

- **Call the committee chair**
- **Call anyone you know who knows anything**
- **Ask:**
  - Why is the position open?
  - What level of investigator are they looking for?
  - What kind of teaching/research areas are they interested in filling?
  - What kind of teaching/research resources are available?

Tailoring your application - Cover Letter

- – The cover letter is a sorting tool for busy committee members

- – Introduce your qualifications: degrees, postdocs, fields

- – Explain why you would fit in the department

- – Name specific resources you can use

- – Name specific people you may collaborate with

- – Include keywords from job announcements

Send in your application!

- – Try to send things in by the deadline
- – If you find an announcement whose deadline has past, send it anyway
- – Tell people you know in the department that you have applied
- – Give your recommenders specific instructions about deadlines, who and where to send applications to, what you want emphasized to the committee
- – Keep track of your correspondence with different universities
- – Start preparing for interviews...