

Chapter 2: Finding a Job in Academia

Many Brown graduate students obtain tenure-track teaching jobs after finishing their PhDs. But they don't all start out on that track. Many students begin their full-time careers as adjunct or visiting professors on fixed-term, often renewable appointments. Some secure post-doctoral fellowships that allow them to engage in further study or to finish a book. Still others find satisfying work in higher education administration.

The key to finding your first job in academia is to listen to your own values and interests. If your passion is teaching, a position at a smaller school may be a good fit. If you're interested in the behind-the-scenes workings of a university, you may pursue a career in administration. This section describes the major kinds of jobs available in academia, including faculty positions, post-doctoral positions, and administrative options. Learning about these options will help you craft a job search plan that is right for you.

FACULTY POSITIONS

The requirements, demands, and timing of an academic job search vary from discipline to discipline. In some fields, the majority of interviews for faculty positions take place at a major conference; in others, the process is more decentralized. Because the nature of the academic job search is discipline specific, the scholars in your department are often the best source of information and advice. Work with your advisor and committee members to develop an action plan for your search process. If your department has a job placement officer, consult him or her for tips on how to navigate the job market in your field.

Learn About the Market

One of the best resources for learning about the academic job market is *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. It's not only the premier source for higher education job listings. It's also the best source for getting the inside scoop on the nature of the market in any given year. Each year *The Chronicle* publishes first-person accounts of life on the market as well as advice from the pros, including faculty who've served on search committees. To learn more about how search committees work, read the UC Berkeley Career Center's account of how departmental politics and institutional priorities inform the search committee process from the time the job ad is drafted to the time a hiring offer is made: <https://career.berkeley.edu/Phds/PhDhiring.stm>.

Plan Your Search

Although the process of looking for a faculty appointment differs from discipline to discipline, all searches require an expenditure of time and money. You will spend an enormous amount of time preparing materials to send out to prospective employers. In addition to drafting letters of application, CVs, and preparing for interviews and job talks, you will correspond with the institutions you've applied to and travel to conferences and universities for interviews. Some students like to use a spreadsheet to track job applications, noting which documents were requested and when they were sent. Emily Peters writes of the expenses that add up in "The Cost of Applying for Academic Jobs," at: <http://chronicle.com/article/The-Cost-of-Applying-for-Ac/46220/>.

Finish Your Dissertation

In the midst of all this frenetic activity, you'll probably need to be working on your dissertation. Talk to your advisor about how to balance your research with your search process. It's important to be able to speak convincingly in interviews about your timeline for finishing your dissertation. Search committees will want to know that you'll have your dissertation completed by the time you step into your new faculty position. Having most of your dissertation finished when you go on the market will enable you to talk with greater confidence about the significance of your work to your discipline.

Talk to Experienced Job Seekers

Graduate students who are a few years ahead of you can give you a good sense of the job search experience in your field. They can provide an insider's view on what to expect during interviews and campus visits, how to deal with and unexpected issues that come up along the way. You can read published accounts of former graduate students' job searches at the sites below.

- Darren Narayan shares his experience on the market in math: www.maa.org/features/narayan.html
- Ellen Spertus's account of her search in computer science, "Tips for a Massive Academic Job Search," is relevant across multiple fields of study. <http://people.mills.edu/spertus/job-search/job.html>
- In "Getting an Academic Job," Michael Ernst provides not only his own advice, but also useful links about stages of the job market: <http://www.cs.washington.edu/homes/mernst/advice/academic-job.html>
- Mary Morris Heiberger and Julia Miller Vick also provide a useful discussion in "Getting Psyched up for the Market" <https://webspace.utexas.edu/cherwitz/www/ie/process.html>.

Be Realistic

When going on the academic market, it's important to adopt a realistic attitude. You'll send out lots of applications. Some institutions will respond promptly, others not at all. Keeping a good attitude is essential to success. It's also important to follow your own sense of what's right for you. Oftentimes, the advice you receive from people at Brown is geared toward getting tenure-track jobs at places like Brown. But a different kind of job may suit you better. There are nearly 3,000 institutions of higher education in the United States alone; take the time to learn about the various institutions with openings before making a decision about applying.

Additional Resources

- "Your first academic job:" <http://www.insidehighered.com/advice/2013/06/17/essay-how-land-first-academic-job#sthash.mkKEYpxa.dpbs>
- "How do you improve your chances of getting an academic job?" <http://www.theguardian.com/higher-education-network/blog/2014/mar/05/careers-higher-education-phd-doctorate-employment>
- "Academic Job Searching for Dummies (or, 10 Easy Ways to Avoid Unemployment)" <http://chronicle.com/article/Academic-Job-Searching-for/45367>

Teaching at community, technical, and junior colleges is fundamentally different from teaching at a four-year institution. The student population is much more diverse, and the work is centered almost exclusively on teaching (and service work in the department). While staying active in professional associations is increasingly expected of community college professors, the pressure to publish is less pronounced.

If you decide to pursue employment at a community college, you will have to develop a cover letter that emphasizes your teaching and that downplays your research. Discuss any courses you have taught, particularly those that you developed yourself. Expect to spend much of the interview discussing your teaching experience and pedagogy.

Is a Community College Right for You?

- Julie Miller Vick and Jennifer S. Furlong discuss what factors to consider when looking at employment in a community college: <http://chronicle.com/article/Do-You-Belong-at-a-Community/45853/>
- Rob Jenkins outlines the benefits of teaching at a community college: <http://chronicle.com/article/Not-a-Bad-Gig/45224>
- Rob Jenkins answers the question “Can I Teach at a Community College?” <http://chronicle.com/article/Can-I-Teach-at-a-Community/124528/>

Landing a Community College Position

- What community colleges look for in an applicant <http://chronicle.com/article/What-Community-Colleges-Want/45793/>
- What to do, and what NOT to do, when interviewing at a community college <http://chronicle.com/article/The-Community-College/45951/>
- Jenkins’ “A Foot in the Door at Community Colleges” is relevant to those with a master’s or doctoral degree: <http://chronicle.com/article/A-Foot-in-the-Door-at/44561/>

Community College Job Listings

- Community College Week online contains news on community, technical, and junior colleges, as well as a link to "CCjobsonline.com," a database of job listings at two-year colleges: www.ccweek.com/
- The Chronicle of Higher Education’s Community College section provides a wealth of information: <http://chronicle.com/section/Community-Colleges/33/>
- Stanford University’s “Community College Job Search” guide provides an overview of the application process, a timeline, and sample interview questions. Download the guide here: <http://studentaffairs.stanford.edu/sites/default/files/cdc/files/CommunityCollegeCareer05-06.pdf>
- The American Association of Community Colleges lists positions nationwide: <http://www.aacc.nche.edu/Resources/Careers/Pages/default.aspx>
- An extensive listing of community college positions in California: <https://www.cccregistry.org/jobs/index.aspx>

ADJUNCT TEACHING

A lot of ink has been spilled in academic circles over the plight of adjunct teaching instructors. Adjunct, part-time, and temporary instructors typically earn less than their tenure-track counterparts, teach heavy course loads, and often work without the benefits accorded to many other university employees. However, many adjunct instructors find their experience to be a rewarding one. If you're a recently-minted Ph.D. with little teaching experience, working as an adjunct can provide you with the opportunity to sharpen your teaching skills, develop syllabi, and teach a wider range of courses.

For some, the heavy teaching load of adjunct work enables them to do what they love best - teach. Others use their adjunct experience to transition into more permanent, tenure-track positions. Still other adjuncts use their role as a part-time instructor to balance careers in college administration: teaching a couple of courses and working at a writing center, to name just one example. If you're considering working as a part-time or temporary college instructor, it's important to keep in mind why you're adjuncting, so that you can get the most from your experience. The following articles and resources offer a range of perspective on how to use adjunct teaching to advance your career goals.

Web Resources

- Robin Wilson discusses the results of a 2009 survey that looks into Adjuncts' work lives: <http://chronicle.com/article/Chronicle-Survey-Yields-a/48843/>
- Adjunct Nation provides news on issues facing adjunct instructors, links to funding sources, professional development resources, and job listings for part-time faculty. www.adjunctnation.com/
- Resources for adjunct professors, including an extensive listing of open adjunct positions: www.adjunctprofessoronline.com/
- HigherEdJobs.com allows you to search for open positions by type. If you are interested in adjunct or part-time teaching positions, click "Part-Time/Adjunct" under the "Type" heading: <https://www.higheredjobs.com/search/>
- Getting Started as an Adjunct: <http://chronicle.com/article/Getting-Started-as-an-Adjunct/46199/>

POSTDOCS

Postdoctoral positions – research appointments of a fixed length of time – have long been a feature of academic careers in the Sciences. Postdocs typically range from one to three years and take place in a setting other than one's graduate institution. The research focus of the postdoc provides the opportunity to deepen and extend your scholarly research before tackling a tenure-track job. Postdoctoral positions are less common in the humanities and social sciences, but they are becoming more numerous and offer a real alternative for job candidates who for a variety of reasons may not secure a tenure-track position right out of graduate school.

Issues to Consider

- Your ultimate career goals: Do you want to teach at a major research university? Or do you want to work outside of academia? What kind of postdoc will best help you prepare for that career track?

- The area of research: Should you choose a postdoc in your current area of expertise or one that allows you to familiarize yourself with another area of research or another methodology?
- The lab and the research center: What is the reputation of the lab or research center? Who is the principal investigator? The other scholars? What kind of facilities and equipment are available?
- Independence of your research: To what extent will the position enable you to develop your own research interests?
- Feasibility of the research project: Can the research goals be accomplished within the term of the appointment, preferably with publishable results?
- Funding: Where does the funding for research come from? The institution? What responsibility will you have for securing funding for the research project?

Julia Miller Vick and Jennifer S. Furlong have written an excellent article about the issues to consider when applying for a postdoc in any field at <http://chronicle.com/article/Applying-for-a-Postdoctoral/46620/>. Paige Gordon offers tips based on her own experience as a social sciences postdoc at <http://chronicle.com/article/Postdoc-Survival-Skills/44589/>.

“Transitioning from grad school to a postdoc:”
<http://tenureshewrote.wordpress.com/2013/08/08/transitioning-from-grad-school-to-a-postdoc/>

STEM Postdocs

Postdocs in the sciences, math, and engineering may be sponsored by an academic institution, a government agency, or private industry. The nature of postdoctoral work varies greatly at different kinds of institutions. An enlightening discussion of the factors that make for a successful post-doc experience in the sciences is online at http://sciencecareers.sciencemag.org/career_development/previous_issues/articles/2006_09_15/science_opms_r0600018. It’s worth taking a few minutes to read the article now. It will help you think strategically about how a post-doc can be part of a longer-term career development plan.

Postdocs in the sciences are located in one of two ways. The first is through networking – leveraging connections made through your advisors and discipline-specific conferences. The second way to locate postdocs in the sciences, math, and engineering is through national or international postings. Listings of science postdocs can be found in *Science and The Chronicle of Higher Education* and in the journals of your discipline’s professional societies. Discipline-specific publications, such as *Physics Today* and *Chemical & Engineering News*, are potentially rich sources of information for information on postdocs.

- Biological sciences postdocs
 - www.spo.berkeley.edu/Fund/biopostdoc.html
- Science postdocs in Europe www.eurosciencejobs.com/
- Post-docs in industry, government, and academia www.newscientistjobs.com/jobs/default.aspx

Humanities and Social Sciences

Postdocs in the humanities and social sciences typically carry lighter teaching loads than faculty positions, providing young scholars the opportunity to conduct more in-depth research and to complete their first book. Most postdoctoral opportunities are published as part of your professional association’s job list, in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, and resources such as H-Net Online.

- Postdoctoral opportunities in the humanities
 - www.spo.berkeley.edu/Fund/hpostdoc.html
 - www.colorado.edu/ArtsSciences/CHA/external/fellowships.html
- Postdoctoral fellowships in the social sciences www.spo.berkeley.edu/Fund/socpostdoc.html
- Postdoc opportunities in the humanities and social sciences
 - http://academicjobs.wikia.com/wiki/Academic_Jobs_Wiki

Post-Doctoral Associations

Work conditions for university-sponsored post-docs have grabbed headlines in academia for the last several years. The debates center on virtually every aspect of the post-doc experience, from salaries and benefits to mentorship programs, career resources, and the sometimes nebulous employment status of post-docs.

At some universities, postdocs have formed their own organizations to lobby for better pay, comprehensive benefits, and more clearly-formulated university policy on the role and employment status of postdocs. Some universities have formed their own post-doctoral associations to clarify the role of postdocs and to support their postdoc community. Because the status of postdocs varies greatly from university to university, visiting the postdoctoral association website of a specific institution is a great way to learn about the issues of concern to post-docs at that institution.

- Stanford's Postdoctoral Association website includes information on issues facing post-docs at Stanford, a post-doc infopacket, and career search resources: www.stanford.edu/group/supd/
- UC Berkeley's Post-Doctoral Association has links to several other associations: <http://postdoc.berkeley.edu/>
- UPenn's Biomed Postdoctoral Programs website includes a "Guidelines and Appointments Manual" for UPenn post-docs as well as a "Career Development" section with links to online resources for biomed post-docs: www.med.upenn.edu/postdoc/

Additional Resources

The following sites list post-doc job openings and offer useful information about various aspects of the post-doc experience:

- www.phds.org/postdoc/
- www.nationalpostdoc.org/
- www.findapostdoc.com/
- www.tedjob.com/
- www.postdocjobs.com/
- <http://staff.lib.msu.edu/harris23/grants/3postdoc.htm>

When you hear the phrase "university administration," you probably think of deans and college presidents, people who determine broad educational policy, govern universities, and act as their public faces. These top administrators are usually tenured faculty members who have worked their way through the professorial ranks before being tapped for leadership roles.

Colleges and universities abound with career opportunities in administration beyond these roles. Employment opportunities run the gamut from academic program administration, student life services, and public relations to finance, human resources, and institutional research.

Such positions offer a different type of work experience than that of a faculty member: for one thing, most administrators suit up and show up for an 8 am -5 pm work week, whereas faculty tend to have more freedom to set their own schedule. While the work week may look different, administrators experience many of the same pleasures faculty do: advising bright and motivated young people; working with intelligent, stimulating colleagues; and helping to shape the overall educational mission of the university.

Learn About Administrative Options

One of the best ways to explore the administrative employment possibilities in higher education is to speak with administrators on your own campus. At a mid-size university like Brown, your choices are many, so you might want to start by asking a CareerLAB advisor for some guidance on whom to approach. You can also meet with a mid-level dean in the Graduate School or in the Dean of the College office to learn about the work that they do. Your contacts in these offices will help you generate names of other administrators with whom you might speak, such as the President's primary Assistant or an associate provost.

In addition to talking with actual administrators, you can read to learn more about the nature of administrative work—its headaches as well as its joys. To get an idea of the kinds of administrative career possibilities in higher education, look at The Chronicle's Career Network job listings. Click on administrative positions. You will see that there are more than 25 categories.

- Rob Jenkins explores the pros and cons of getting into administration: <http://chronicle.com/article/Getting-Into-Administration/44904/>
- Mary Morris Heiberger and Julie Miller Vick provide advice to graduate students looking to get into academic administration: <http://chronicle.com/article/When-You-Want-to-Stay-on-Ca/46318/>
- In "Making the Switch," Julie Miller Vick and Jennifer S. Furlong discuss the many roles Ph.D.s play on campus outside of teaching: <http://chronicle.com/article/Switching-Sides/46918/>

Administrative Job Lists

Browse job listings on the sites below to develop your knowledge of university administrative positions and the required or desirable characteristics for each job. Knowing the kind of background needed for a particular position will help you make better short-term choices now.

- The Chronicle of Higher Education allows users to browse jobs by position type: from the "jobs" tab, click on the "administrative" link.
- Academic360 has a wealth of links to sites with academic job openings for both faculty members and administrators: www.Academic360.com

- The American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers allows users to search for jobs by location and category: jobs.aacrao.org/hunter/search.php
- The College and University Professional Association for Human Resources allows users to make connections with higher-ed professionals. Its “JobLine” section allows users to search for jobs by title and by date posted: www.cupahr.org
- The National Academic Advising Association provides a forum for ideas pertaining to academic advising through numerous activities and publications. Its website includes job listings related to academic advising and student services under the “Resources” tab (click “Position Announcements”) : www.nacada.ksu.edu/
- The National Association for College Admission Counseling’s website allows users to browse job listings in high schools, colleges, universities or industry partner organizations. Under the “Career Development” tab, click “Career Opportunities:” www.nacacnet.org
- HigherEdJobs provides administrative job listings, by searching by “category:” www.higheredjobs.com/

JOB SEARCH TIMELINE

Timing your job search can be stressful, since you must rely on others for things like letters of recommendation and transcripts. Below is a rough timeline that can guide your process. Be sure to check with your advisor about the specific requirements in your discipline. Make sure to check your department’s website. Most provide useful information and timelines specific to your discipline.

- | | |
|---------------|--|
| Spring | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Open an Interfolio account Request letters of recommendation Attend CareerLAB Academic Job Search Series |
| Summer | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Draft a curriculum vita; solicit feedback from dissertation director Create teaching portfolio and draft teaching philosophy statement Draft dissertation abstract, research statement, and cover letters Obtain feedback on drafts of application materials Work on dissertation Check job listings regularly Attend CareerLAB Academic Job Search Series |
| Fall | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Research schools you’ll be applying to Schedule career counseling sessions at CareerLAB Polish final drafts of CV, cover letters, teaching and research statements Continue working on dissertation Prepare writing samples Attend CareerLAB Academic Job Search Series |
| Winter | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Register for mock interviews Prepare and practice job talk Make campus visits Check for new job ads Attend CareerLAB Academic Job Search Series |

Spring

Make campus visits
Look for late openings
Negotiate job offers

Duke University's Career Center publishes a helpful job search timeline at :

www.imdiversity.com/Villages/Channels/grad_school/articles/grad_duke_academic_jobs.asp.