

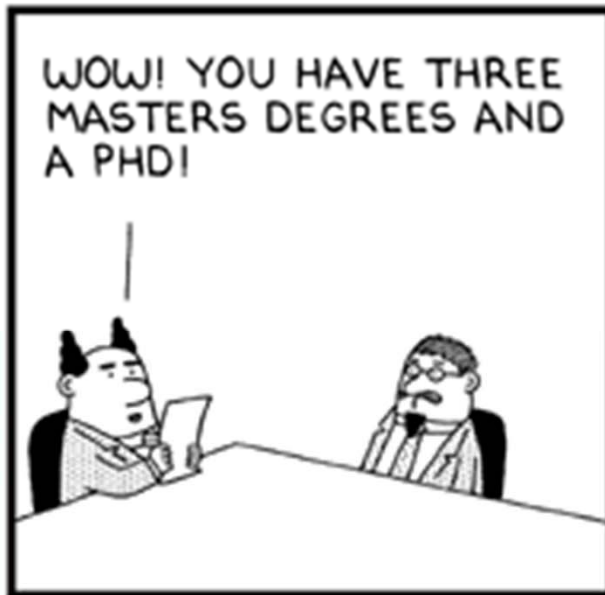
# Academic Job Interviews: Questions and Advice

Roseanne J. Foti, Ph.D.

A stylized silhouette of a mountain range in shades of teal, located at the bottom right of the slide.

# Overview

- ◆ General Advice
- ◆ Typical Schedule
- ◆ The QUESTIONS
  - What will you BE asked?
  - What should YOU ask?
- ◆ Advice based on the Research



www.dilbert.com scottadams@aol.com



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# General Advice

- ◆ Attend candidate interviews in your own department
- ◆ Want to portray an image of yourself as a colleague
- ◆ So, what to do?
  - Show excitement and enthusiasm
  - How invested you are in your work
  - Think of yourself as a faculty member from the time you start applying for jobs

# General Advice

- ◆ Want to be prepared
  - Research the institution
  - Research the program and department
  - Research the people who will interview you
- ◆ Then you can mention ways you can see yourself contributing to the department
  - Helps you be seen as a colleague

# Typical Schedule

- ◆ Typically 1.5 to 2 days
- ◆ Must give seminar
- ◆ 30 min meetings from breakfast through dinner
- ◆ Plan to be exhausted, drink lots of caffeine, yet have no time to go to the bathroom

# Questions You WILL Be Asked

- ◆ Part of being prepared is pre-thinking answers to typical interview questions

# Top 5 Questions

- ◆ Describe your research
  - Need a short and long answer for experts and non-experts
  - Corollaries
    - ◆ What is the broader significance of your research?
    - ◆ What are the limitations of your research?
    - ◆ What research will you do next?



# Top 5 Questions

- ◆ How would you teach...
  - A service course in your field
  - Any of the courses on your CV that you say you can teach
  - Corollary
    - ◆ What courses would you like to teach and how would you teach them?

# Top 5 Questions

- ◆ Tell us how your research has influenced your teaching? In what ways have you been able to bring the insights of your research to courses at the undergraduate level?
  - Try to focus on specific examples
  - Using specific examples will ground you, may make you less nervous

# Top 5 Questions

- ◆ Why do you want to work at *Shall Remain Nameless* College or University?

- Corollaries

- ◆ How do you see yourself as contributing to our department?
- ◆ What are the top 3 things you are looking for in an academic job?
- ◆ Your degree is from Prestige Research University -  
- what is it about Mediocre U that interests you?

# Top 5 Questions

- ◆ Do you have any questions?
- ◆ Need to have some!!
  - I have some suggestions to get you thinking

# Questions that Surprised me

- ◆ What will be the first student research project that you supervise?
- ◆ How do you evaluate research in your area?

# Questions about marital/family status, religion, etc.

- ◆ You can answer
- ◆ You can answer by saying it won't interfere with doing the job
  - "I can definitely work the hours required?"
  - "If you're concerned that I won't be able to perform the duties of the job, I'm sure I can."
  - "If you're going to ask next whether or not I'm authorized to work in the USA, I am."
- ◆ You can decline to answer and state it makes you uncomfortable

# What are the Illegal Questions

- ◆ **National origin or descent:**
  - "That's an unusual name. Where is it from?"
- ◆ **Citizenship:**
  - "Are you a U.S. citizen?"
- ◆ **Marital/family status:**
  - "Are you married? Engaged? Divorced?"
  - "With whom do you live?"
  - "Do you plan to have a family? When?"
  - "Do you have children?"
  - "What are your childcare arrangements?"

# What are the Illegal Questions

## ◆ Age:

- "How old are you?"
- "What is your date of birth?"
- "When did you graduate?"

## ◆ Affiliations:

- "What organizations or groups do you belong to?"



# Questions about marital/family status, religion, etc.

- ◆ If you feel that your partner is an asset, nothing stops **you** from adding (nothing stops you from volunteering information)
- ◆ Similarly, you can reference family, friends, and other links to the area

# Questions You SHOULD Ask

- ◆ To Search Committee Chair
  - Are there any “surprises” on my itinerary?
    - ◆ Touchy topics, difficult people, faculty with different expectations from those of the search committee
  - What, in particular, are *you* looking for in filling this position?

# Questions You SHOULD Ask

- ◆ To College Dean
  - What research funds are available at different levels of the university?
  - How would you describe the *Shall Remain Nameless* department to a fellow dean?
    - ◆ Trying to assess his/her evaluation of the department

# Questions You SHOULD Ask

- ◆ To Department Chair and Senior Faculty
  - What, in particular, are *you* looking for in filling this position?
    - ◆ let's you assess whether different faculty have different agendas
  - What type of summer support is available?
  - Pre-tenure teaching release?

# Questions You SHOULD Ask

## ◆ To Junior Faculty

- What classes did you teach in the last year? How much influence did you have regarding: number of students? how many preps? which classes taught and when?
- What support do you receive for your research?
- What is your greatest frustration with your job?

# Questions You SHOULD Ask

- ◆ To Graduate Students
  - Why did you choose to get your graduate degree at this school?
  - Do graduate students get travel funds?

# Questions You SHOULD Ask

- ◆ Exit interview with Chair
  - Will you be interviewing other candidates?
  - Who makes the decision regarding whom to hire?
  - What is your timetable for filling this position?
  - If you are *asked* about salary... know the range for the position, aim a bit high and have a good rationale

# Questions You SHOULD Ask

- ◆ Exit interview with Chair
  - Need to be prepared with start up package with justification



# Research on Interviewing and Gender Differences

- ◆ Much interview advice involves the use of impression management tactics
- ◆ Self-promotion
  - Speaking with pride about your accomplishments
  - Speaking directly about your strengths and talents
  - Taking responsibility for your accomplishments

# Research on Interviewing and Gender Differences

- ◆ Research shows women are perceived as less competent and competitive than men
  - Self-promotion seen as a way of counteracting gender schemas and stereotypes
- ◆ Women who self-promote are given higher competence ratings
  - But, lower interpersonal skills ratings

# Research on Interviewing and Gender Differences

- ◆ This result is stronger when
  - the interviewer has less vested interest
  - when the job requires good listening skills and being sensitive to others

# Research on Interviewing and Gender Differences

- ◆ So, what to do...
- ◆ Most common advice is to stress the characteristics associated with competence
  - independent, ambitious
- ◆ downplay those characteristics associated with dominance
  - aggressive

# Conclusions

- ◆ To help you self-promote, try the following
- ◆ Think about your grad school/post doc experience in terms of accomplishments NOT responsibilities
- ◆ Rework vitae as much as possible in terms of accomplishments
- ◆ Keep a file with letters, emails, notes, etc