

AEJMC Spotlight presentation

AEJMC's Washington, D.C., Conference, The Renaissance Hotel Downtown, Exhibit Hall
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How to Get "That" Job

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It has been a challenging, exhilarating and exhausting 3-4 years, but there is a light at the end of your doctoral program tunnel. Now, it's time to seek that first job. The pressure and anxiety build, along with stress. It's normal, but it does not have to be debilitating. Here are steps you can take to help you land that first job post-Ph.D.

- 1) Know your strengths and develop a narrative to articulate them, both in written and verbal form. This is not something that job candidates think about first, but they should. You spend a lot of time thinking, searching, dreaming about the dream job instead of the job that best fits your strengths. Taking the time to do this will save time and effort chasing a job that might not be the right one.
- 2) Talk to advisors/mentors. This should be a frank and honest conversation about who you are as a teacher/scholar. What you need from them is an assessment of your strengths and weaknesses and what type of program/position you should seek. You also want to ask if they know of any open positions or possible openings where you should apply. Conversations about possible jobs must happen regularly during the job search. This is also the time to ask advisors/mentors to be references. However, make sure they know what positions you have applied for and that you put them down as a reference.
- 3) Once you see a position posted that interests you, find out as much as you can about the position. What exactly are they looking for, is it replacing someone or is it a new position? If it is a replacement, what was the previous person doing and is the expectation that the new person will be doing the same thing? I know you are probably thinking "what about the research expectation?" That's important, but oftentimes that is not the first thing on the minds of those posting the position. They are looking for both teaching and research and even more important, fit. You should be looking for the same thing.
- 4) Don't forget to reach out to contacts at other programs, especially colleagues who were ahead of you in the program. They will have knowledge about positions they applied for that did not get filled for various reasons. They will also have information about people you may interview with at some point in the process.

- 5) As you put your cover letter and CV together, make sure that it is tailored to the position and the program. I can't tell you how many times I've seen job candidates send in a cover letter that is generic and shows that they did not take the time to understand our program and how they would fit in as a faculty member.
- 6) Once you make it to the first interview, make sure you know who is on the search committee. Most first interviews are now done by Skype, Zoom, etc. It is important to put faces with names in these interviews. Make sure you have questions for them about the position and the program.
- 7) In both the first interview and any campus interviews, be ready to talk about your strengths and weaknesses, but refer to your weaknesses as challenges. They are opportunities to grow. You want to demonstrate that you did your homework, but try not to come across as a know-it-all. Remember, do more listening than talking, but don't be too silent.
- 8) In most interviews, you will be expected to do either a research talk or teach a class or both. Make sure you know exactly what is expected and how much time you will have. If it is a class, make it easy on the current instructor and offer to teach whatever is listed on the syllabus. This will show your versatility and the instructor will thank you for it. Also, and this is important, make sure you do a practice talk in front of an audience before you go for the campus interview. Make sure to invite colleagues and professors who will be critical and provide ideas on how to make the presentations better. Also, make sure you can give the presentations **without technology**. You never know when the technology will fail you.
- 9) Be as flexible as you can about what type of position/program you want to pursue. If you are too rigid, you may find yourself without a position at the end of the hiring season. This does not mean take the first offer that is made or apply for every position. You want a position that will give you the opportunity to be the best. Both you and the program should be invested in your future.
- 10) Lastly, be yourself. You do not want to present yourself as someone you are not or state that you can do something that you are not capable of doing.