

**McCormick**

Northwestern Engineering

# The Interview Process

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# Questions they want answered:

- Can you teach/design courses?
  - Especially important in b-schools
- Are you knowledgeable about your field?
- Is your dissertation research worthwhile, publishable and extendable?
- Can you run your own research program?
- Will you be a good colleague?
- Do you have the drive it takes to be successful?

# Questions you want answered:

- Is this a place (department, school and city) where I could be comfortable?
- How do they help assistant professors to be successful?
- Are there people here with whom I could work?
- Does what I do fit what they want me to do?

# Design of the job talk

- Timing:
  - 45 minutes for 1 hour talk
  - 70 minutes for 90 minute talk (some business schools)
- 20-20 rule
  - The first 20 minutes *everyone in the room* should understand what you say
    - B-school requires industry relevant stories
  - 20 minutes can be targeted to people knowledgeable in your area
  - Close with a strong statement of next steps

# More on the talk

- Practice the talk out loud (ideally in front of an audience) for timing.
- Try not to memorize the talk word for word if you can be more conversational.
- Expect to be interrupted, but do not lose control of the talk.
- Have a back up of your talk in pdf because it looks correct on any computer.

# Giving the talk

- Give an “excuse free talk;” if you will be starting with an excuse, then change the talk.
- Speak clearly, smile and be enthusiastic even if you are not confident with your English.
- Before you say your first word, take a deep breath and relax.
- Never, ever rush. Plan for ways to shorten the talk if you get behind (especially important in b-schools)
- Listen to questions before answering.
- If you don't know, say you don't know.

# Presenting yourself at the interview

- Dress neatly and professionally. Ask for help from your friends if you are fashion challenged.
- Speak clearly and not quietly (even if you are not confident about your English; mumbling will only compound the problem).
- Greet people with a firm handshake and a smile.

# One-on-one interviews

- Respect the person you are talking to.
- Know one sentence about every person in the department (e.g., “Goldman does statistical methods for simulation.”)
- You will be a more interesting job candidate if *you interview them*.
- A good way to escape a difficult interview is to ask them about their work.
- It is useful to ask the same question to multiple people.

# Preparation

- Know one or two of their classes that you could teach; be prepared with a class you would like to create.
- Know what might be sources of funding for your research.
- Know the next research problem on which you might work.
- Know whose work is most closely related to yours.

# Breakfast/lunch/dinner

- This is where you pass the “smuck test” (are you a nice and interesting person to be around). Don’t be all business.
- Don’t offer personal information or problems; stay clear of politics, religion and gossip.
- A good time to ask about what it is like to live there, housing costs, etc.

# Talking to the chair

- Likely questions you will be asked:
  - Who else are you talking to? What is your time frame for a decision?
  - What resources will you need to get started?
  - Why do you think this department will be a good fit for you?
  - What salary are you looking for? **DO NOT ANSWER THIS QUESTION**
  - What will it take to get you here?

# More on talking to the chair

- Questions you should ask the chair:
  - What is your time frame for making an offer? When might I expect to hear from you?
  - What are characteristics of successful assistant professors? What are your expectations for assistant professors?
  - How do you support assistant professors to be successful?
  - What would my teaching load be? What other duties would I have?
  - What makes your department a good place to be? Are there new initiatives coming/in progress?

# Talking to the Dean, Provost, etc.

- Be prepared to explain what you do in easily understandable terms.
- Be prepared to say what you would add to the department; why they should want you.
- Be enthusiastic and engaged. This is the worst interview for you to be quiet.
- Ask them what they think of the department you are interviewing; strengths and weaknesses.

# Hooray! You got an offer

- Once they make an offer, they really want you to accept, and as quickly as possible.
  - It is common for schools to give a “deadline” by which you must make a binding yes/no decision.
- Work with your advisor after you get the offer.
- Never accept an offer until you have it in writing.
  - Try to get **all** the details down in writing.
- Once you accept the offer, it is in very bad taste to negotiate more (say to counter another offer).

# Negotiating

- Negotiation is most effective if you are willing to say “no.”
  - This is easier said than done.
- Things for which you may negotiate
  - Salary: This is the hardest to get, but it is even harder to get later.
  - R/A support. Some schools give in units of student years, some in dollars (so ask what is current funding rate).
  - Teaching reduction.
  - Startup funds. Ask if funds are sub-allocated to different areas (travel, equipment), or can all be spent as you need.

# Drat! No offers

- Don't Despair! Some of the best academics didn't start out as academics.
- Postdoc positions are **great** ways to widen the circle of people who know your work.
- Research-based industrial position can also be effective.
- Keep in contact with the field. Come to INFORMS, keep reading papers, and get your own papers out.