



NOW HIRING!

Guidance and Support for STEM PhDs
Seeking Competitive Academic Positions



MOTIVATION

According to the National Science Foundation, <20% of PhD recipients in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) fields will obtain academic faculty positions. These statistics are drastically lower for minoritized scholars. The job market for tenure-track faculty positions in STEM is notoriously competitive and many PhD recipients feel ill-equipped to navigate it. I felt wildly underprepared for the academic job market and wanted to help others in their search process by aggregating and sharing my own experiences over the past year. In particular, I wanted to share my perspectives as a WOC on the academic job market to help prepare other minoritized scholars for situations not commonly addressed in readily available resources for job market preparation.

MY JOB MARKET JOURNEY

I am a UC Davis Chancellor's Postdoctoral Fellow in the earth and marine sciences and this year was my first year on the academic job market. I applied to 14 tenure-track faculty positions at teaching institutions, as well as R2 and R1 universities. These applications resulted in ten requests for letters, six screening interviews, four on-campus interviews and three offers.

GATHERING INFO

Throughout my journey on the academic job market, I solicited information and advice from faculty members across STEM disciplines that have recently either a) been on the job market or b) served on a faculty search committee. Although everyone's guidance differed, several common themes emerged. Additionally, I experienced situations for which no amount of guidance could have prepared me.



GENERAL ADVICE

Establish your priorities: How much would you like to teach? How focused on research would you like to be? What kind of college environment would you like to be a part of? Where would you like to live? What demographics of students are you interested in serving? What types of mentees are you interested in mentoring (undergraduates, graduate, Master's/Doctoral, postdoctoral?) Most importantly, what are your personal and professional priorities? Responding to these questions will help you envision your dream academic position.

Get a variety of experiences: Not sure if you like teaching or mentoring? Zero interest in writing grants and publications? In order to find the answer to questions like this, it's important to get as many experiences as possible before entering the job market so you can make an informed decision about the future career you want.

It's never too early to build your network: One thing you can do right now is build your network. STEM fields tend to be "small worlds" of their own where many people know and interact with another. You never know who may be on a search committee, in a department, or able to provide you a reference. Be sure to start and continue cultivating and maintaining a broad network of professional colleagues, peers, and mentors.

The best advice is lots of advice: Everyone will have a different opinion on the best way to navigate the job market, what your application materials should contain, how your CV is organized, and how to proceed with interviews and negotiations, etc.. This influx of advice can be overwhelming, but if you ask enough people, themes and commonalities will start to emerge.

Always know that there are other options: As a PhD recipient (or soon to be recipient) you have a tremendous amount of transferrable, valuable skills and expertise. Often times, not progressing in a search has nothing to do with your intelligence, capabilities or qualifications, but more to do with luck, timing, and "fit". Although academic jobs are highly coveted, there are so many other rewarding career trajectories and most PhDs do not end up in academia. In fact, based on the numbers, academic jobs are the actual "alternative career path". Untangle your worth from the academic job market.

Trust yourself and know your worth: No one can decide what the best place for you and your career may be. Trust your instincts about any position you apply to, interview for, or receive an offer from. Know your worth and do not let the scarcity of the job market or the pressures of getting an academic position let you settle for anything less than what you deserve and makes you happy.

Everyone's journey is different: Expectations for the job market differ tremendously by field and we strongly encourage you to seek guidance and feedback from advisor(s), mentors, and/or peers. In doing so, remember that everyone's experience will be different and do not compare your journey to others.

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THE COMMENTARY

The UC Davis Internship and Career Center offers a virtual workshop on the academic job market on their YouTube channel at the following link:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zCBIoD12X1Y&t=1237s>

I augmented this workshop with feedback from my own job market experiences and the advice I received along the way. This resulted in a running commentary that will hopefully help future UC Davis graduate students & postdocs navigate the job market confidently. For full commentary email ajgriffin@ucdavis.edu.