



<http://www.uicwisest.org/>

WISEST INITIATIVES / *POSTDOCTORAL PROGRAM*

The Post-doc Institute

The Campus Job Interview

Martin Newcomb, Chemistry

Bottom Line

- Those invited to campus are in a small group
 - You already have been judged to be good for the institution
- Interview reinforces or changes opinions
- Demonstrate you have abilities to handle the job
- Avoid messing up your strong position

Overview

- Before the visit
 - Know travel details
 - Check out faculty at host institution
- During the visit
 - One or two presentations
 - Visits with faculty
- After the visit
 - Evaluate what went right and wrong

Before the Visit

- Know your travel details
 - Make certain travel plans are complete if you made them or adequate if made for you
 - Ask your host if you have any questions
 - Taxi or pick-up?
 - If taxi, what is address for hotel and plan for after arrival
 - If pick-up, who will you meet you and where
 - Contact details
 - Host (and pick-up person) telephone number
 - Hotel number, address, confirmation number

Before the Visit

- Know your hosts
 - Obtain a schedule of visits in advance
 - Ask for one if it is not offered
 - Plan for all talks and visits (more on this later)
 - Familiarize yourself with department members
 - Check the department web site for background
 - You don't have to be an expert or even know all names, but you should know something about people in your specific area of interest
 - Check recent pubs for research active people
 - Look at titles, possibly abstracts

Before the Visit

- Know your schedule
 - Obtain a schedule of your talks in advance
 - One or two presentations?
- Prepare materials for presentations
 - Research talk on current work
 - Research proposal

Before the Visit

- What NOT to do
 - Don't expect or plan for any social event
 - Don't bring a guest!!
 - Or family member
 - It sounds too dumb to even mention this, but it has happened at UIC more than once
 - You will be invited back for socializing and housing plans WHEN you receive an offer

During the Visit

- Visits with faculty
 - This will consume most of your time
 - Be prepared to listen and listen
- Visits with administration
 - Department Head, Dean or Associate Dean
 - Dean Nelson will discuss
- Presentations and discussion of research
 - This is where your lecture skills are evaluated

During the Visit

- **The most important point**
- You were invited because you impressed people
 - Most people want you to succeed
- The interview is where you can lose your advantage and the good will you have
- **DON'T PENALIZE YOURSELF**

During the Visit

- What ruins an interview?
- Poor presentations
 - Come with all materials for presentations
- Poor preparation
 - Practice your talks
 - Plan out what you want to discuss
- Poor attitude
 - Don't go if you don't want to impress

Your Presentations

- How many will you give? One or two
 - Research seminar only
 - Two talks: Research and Proposal
- When will you give them?
 - Typically one each on two days of visit
 - Ask your host about timing if you don't have a detailed schedule

Your Presentations

- Big school versus small school
- Competition may differ, but big picture does not
- Most small schools expect research
 - Plan for at least an informal discussion
 - Formal research presentation possible
 - Opportunity to be much more sophisticated than your competition

Research Seminar

- Research you performed (or were the major research player)
 - Current (post-doc) or previous (grad student) research
 - Possibly not a good idea to mix the two
- Focus on complete stories and summaries
 - Emphasize published or completed work
 - Don't try to discuss everything you did
 - Graphs versus tables

Research Seminar

- Given at almost all institutions
 - Large or small
- Evaluation of your ability to give a lecture
 - Be prepared to use both PowerPoint and a chalk board
- Evaluation of your ability to handle questions
 - Whatever you do, don't BS here!

Research Seminar

- Length of presentation
 - 40-50 minutes
 - Target 45 minutes
- Ca. 30 PowerPoint slides
 - Depends on your rate of talking
 - Practice for length with a real audience
- Be confident – You know more about this subject than anyone else present

Proposal Seminar

- Variable by Profession
 - Ask mentors what you need for your area
 - Go to candidate presentations in your department
- Variable by Institution
 - Some want a formal 50 minute talk
 - Some want a short chalk talk
 - Some don't want a presentation
 - Research discussed one-on-one with others

What Worked?

- Chemistry Assistant Prof. hired at UIC
- Initial submission materials
 - Cover letter – 2 pages
 - CV – 3 pages
 - 3 Research proposals – 20 pages total
 - Average of 40 references per proposal
 - Teaching philosophy – 2 pages
- 3 letters of recommendation

What Worked?

- Chemistry Assistant Prof. hired at UIC
- Research Presentation
 - Grad student and Post-doc work
 - Graduate: 31 slides
 - Post-doc: 34 slides
- Probably a little long
 - 45 - 50 minutes is good
 - Expect 10-15 minutes of questions
 - Question period gives you a chance to shine

What Worked?

- Chemistry Assistant Prof. hired at UIC
- Proposal Presentation
- 3 Research Proposals plus extra material
 - 21, 18, 19, 7 slides
 - Opportunity to stop at different points
- You should expect 30 to 60 minutes
- Audience participation will vary
 - Limit your material if discussion carries on
 - Be prepared to summarize late topics

What Doesn't Work?

- Case study of UIC candidate
- Researcher looked strong on paper
 - Independent funding already obtained
 - Possibly looked too strong for abilities shown in talks
- Modest (weak) preparation for formal presentation on proposed research
 - Naïve expectations for rate of progress
 - Poor on Q & A for research

What Doesn't Work?

- Case study - UIC Post-doc looking outside
- Strong based on publications and recommendations
- Did not commit to market until August
 - Application materials due in September
 - Proposals too short, 7 pages for 3 proposals
- Presentations prepared after invitations
 - Too short and simplistic
 - Good research ideas but lacking enough details
- Too anxious, accepted first offer

After the Visit

- Thank your host
 - By e-mail or (better) phone
 - Especially if you are positive on the place
 - Opportunity to get a read on your visit
- Up-date for your next interview
 - What worked and didn't work
 - Change presentations if necessary

Conclusion

- When invited, you are one of only 5 or so persons in line for the position
- Prepare well, especially before first visit
- Be confident and sell yourself and your program
- Evaluate your host invitation – Is it the place for you?