

## Reflections on the job market process: Eladio Bobadilla

Some reflections on the job market process. Please keep in mind these are based entirely on my own experience(s). My advice may not be suitable to every discipline, situation, or candidate. Speak with your adviser, consult other successful scholars, and read widely. I especially recommend Karen Kelsky's *The Professor is In*, an invaluable guide (though it, too, is imperfect and necessarily paints in broad strokes that may obscure some of the specific norms of certain disciplines).

### Before the job search season:

- Identify the types of jobs you'd like to apply to. Consider:
  - Focus: research universities, small liberal arts colleges (SLACs), regional universities, community colleges.
  - Funding: public vs. private.
  - Location (if region matters to you).
- Discuss your plans with your adviser/supervisor and your committee and other mentors.
- Prepare a plan B and/or C (Delay graduation? Postdoc? Non-ac jobs?)
- Make a list of materials you'll need to compile.
- Update your CV and website—and consider the impact of your social media presence (I suggest muting or deactivating social media leading up to and during the process).
- Review sample job letters, read about the job market process, and mine successful applicants' files if possible.
- Complete at least one publishable chapter/article that can be used as a writing sample.
- Decide on at least three letter-writers and tell them to expect a request.
- Set up a dossier account (Interfolio is usually best, but it's not free; Chronicle Vitae has a free dossier service, but I can't vouch for it).

### Year of job search (beginning spring for fall applications):

- Update C.V.
- Create templates for necessary materials, which may include the following:
  - Cover letter ("job letter").
    - On university or department letterhead.
    - Two pages max (11-12 pt. font).
    - Create a generic letter for our "dream job," but tailor each one you send to the institution and job description. In your generic template, highlight anything that is not applicable to all jobs (e.g. your ability to teach graduate seminars) so you won't miss it when tailoring letters.
  - C.V.
    - Be concise and void fluff.
    - Make it easy to read.
    - Avoid headers at the bottom of the page if possible.
  - Writing sample
    - Should be of publishable quality.
    - Will often have a maximum page count (usually around 25-30 pages).
  - Teaching statement/philosophy
  - Diversity statement/philosophy
  - Research agenda/philosophy
  - References list (sometimes required instead of reference letters, must be separate from CV!)

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- Dissertation outline (not usually required but good to include when allowed extra materials).
- Compile a list of jobs you'll apply to (obviously, you'll update as you go) and make it sharable (Google Documents or Sheets). Include information about each application, including job description, deadlines, materials required, etc.
- Request letters of recommendation to be sent to dossier service well before the first deadline.
- If requesting tailored letters for each job, send request at least two weeks in advance, with a clear job description, deadline, and submission details: to be submitted by email? Through link? Dossier service? Snail-mail (yes, this is still a thing for some applications!)?
- Give yourself one or two days per week to work exclusively on job applications.
- Double- and triple-check spelling and grammar, especially on cover letters. Have colleagues and friends read them over. Use a contextual proofreader like Grammarly too (the free version will catch most glaring issues).
- Once you submit a job application, let it go. Don't look at materials you've already sent. Don't second-guess yourself. Just let go!

### The first-round interview:

- Understand that it could be at a conference (AHA for historians, for example) or through Skype/Zoom/phone (video conferencing seems the most popular option these days, but conference interviews are still popular).
- Have notes but don't read them when responding. You'll likely be asked about your dissertation, possible future projects, teaching experience and style, department service, commitment to diversity/inclusion, etc.
- Make sure you have a reliable connection, a decent camera and microphone, and a quiet, clean, professional-looking space in which to conduct the interview.
- Dress appropriately but comfortably.
- Answer the questions to the best of your ability.
- Have two or three questions ready for the committee.

### The campus visit:

- Begin working on a job talk as soon as you get your first on-campus interview.
- As with other materials, create a generic, master presentation/talk and then tweak as necessary.
- Practice, practice, practice! Set up a department mock talk if possible.
- Discuss with your advisers, mentors, and friends possible Q&A topics (often, the Q&A, rather than the job talk, is the make-or-break point).
- Learn how to answer questions designed to throw you off (don't be defensive; bring the discussion back to what you're comfortable talking about). Practice those too!
- Review your itinerary closely.
- Briefly familiarize yourself with the faculty and students you're likely to meet.
- Have at least two changes of professional job-interview attire (for men, a conservative suit, navy or gray. Women have a bit more flexibility, I think, so just think "job interview wear"). Avoid anything that brings attention to what you're wearing (big watch, sparkly earrings). Pack everything in a carry-on because you don't want your interview clothes to get lost!

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- Pack light and bring a suitcase or bag with essentials (your laptop, phone, chargers, pen and paper, business cards, Rx and OTC meds you may need). Make sure you have comfortable shoes. You will be walking a lot, and this is not the time to find out you have ill-fitting shoes (I had blisters on my feet and cuts on my heel from dress shoes that were relatively new).
- Save your job talk/presentation in at least three platforms: flash drive, cloud, and print (bring a couple of copies, especially any with your notes on it).
- Plan ahead and arrive (or be ready to be picked up) on time.
- Ask good, appropriate questions about the university, department, student body, area. Do not ask about salary, course reduction, spousal hires, anything related to \$ during the campus visit. The exception might be if when and if you have a benefits briefing (even then, only some questions may be appropriate).
- If you are offered down time, take it!
- Be yourself. This sounds like a cliché. But the process is exhausting and difficult enough as it is. Remember that you're being evaluated as a potential colleague as much as a scholar, so they want to know the real you. And if you're going to be rejected, let them reject the real you rather than a persona you've invented. Maintain and protect your dignity. And take a deep breath when it's all over. Treat yourself to alone time and do something that you enjoy (watch a movie or TV show, get some desert, have a drink—whatever you need!).

### **The negotiation:**

- Everything is negotiable (salary, course reductions, spousal hire assistance, office/lab space, start-up package, equipment, etc.).
- Be reasonable.
- Ask for everything in writing.