

# Questions That Might Be Asked in an Academic Interview

## Research

- Why did you choose your dissertation topic?
- Tell me about your dissertation...
- Can you tell us briefly what theoretical framework you used in developing your research?
- What are your research plans for the next two/five/ten years?
- What facilities and critical resources do you need to carry out your research plans?
- What specific research will you pursue if you are selected and how do you anticipate funding it?
- What kind of help would you want from the Department and the University for you to achieve your goals?

## Teaching

- What do you do? (answer with your 3-5 minute summary of your entire research agenda)
- How do you feel about having to teach required courses?
- How will you engage graduate and undergraduate students in your research program? That is, what style of advising/mentoring will you use?
- How do you motivate students?
- What course(s) would you like to teach, and what will be your basic teaching model (e.g. lecture, lecture + lab, discussion, etc)?
- What is your teaching philosophy?
- If you could teach any course you wanted, what would it be?
- What do think is the optimal balance between teaching and research?
- Have you had any experience with interactive on-line instruction?
- How has your experience and training prepared you to teach the courses required?

## Willingness to Participate in the Department and School

- Can you summarize the contribution you would make to our department?
- Are you willing to become involved in committee work?
- What interested you in our school?
- What institutional issues particularly interest you?
- Do you have experience in grant writing?
- How do you view your role as a faculty advisor?
- How can you contribute to the mission of our university?
- What interested you about this position?

## Career and Personal Choices

- If you have more than one job offer, how will you decide?
- What are your professional goals?
- I understand your spouse is completing his/her Ph.D. What if you receive job offers in different locations? (This question is not legal, but you should be prepared for it.) Avoid answering the question directly and go straight to addressing the underlying concern for asking it: (If we offer you this job, are you fully committed and prepared to accept it?)
- Who else are you interviewing with?
- What will it take to persuade you to take this job?
- What kind of salary are you looking for?

## Questions You Might Expect from Students:

- What kinds of tools would be available in your lab for grad student use?
- In what areas do you think your work would uniquely contribute to this department?

- With whom in the department do you envision interacting the most? Outside the department?
- What conferences do you attend? What associations and societies do you belong to?
- What do you envision as your ideal lab: # of grads, undergrads, postdocs, techs, participation of grads who are not your own students?
- To what degree do you see integrating grad students into your research program?
- Is their work usually closely related to your research focus or is it fairly independent?
- How do you help grad students get started on a project?
- How would you respond to a student who is floundering (early vs. late)?
- What types of mentoring have you experienced -- and what would you do similarly or differently?
- What courses have you taught before?
- What do you see as the major challenges of teaching at a large (small) university?
- What do you want to teach? (grad, undergrad, seminars)

### **Do You Have Any Questions for Us?**

The right answer to this is always YES, or you risk appearing uninterested. Prepare some questions in advance, but, above all, ask questions that show a response to what you have learned from the interviewers, and that are lively, rather than formulaic. Questions about salary and benefits are not appropriate at this time and should not be asked until you are offered a job.

### **Sample Questions to Ask in an Academic Interview**

#### Big Picture

What is the long term plan for this school/institution?  
 How does this department fit into the long-term plan?  
 What sorts of programs are available for new faculty members? Mentoring? Orientation?  
 What are the future hiring priorities for this institution?

#### Research

Are competitive, within-institution seed grants available?  
 Is there support for summer research by undergraduates?  
 Can you tell me about the office or lab space that is available for this position?

#### Teaching

Are teaching training opportunities available? What kind? How often?  
 What are typical teaching opportunities, across the college?  
 What is the average class size for this department?

#### Department Administration

How often does the department meet?  
 How are decisions made?  
 What administrative support can I expect?

#### Faculty Review/Tenure

What is the schedule and mechanism of faculty review?  
 How much of the department is already tenured? Is there a quota?  
 Who decides tenure and how?

#### Final Question

When will a decision be made? When might I be notified?