Moving Through Your Career: From grad school to postdoc to job

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Outline

• Establish long-term goals
• Get the information you need
• Complete graduate school and postdoc training
• Find employment

Optional routes

• “Gap years”
• BS⇒Job
• PhD⇒Job
• Internships
• Professional degrees
  – MD
  – MPH
  – JD
  – MBA
Getting your PhD

- select advisor & research problem well
- have a clear plan with milestones
- have good relationship with advisor
- develop a cadre of mentors
- work very hard

Selecting a research problem: some variables

Choosing a major advisor
Choosing a major advisor
junior versus senior faculty

• strengths of senior advisor
  – experience in training
  – extent of network
• strengths of junior advisor
  – up-to-date research experience
  – hands-on research involvement

• possible solution: co-mentors

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Develop and use a plan

- list what you must accomplish
- add other things you would like to accomplish
- determine how long you should stay
- develop a time table
- indicate regular milestones

Setting goals & establishing a plan
possible grad student milestones

1. courses
2. exams taken
3. expts completed
4. pubs submitted
5. thesis defended

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### Establishing an advising committee

**functions**
- provide advice
- serve as intermediaries
- enlarge network
- letters of reference

**selection criteria**
- expertise
- diplomatic skills
- contacts
- willingness to take time
  - to get to know you
  - to write letters

### Getting your PhD

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- have a clear plan with milestones
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### Postdoctoral training

**Parallels to PhD**
- Select advisor
- Select problems
- Find mentors
- Work hard

**Differences**
- Could be new Qs.
- Likely to lead to job
- Few other tasks
- Develop wide network
- Work on funding
How long to stay?

• Graduate training: 4-5 years
• Postdoc
  – In general: 3-4 years
  – If multiple postdocs: ≤ 5 years
• What next? Some level of advancement
  – Employment
  – Research Assistant Professor

When to start preparing for your next move?

• In general: immediately
  – consider options
  – develop skills
  – establish references
  – develop network
• Specific move
  – 12-18 months before leaving, or
  – as soon as someone inquires (whichever comes first)

How do you solve a research problem?

  problem solving
  1. define the problem
  2. acquire knowledge
     – information
     – experience
  3. think creatively
  4. develop logical plan
  5. work very hard
Getting additional information

Considering career options
- University, college, high school
- Institute
- Company
- Administration
- Education
- Writing
- Public policy
- Law

Where do you get information?
Networking

• the key source of info
• >75% of all jobs
• developing your network
  – takes effort
  – is essential

How large is your network?

Your “Package”

• cover letter
• curriculum vitae or résumé
• statement of interests
• recommendation letters
• additional materials

CVs and Résumés

• What’s the difference?
• How are they reviewed?
Cover letter: Contents

1. purpose of letter
2. your interest and qualifications
3. list of enclosures

Cover letter

- very brief (1 page)
- address to a person
- tailor to job
- be selective in choosing examples

Statement of interests

- introduction
- past history
- current activities
- future directions

- brief (1-4 pages)
- carefully written
- use headings
Letters of recommendation:  
Key variables

- how well they know you
- how specific they are
- how enthusiastic they are
- who they are

How to request a letter of recommendation

“Can you provide me with a strong letter of recommendation for this job by [date]?”

What to provide to references?

- job description
- CV or résumé
- statement of interests
- additional materials
- brief personal presentation?
Additional materials

- reprints
- manuscripts
- fellowship application
- statement of teaching philosophy

The Interview

The objective: transfer of information

What they want to know
What will you want to know?

Preparation is the key
- collect information
- have answers to their questions
- demonstrate interest in them
- ask intelligent questions

Collecting critical information
- your needs
  - type of responsibilities
  - space, special facilities
  - equipment
  - staff
  - start-up funds
  - start date
  - (salary range)
Collecting critical information

- current “market conditions”
- environment
  - professional
  - personal
- schedule for your visit

Preparing your presentations:
  The “job talk”

- general organization
  - introduction 5 min
  - your research
    - rationale
    - methods
    - results
    - implications
  - summary & future directions 5 min
  - question period

“Job talks”

- emphasize your role
- acknowledge others
- discuss future directions
Some issues

Anticipate and prepare for likely questions
• do a self assessment
  – strengths
  – weaknesses
  – needs
  – potential contributions
• determine your key traits (relevant to job)

What can you offer?
• knowledge
• skills
• experience
• perspective
• creativity
• enthusiasm
• good interpersonal skills
• fast learner
• team player
• self-motivated
• takes initiative...
Anticipate and prepare for likely questions

- identify examples to demonstrate key traits
- Be a “STAR”
  - Situation
  - Task (or trouble)
  - Action
  - Response (and impact)

Answering questions

- be honest
- be positive
- recognize difference between private & public issues

Being interviewed:
Some other key issues

- make eye contact
- shake hands
- sit up straight
- show interest
- don’t fidget
- take brief notes if you need to
- deal with silence