Experiences getting a faculty job

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Outline

- Wintery Economic Climate

- My path

- Application

- Interview goals & prep

- My Interview day

- Negotiation

- Startup money

- Wish I'd known/done...

Wintery Economic Climate

- Especially important to establish match between you and them

- From last faculty meeting: "who are people you know that we should be hiring?"

  - Depts like to hunt, rather than gather, because the local advocate is built in

- They're looking for reasons NOT to interview you

- "Networking" is a vital ongoing process, start now

My path

- '95 Cornell undergrad Math
- '98 Cornell MS computer graphics (Greenberg)
- '04 U of Utah PhD Computer Science (Johnson)
- '08 Harvard Medical, Post-doc "Radiology" (Westin)
- Wanted to be a prof, but got used to preparing
- Had the luxury of possibly staying post-doc
  - Could cast a narrow net at first, wider next year
  - UCSD, Stanford, UT Austin, U Chicago, MIT, Harvard
  - Lucked out: '09 U of Chicago, Asst Prof CS

Application

- Now: figure out who's going to be writing letters
  - Give them notice a month ahead of time
  - Give them a copy of your research statement
- Cover letter:
  - Needs to reflect that you know how you'd fit into the place
  - Important to highlight people inside who already know and can vouch for you

Application: research statement

- The hardest two pages of text ever

- Unlike any other paper you've written

- About four months of solid work

- Lots of iterations with former advisor(s), peers

- Should be finished in some form to give to people writing you letters

Interview Goals

- Demonstrate you'll complement/build the dept

- Be yourself:

  - Talk enthusiastically/pointedly about what you do

  - They'll either like you or not

- "Can this person do their job and not be jerk?"

- "Will I want to run into this person in the hall?"

- "Can this person speak to their research and its broader context?"

Interview prep

- Before interview day is scheduled, be proactive about requesting what faculty you want to meet

- With schedule:

  - Learn about the people, their papers, to have more substantial conversations

Interview prep 2: basic autobiography

- What courses I could teach

- How will I teach?

- What's important for me in a dept (or in this dept)

  - Tenure values collab outside CS

- My one minute pitch

- My five minute pitch

- Where else did I apply

- Who are the best people in my field

- What the basic contributions of your thesis?

Interview prep 3: ?s you might need to answer

- Basic:
- Why did you use your approach and not something else or someone else's?
- Know the assumptions and limitations of your approach and solution.
- What's so interesting about your thesis research? What's novel about your contribution? Why should I be interested in the problem or solution?
- What's the key insight to your solution? Your secret weapon?
- What are the one or two most significant contributions you feel you have made to the field, to Computer Science?
- What difference is your solution or approach going to make to someone who is outside of your field?
- Tougher:
- What do you want to do next?
- What do you see yourself doing in three, five years?
- Where do you see the field being in five years? Ten? What are you going to do that will help us get there?
- What do you think are the top two or three problems in Computer Science? What are you going to do that will help us solve them?
- What do you think is the most significant advance in Computer Science (or in your field) in the past year? Past two-three years?
- Do you know anything about X?
- Be careful: "What do you think of X?"

Interview prep 4: things to learn about dept

- How does the promotion and tenure process work?

  - Is it documented? What fraction get tenure? What matters (letters, grants, CV)?

- Teaching: how many classes, how big are classes how are TAs assigned

- How faculty/post-docs/grad students are in the department, and how many of them will understand your work?

- What is your vision for the future of the dept?

Interview prep 5: things to ask faculty

- Tell me about your work (how ambitious can research be, scope of activity, potential collab?)

- Students? What are they doing?

- Collaborators? How is that supported/encouraged?

- How are you funded?

- What courses are you teaching?

- How would you describe the students?

- What do perceive are the strengths and weaknesses of this department?

- How do you like working here?

- If you could change something about this dept, what would it be?

My interview day(s)

- (Look at Kindlmann2.pdf)

- Lots and lots of half-hour meetings

- Met with people from many different departments

- Minimal time to tweak talk prior to it starting

Negotiation

- A nice phrase to use: "It would make my decision easier if you could do X"

- Can't think of anything that's not negotiable

- Start date

- Salary (look at http://www.cra.org/statistics/)

    - may value salary over startup

- Teaching reductions (seminars vs classes)

- Moving expenses

- Access to space & computing resources

- Startup money

Startup money

- Grad students: benefits, summer pay, computers, hard drives, graphics cards, printers ...

- Equipment: projectors, commercial software, furniture, discretionary funds & academic enrichment, MRI scanner

- The more specific, the more thought out, the better:

  - "This is the size group I need to be self-sustaining"

- My research requires collabs, they take time to develop, grants take time to get approved/funded

- Demonstrate that you're a good investment

- "There's no point in them hiring me, spending money on me, and then 3 years from now not have enough to keep going"

Wish I'd ...

- Figured out start-up requests before I got the offer
- "understood the 9 month salary thing" (and taxes on summer pay)
- Wish I hadn't told them I didn't have other offers
- Wish I was more self-confident during the talk and the questions afterwards
  - How you handle questions demonstrate maturity
  - Patiently listen, think, pause, answer

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