Academic Career Mentoring Series

“Applying and Interviewing for an Academic Position”

Nora Ayanian, Ph.D.
Gabilan Assistant Professor of Computer Science

November 1, 2013
About myself

• 2005 B.S. Mechanical Engineering
  Drexel University

• 2008 M.S. Mechanical Engineering
  2011 Ph.D. Mechanical Engineering
  University of Pennsylvania

• 2011-2013 Postdoctoral Associate in CSAIL MIT

• 2013: WiSE Gabilan Assistant Professor
  Computer Science
Key steps to take

• Early:
  – Attend conferences, meet faculty
  – Publish!

• Later:
  – Organize conference workshops
  – Make sure people know you are on the market
  – START EARLY!
  – Follow up! Tell them you have applied
  – Make sure you have interview appropriate clothing
  – Do not let others discourage you
Finding places to apply

• At which institutions would you want to work?
  – Go directly to their websites
• Industry magazines (IEEE Spectrum, etc.)
• Web: AcademicKeys.com, AcademicJobsOnline.org
• Be open minded about the department
Standing out (at interview)

• Thoughtful comments in one-on-ones
• Practice your talk (but don’t make it robotic)
• Ability to go with the flow—relax!
• Ask questions—you are also interviewing them
• Be confident, but not arrogant
Interview Homework

• Learn about everyone you will meet
• If in doubt, ask them (thoughtfully) about their work
• Find out if they have facilities that your research requires and ask if you would have access to it/ if you can see it
• Think carefully about collaborations within department, school, and outside of school (have names prepared!)
• If you know someone at the school but in a different department, talk to them
Interview Takeaways

• Them:
  – Would I want to work with this person?
  – Is this person’s work top quality?

• You:
  – Do I want to work with these people?
  – Is research quality increasing or decreasing?
  – How are junior faculty coping with the tenure process?
General Advice

• Take all opportunities to apply (you can defer)
• Get grant-writing experience
• Practice practice practice your talk
  — Practice taking tangential questions offline
• You will get better at one-on-ones with each interview
• Treat the students nicely—for MANY reasons
• ALWAYS BE GRACIOUS!