Preparing to Interview for an Academic Position

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Biography

- S.B. in Electrical Engineering, MIT, 1966
- M.S. in Electrical Engineering, Stanford, 1968
- Ph.D. in Electrical Engineering, Stanford, 1972

- Various short-term jobs: NIST, NASA, Comsat

- At USC since 1971
- Administrative jobs
  - Director, Signal and Image Processing Institute (SIPI)
  - Deputy Director, Integrated Media Systems Center (IMSC)
  - Chair, Ming Hsieh EE-Systems
• What are the most important elements of interview preparation?
• What research about the institution should you do before the interview and how, including whom you should contact and what questions you should ask?
• Explore school’s web sites thoroughly—academic programs, research programs, faculty
• Talk to students and faculty that you may know at the school where you are interviewing
• Think about how you match the culture and style of the school
• Prepare as though it is an exam - anticipate the questions you will be asked and be ready to answer them. Make up the exam questions yourself - what would you ask?
• Contact your host (department chair, group leader, faculty) and discuss the interview schedule and procedure in advance
• How should you practice for your interview?

• Rehearse your answers to these questions:
  – What is the future of your research area in 3-5 years?
  – What are prospective research funding sources?
  – What courses would you like to teach?
  – What courses are you qualified to teach?
  – What new courses would you develop?
  – What lab facilities, space, and equipment are needed to get started?

• Have your friends role-play the interviewer

• Rehearse your research seminar
  – give the big background picture
  – your own contributions and future work
  – relate it to the institution
What should you definitely do and definitely not do during your interview?

Do:
- Show that you are positive, engaged, prepared, and a good listener
- Ask a few questions yourself: you are interviewing them as well as vice-versa, for example:
  - What mentoring support is available?
  - What help in applying for research grants is available?

Don't:
- Criticize the school about any perceived shortcomings
- Appear arrogant or egotistical
• What should you do post-interview and when/how, including whom you should contact at the interviewing institution and what should be conveyed to them?

• Contact the department chair and/or your faculty host(s) shortly after the interview and tell them how much you enjoyed the visit

• Follow up on any questions that were raised

• Ask them their timetable for making a decision, if this was not previously discussed