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Interview Success! CSW Workshop Provides Invaluable Advice for Graduate Students on the Job Market

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GRAD STUDENTS!

Going on the
JOB MARKET?

GET TIPS FOR

**INTERVIEW
SUCCESS!**

Interview Success!

CSW WORKSHOP PROVIDES INVALUABLE ADVICE FOR GRADUATE STUDENTS ON JOB MARKET

BY REBEKAH PARK AND KRISTIN YARRIS

On November 2, a full house of about 30 graduate students from various academic departments gathered for an informative session on preparing for academic interviews and other aspects of the academic job search. Sponsored by the Center for the Study of Women and moderated by CSW Director Kathleen McHugh, the event featured two recently-hired UCLA professors, Allyson Field, Assistant Professor in the Department of Film, TV and Digital Media, and Aisha Finch, Assistant Professor in Women's Studies and African American Studies.

Professor Field opened the session by providing some highly useful tips about how to successfully prepare for campus visits, job talks, and other aspects of the academic interview process. First, she

suggested that students “play detective” prior to a campus visit, finding out as much information as possible about the department, faculty, what they are looking for in a new hire, and what they want in a colleague. Additionally, it is important to ask logistical questions such as: the length of the job talk, what will the room set up be, who will be in the audience, how many copies of teaching and other dossier materials to bring. Second, Professor Field emphasized the importance of crafting a clear, coherent, and well-rehearsed job talk. Part of this process is preparing to handle the Q&A session by anticipating the types of questions faculty might ask and practicing responses to those questions. The Q&A session can also be used as an opportunity to highlight your teaching experience using illustrative anecdotes. Professor Field

“This session has made me think about reassessing my dissertation in order to come up with convincing ways to explain my research during the interview process. I’m actually excited to do a job talk and present myself as an authority in my field.”

—Brian Hu,
Department of
Cinema and Media Studies

“The two speakers were exemplary examples of how forward planning and a lot of preparation can ease the stress of the being on the market.

I found the handouts to be incredibly instructive for planning for a campus visit. I’m writing answers to the questions, and it’s been very helpful in writing a cover letter as well as teaching and research statement.

The point about being your own advocate and owning your authority to be so true when it comes to representing yourself as the best candidate for the position.

—Anita H. Yuan,
Department of Sociology

said it’s crucial to think of the job talk as a well-rehearsed performance; she said, “Treat the job talk like a script that you know by heart”. Professor Field’s message was that throughout the campus visit and job talk process, candidates should feel confident and convince others of their authority by carrying themselves with confidence and comfort. Finally, Professor Field mentioned the importance of self-care throughout this process, staying as physically and mentally healthy as possible.

Professor Finch’s message focused on thinking about the academic interview as a holistic process with a variety of components. For example, during a campus visit, a candidate might have several informal sessions over meals, meetings with students, and other forums that are all important parts of the interview and evaluation process. Professor Field stressed the importance of being prepared to be constantly “on” during the campus visit in order to present oneself in a clear and confident manner when there is no “down time”. Professor Finch also gave very useful advice about how to frame one’s research interests; she suggested scripting two versions describing research interests, first, a set of two to three key phrases that serve as flashpoints to situate your central arguments within debates and issues in your field, and second, a more extended narrative about your research that fleshes out the depth of your work,

“The workshop was an invaluable resource. I feel now that I have a road map for going on the market. The workshop gave concrete, precise suggestions while allowing for the differences between disciplines. I feel much more confident about what to expect and what I should do to prepare for job interviews.”

—Patrick Keilty,
Department of Information Studies

Tips for Succeeding in the Job Market

by Allyson Field, Department of Cinema and Media Studies

CHOOSING YOUR JOB TALK

- The job talk should NOT be the same as writing sample but can come from same work (that is, dissertation) if significantly different.
- Be a detective: Find out what the department wants and tailor your talk to highlight your strengths accordingly.
- Don't be afraid to ask the chair or admin for precise details about the talk: room style, mic, power point, length of talk, length of Q&A session.
- Anticipate questions.
- Practice the job talk as well as the Q&A. Recruit colleagues and professors to listen and ask questions.
- Before your talk, listen to what people are saying about issues in the department and weave in examples from your experience (that is, tell about UCLA).

DELIVERING YOUR JOB TALK

- Have prepared answers to anticipated questions and signal willingness to “expand” during talk.
- Have scripted “asides.”
- Know it by heart.
- During the Q&A, take your time. Look up, not down, when thinking. Ask for clarification (to buy time). Have go-to texts you know well. Don't assume they know more! Own your authority!
- Use Q&A to talk about your teaching and tell stories.
- If don't know an answer, walk through how you'd find out.

VISITING THE CAMPUS

- Be the best “you” you can be.
- Prepare a list of take-aways and repeatedly reinforce them.
- Bring extra stockings, shoes, suit, shirt, bars, water, printed talk, C.V., and materials.
- Wear comfortable clothes! Bring options.
- Do your homework about the campus and its issues by researching and talking to people ahead of time.
- “Fit” is key. At this point in the process, they're looking for a colleague. General advice
- Have a plan B. It helps alleviate desperation.
- Be assertive!
- Use connections!
- Ask questions at all steps: knowledge is power!
- Stay healthy. Figure out a technique for destressing that works for you and use it (yoga, baths, movies, or pharmaceuticals).

“I feel much more prepared going into the interview process at academic conferences.”

—Heather Lloyd,
Department of Anthropology

“Professors Field and Finch offered excellent strategies for a successful job interview. I found tips about preparing research and teaching ‘sound bites’ with take-away messages for the hosting campus and treating the job talk paper as a script to be particularly helpful suggestions.”

—Erin Hogan,
Department of
Spanish & Portuguese

the broader implications of your research, and the intellectual contributions you are making, in other words, the “so what” of your project. Like Professor Field, Professor Finch emphasized the importance of practicing these narrative versions of your research, preparing to present them comfortably and confidently in the various aspects of the campus visit and interview. Both speakers also stressed the importance of gathering background information on schools and programs prior to campus visits in order to be as prepared as possible to answer potential questions and also to ask appropriate questions during the interview process. Finally, Professor Finch recommended preparing a “class narrative” similar to the research narrative, highlighting teaching prospectus, courses you have taught and can teach, the scope and trajectory of these classes and your overall pedagogical approach.

Toward the end of the workshop both professors described conference interviews as a condensed version of the campus visit. Both recommended bring a portfolio of your CV and teaching related materials in case search committees want a copy on hand. Professor Field advised not answering calls, and instead listening to the message while back in the hotel room to calm down and prepare before arranging an interview time. Conference interviews take place in conference hotel rooms, and depending on a school’s bud-

get, can be conducted near an unmade bed. Still, dress professionally, and be ready to speak about your dissertation and teaching in a few sentences, because there is less time to flush out your ideas, as interviews can last between 30 minutes to 1 hour.

Overall the workshop left students feeling more confident about the process, learning what to generally expect during campus visits and how to prepare before stepping on campus. Many students asked about handling inappropriate questions, and both professors avoided giving a definitive answer because there is no one right way to deal with these situations, but both emphasized: “Be professional.” Both also told students to simply be honest and redirect the conversation toward research and teaching. Finally, both Professor Field and Professor Finch reminded students that the goal of interviews should be to convey oneself as honest as possible, and not necessarily to score the job.

Rebekah Park and Kristin Yarris are doctoral students in the Department of Anthropology.