



A Professional Development Program  
for Graduate Students and Postdoctoral Fellows  
Offered by the Teaching Resource Center

## Faculty Interview: Things to Consider

You are free to interview any faculty member you choose, including, but not limited to, someone in your department, in a related field, or in a field you rely on for interdisciplinary research. Likewise, he/she can also reside at a different institution, e.g. a high school, a two-year college, a small liberal arts institution, or another Research I university.

Once you have identified the faculty member you would like to interview, keep the following points in mind as you arrange and conduct the interview:

- Request the interview either by phone or email. Be sure to:
  - briefly introduce yourself if you don't personally know the interviewee.
  - explain why you are requesting the interview.
  - give an example of the type of questions you will be asking.
  - mention (and/or send via email) the Confidentiality Clause.
  - suggest (or ask the interviewee to suggest) a date and time for the interview; mention that you'll be happy to meet at his/her office and that you'll be sure to limit the interview to 30 minutes. Or, consider tapping into the TPT lunch fund (see "Lunch Fund" for more details) and inviting the faculty member to answer questions more informally over lunch.
  - provide your contact information (e.g. email address, phone number(s)).
- Confirm the meeting date, time and location a few days before the interview.
- Arrive at least 5 minutes early for your scheduled interview.
- During the interview:
  - introduce yourself again and explain why you requested the interview. The interviewee will likely be interested in why you chose him/her.
  - mention and hand the interviewee a copy of the Confidentiality Clause.
  - use the questions below, or others you're interested in, to guide the interview.
  - be respectful of the interviewee's time and limit the length of the interview to 30 minutes.
- Before leaving the interview, thank the interviewee for his/her time. Also, be sure to send a hand-written thank-you note to the interviewee via Messenger Mail within 2-3 days. (A good rule of thumb for all informational or job interviews.)

## Faculty Interview: Possible Questions

The following sets of questions are designed to help guide you in conducting the faculty interview. The questions are not meant to form an exhaustive list, but rather to act as a springboard to questions of interest to you.

### *Preparation for a faculty position*

- What did your years as a junior faculty member look like? What aspect of your position during that time surprised you the most?
- In what ways did you feel prepared/unprepared for the position?
- Who was most helpful person in making those early years successful? In what ways did they help?
- How does your current faculty position compare to what you expected as a graduate student or junior faculty?

### *Applying for a faculty position*

- How many other positions did you apply for? Were they all at the same type of institution (e.g., research, liberal arts, religious)? What motivated you to choose the school you are at now?

- When your department hires a new faculty member, what makes an application packet stand out and ultimately make the applicant successful?

*Teaching, research and service*

- How much time do you spend in teaching/research/service roles? How do each of these factor into the tenure process in your discipline? How do you balance the various demands on your time?
- What are your typical teaching responsibilities? How much choice do you have in what you teach? Given complete freedom and ample time, what would your ideal teaching experience look like?
- What is the current focus of your research efforts? How active is your research program? What are your funding sources? How do you go about getting published? Does your department offer resources or support to help you get published?
- What is your perspective on the relationship between teaching and research?
- Which many committees do you serve on? What is the scope of these committees? Are you able to choose on which committees you participate?
- How do you balance the “big three” (teaching, research, and service) with your personal interests?

*Advising and mentoring*

- Do you have a mentor or serve as a mentor to another faculty member? What role has mentoring played in your career? What advice do you have about choosing a mentor?
- How many undergraduate students do you advise? How many graduate students? What do you feel is your role as an advisor?

*Perspective*

- What have you discovered about yourself as a teacher/researcher/advisor in the last 5 years?
- What have you discovered about your students in the last 5 years?
- What is the most rewarding aspect of your position?
- What advice would you have to offer me when considering a future faculty position?

*For more experienced, senior faculty*

Over the course of your academic career: how has your role as a faculty member changed?, how has undergraduate/graduate education changed?, how has the university changed?