

■ JULIE E. KENDALL, Feature Editor, School of Business-Camden, Rutgers University

Several of our recent articles in this column have focused on managing the many facets of the advisor-doctoral student relationship, primarily during the writing of the doctoral dissertation. However, you will soon realize that once the dissertation is nearing completion you must move to the next phase of your career, that of seeking a position. In this current column, a recent graduate (and successful interview candidate), Dr. Carol Prahinski, gives insightful step-by-step advice on the process you will go through when you are interviewing for an academic position. With a careful review of the material you will be able to visualize the entire interview process, comprehend what the norms are, and know what to expect every step of the way. Dr. Prahinski's down-to-earth advice is applicable to doctoral students in information systems, as well as the other disciplines encompassed by decision sciences.

The Process of Getting a Position in Academia

by Carol Prahinski, Ivey School of Business,
University of Western Ontario

Types of Positions for Doctoral Candidates

There are four types of positions that doctoral candidates in OM consider when they consider their future: academia, consulting, private industry, and the government. The focus of this paper is on the process of obtaining a position in academia.

The interview process is very much like traditional dating. The first step is the awareness stage—the boy and girl become aware of each other. One person may become aware of the other person through the job-postings lists, word-of-mouth, etc. That person then makes the initial contact to express his interest. If both parties are interested, the boy (the hiring institution) will ask the girl (the applicant) out for their first date, the initial interview. Sometimes the guy may ask for more information prior to making arrangements for the first date, but the process has begun. If you get asked out, you have made the first cut, and now you get to see if you like what they are offering, and they get to decide if they like what you are offering. If you don't make the cut, the main reason is that either you weren't a good match for what they are looking for, or you haven't effectively communicated what you have to offer. The end result is that, hopefully, the girl and guy find a partner that is right for them. It isn't just a job; it is a life. The objective is to find a position that is a good fit for you.

Preparation for the Interview

Determine the decision criteria that is most important to you and, if applicable, your family. The characteristics that a person looks for in the position can vary significantly. Here is a partial list: location, research/teaching compatibility with peers, tenure capability, private/public institution, salary, caliber of students, department size, and power within college.

Develop an up-to-date, professional, and error-free vita. See Heiberger and Vick (1996). Make your best points obvious to the reader. Be sure to mention your dissertation title and chair. Make sure that your references will give you glowing recommendations. Include details on your teaching history. Have good-or-great teaching evaluations.

Develop a one-page statement of your teaching philosophy and a statement of your research philosophy. These statements should help you in formulating a direct response to interview questions. Your teaching philosophy should include: your objectives, your style, the tools (such as the books and teaching methods), and your strengths. Your research philosophy should briefly describe your research interests, preferred methodology and tools, your objectives, and your definition of 'good' research.



Carol Prahinski

is an assistant professor of operations management at Richard Ivey School of Business, University of Western Ontario. She has a background in applied Operations Management with nine years

of business experience in manufacturing at RJR Nabisco, Warner-Lambert, and Ocean Spray Cranberries. At RJR Nabisco, Ross Johnson, CEO, attempted an LBO in 1987-88. To raise capital, the plant was sold to Warner-Lambert. Due to the sale, Carol has hands-on experience with supply chain dynamics (also called the bullwhip effect). Prior to joining Ivey, she earned her Ph.D. and M.A. in operations management at Ohio State University with minors in logistics and industrial engineering. She has an MBA from Babson College and a BS in operations management from the University of Delaware. She is a certified CPIM from the American Production and Inventory Control Society.
cprahinski@ivey.uwo.ca

Getting the First Interview

The first step to getting an interview is learning about the available positions. Typically, the academic journals offer job-posting services. You will want to be a member of DSI, possibly Academy of Management, POMS, INFORMS, etc. For a logistics job bulletin, write to Dr. James Masters at MIT (logprofs@mitvma.mit.edu).

The second step is to apply for the doctoral consortium(s) available through the conferences. You will want to attend the DSI doctoral student consortium (submission date is late July), and you may want to consider others, such as the Academy of Management or INFORMS. Take a look at the application process the year prior to going on the market to become familiar with it.

Get your name listed on the job-posting candidate listing for the conferences. This is a way for the schools to hear about you, even if you don't hear about them. This is free for student members of DSI, INFORMS, etc. You apply through the various websites. Most students will want at least two listings.

Develop a list of institutions, faculty names, addresses and position titles that interest you. You may want to write a letter to each of them or ask your advisor to write a letter expressing your strengths as a job candidate and the conferences you will be attending. If the schools are interested, they will typically contact you and either request more information or request a meeting with you at the upcoming conference.

At this point, you should be receiving some contact from the schools as they request time slots for an initial interview. **Be Organized!** It can quickly get overwhelming. Feel free to reject the schools (nicely) that do not meet your minimum qualifications. Don't burn any bridges.

Each student is different in how they determine which schools to apply and meet with. Some students will only express interest in their top choices. If there is no interest from these schools, they may decide to stay at their Ph.D. institution for another year to better prepare for the market. Other students apply to everything and hope to get something. If you fall into the later category, recognize that your time will be pressed. The job search process is time consuming and stressful. A benefit of ap-

plying for many positions is that it can help you determine what type of school you are really interested in, if you don't already know. In addition, it may permit you to have more negotiation power when you have several offers.

At the conferences, most schools will ask to meet with you for between thirty to sixty minutes. You may want to consider using one-hour intervals between interviews. This permits time to go to the bathroom, check your messages, and prepare for the next interview. Note: There is frequently no time for even these short breaks. Another suggestion is to limit the number of interviews in a day and definitely TAKE NOTES! It is easy to get confused on what different people have said.

At DSI, most schools try to schedule the interviews on Sunday and Monday. If a school offers to meet with you on Tuesday, take them up on it. Some will also ask to meet with you on Saturday. Since Saturday is the day of the doctoral student consortium, the decision is up to you. The DSI consortium is very good and highly recommended. I suggest that you take a breather on Saturday to mentally prepare for the interviews on Sunday.

It is strongly suggested that you get a hotel room at the conference hotel when you are on the job market. If necessary, the interviewers can call you to leave messages.

The First Interview

Usually one or two faculty will meet you at a specific location within the conference hotel. Most will meet you at the placement board, the conference registration desk, or a hotel room. The interview area near the placement board is usually very noisy and distracting. If you can meet elsewhere, it makes for a more comfortable arrangement. Some hiring institutions will meet you in a hotel room or conference room. If you are uncomfortable with the arrangement, ask if you could meet at a more public area or restaurant on the off-peak hours.

Research the schools prior to attending the conference. Have a folder (or some form of organization) for each school and review it prior to your interview. Prior to the conference, look at whatever factors are important to you—check out the websites, faculty vitas, previous publications, teaching focus, location, rank, etc. *US*

News and World Report, Newsweek, Business Week, and Financial Times provide rankings and discussion of the various schools.

Bring an up-to-date vita, a list of your course work, notepaper and a writing instrument to the interview. Ask your advisor if you should bring anything else.

You will want to be prepared for the typical questions that each school will ask. For a list of typical questions, see Kronenfeld & Whicker (1997), Vesilind (2000), and my website, www.ivey.uwo.ca/faculty/Carol_Prahinski.html. My site contains questions that you may be asked, the questions you should consider asking, and what to do about questions that you are uncomfortable answering. Have your advisor ask the questions while you practice answering them to become comfortable and to get his/her feedback.

At the end of the initial interview, thank them for their time and, no matter how tired you are, be pleasant. You may want to ask about the next step in the process. Typically, they will ask you for more information, such as (1) an application letter from you expressing your interest in the position, (2) letters of reference, (3) a statement of your research philosophy, (4) a statement of your teaching philosophy, (5) a copy of one or more of your papers, (6) a list of your course work, and (7) a copy of your more recent student evaluations. You will want to put it in the mail within a few days of your return.

The next step for the interviewer is (1) to reflect on the candidates that he/she has met with to determine which candidates will be invited to campus, and (2) to call candidates for (a) more information, (b) a phone interview with faculty that were unable to meet with you on the first round, (c) an opportunity for you to ask more questions, and (d) to further discuss the position with you. Interviewers will usually give you a time frame of when to expect to hear from them. (Write it down because you may want to remember it later.) For example, they will contact their short-list within two weeks of the DSI conference to set up on-campus visits for mid-January through mid-February. Usually they will only ask 3-5 candidates on site. They want to minimize their risk: They want candidates that will accept their offer and be an appropriate fit for their environment.

On-Campus Interview

In our field, campus visits are usually scheduled from mid-January through mid-February. Schedule no more than two per week. Only accept offers for campus visits for schools that you are interested in. Of those, you may want to schedule the least important school first. This allows you to become more familiar and comfortable with the interview process. If you make mistakes, it should be without significant repercussions (let's hope).

Usually the secretary for the department chair will make the arrangements (and pay for the airline ticket and hotel room). If it hasn't been provided, ask for your itinerary several days prior to your departure. Get to know the research and teaching emphasis of the people you will be meeting. Look at the textbooks that are used, courses offered, publications, teaching interests, department philosophy, etc. Develop specific questions for individuals. Let them know about any food restrictions prior to your arrival. Prepare your passport and documents if you are an international student or if you will be traveling outside of your country.

Be prepared for a typical worst-case traveling scenario, such as lost luggage and delays in your flight. Have a phone card so that you can make contact with the school representative in the event of delays. Carry your presentation materials in your carry-on luggage.

The typical schedule for your on-campus visit will have you arriving in the late afternoon. You will have dinner with colleagues and some time for rest. During your rest time, and during your flight, review your presentation materials, and other material in the file on this school such as the faculty's work. The following morning will commence with breakfast with colleagues, and then individual interviews with faculty. Usually your research presentation will be in the late morning or early afternoon and will be approximately 1.5 hours in length. A recent trend is to also ask you to teach a class on a specific topic. They will tell you about it prior to your arrival so that you have preparation time. Lunch will be with colleagues and the afternoon will again be filled with interviews. Usually, you will be scheduled to meet the dean or associate dean and a final meeting with department chair. If time permits, you may be

scheduled to have dinner with colleagues before your return flight. As you get ushered from one interview to the next, you may need to let them know that you need a few minutes to use the restroom.

Every meeting is important, especially the meals. Your potential colleagues want to know that they like you as a person, not just your research and teaching skills. Suggestions for meals include: (1) Don't drink more than one glass of alcohol. (2) Stay away from "messy" foods, such as foods that need to be eaten with your hands or foods that are difficult to eat neatly, such as spaghetti. (3) Watch your food intake (too much food will give you a tummy ache). (4) Be concerned about the potential for food poisoning (obviously, stay away from foods that you may be allergic to).

Your research presentation may be the most important part of your visit. Spend a significant amount of time preparing for it. Present your research-to-date. Use approximately 20-25 slides, plus back-up slides. Be comfortable with whatever tools you will be using in your presentation. PowerPoint looks great, but it is difficult to flip back and forth between slides, you can't write on it, and the school may not have significant technological resources. (One school said that they had PowerPoint capability, but upon arrival the tool was too cumbersome to set up). Have two methods of presentation—if one fails, you have an alternative.

For PowerPoint and overhead projector slides, use color, but keep it simple. Practice your presentation prior to the campus visit by giving it to your committee, to other students and to other faculty members. Ask for feedback on how to improve your presentation. Review each of the questions they ask to determine how to better present your material to either incorporate the answer in your presentation or to avoid the topic from becoming a 'big deal.' As with all presentations, speak clearly, loudly, and don't speed through your material. Relax. Determine your most important slides ahead of time.

You will get questions throughout your presentation, sometimes a significant amount of questions. Try to manage the questions effectively without offending anyone. Answer all questions or ask them to wait "two" slides, which is when you will answer their question. Sometimes the listeners will provide suggestions; in this

case, say "Good point" and make a note of it. Later, when you write the "thank you" note, acknowledge their comments on your presentation. Don't worry if you don't make it through your presentation. Don't panic if the department chair falls asleep. Don't get upset about the 'stupid' questions. Treat your listeners with respect and patience.

Usually, you will be scheduled for a tour of the area with a real estate agent. Ask yourself, "Can I live here?" Prior to your arrival, let the real estate agent know of your housing preferences so that he/she can narrow the market to best meet your needs. Treat the agent as an extension of the academic institution—this person will have a contact within the college and will most likely provide feedback on your meeting.

During your flight home, write "thank you" notes to each person that you met with. Also, calculate your expenses in preparation for completing the expense reports. And write up a summary of things you need to do as a follow-up.

Occasionally, towards the end of your visit, the dean may extend an offer to you. It is highly suggested that you don't accept the offer immediately and don't agree with anything. Let them know when you would be open to receiving an offer, such as after your last campus visit.

Regarding clothes, wear comfortable and professional clothes for your entire trip including your flight. Bring comfortable walking shoes or outdoor boots in the event of snow. Dress appropriately for the weather and travel conditions. If the outfit is brand new, wear it at least once prior to your visit. Women should try not to wear anything older than five years old.

Rejections, Offers and the Negotiation

Expect that you will receive several rejections. When you receive a rejection, be professional. Do not burn your bridges. These people may one day be your colleagues. Ask for specific suggestions to improve your future interview and presentation skills. Possible reasons for rejection include: (1) your skills are not a good match for what the institution needs, (2) supply exceeds demand or, (3) your strengths were not clearly communicated. If the reason for the rejection is poor communication, you

need to exert significant effort on improving your communication skills.

When a school wants to hire you, they usually telephone to extend the offer. Ask for the offer in writing. If something appears to be missing from the offer (such as moving expenses), ask for clarifications. Ask about other benefits that are of interest to you, such as health insurance and retirement plans. In addition, ask them when they need to hear your response—one to two weeks is considered reasonable. If you need longer than two weeks, explain why you need that time.

If you get multiple offers, you may want to consider developing specific selection criteria and weighting schemes to aid in your decision. However, a scientific method may not be enough. Prayer and searching your heart may be most helpful. Evaluate your fit with the institutions based on teaching and research philosophies, ability to make tenure, location, and your family "happiness" factor. If your family would be miserable with this decision, you will become miserable. You may also want to check out the cost of living index on Yahoo.com's finance housing market section.

If you aren't sure if you want to accept the position, you may ask for a second campus visit to further explore the opportunities at both the university and within the community. Let the school know some of your issues so that they can attempt to address them.

Don't start the negotiation process unless you are serious about accepting the offer. You are counter-offering when you begin asking for anything more than what was contained in the initial offer. They could say, "Yes, we will meet your needs." At that point, you have technically entered a

verbal contractual agreement. You won't be held in very high esteem if you then choose to back out of the agreement. Get everything in writing. Everything. Computer software and hardware seem to be something that is 'forgotten about' after the negotiation—so, get it in writing.

Some schools do not have much room for negotiation, especially if the faculty are unionized. Understand why they want (need) you. The hiring process is expensive and they would prefer not to go through it again. Who is your competition and how much room do you have for successful negotiation? Do they need a female or minority faculty member to increase their diversity? Are you the best person for the expertise that they want to gain? What will they do about their open position if you say no? (This may give you more leverage—some schools will leave the position open for the following year, some may offer the position to the next candidate if he or she is still on the job market, others may open the search for different levels of faculty.)

This is the time when you are in the strongest position to ask for salary or other special considerations that are important to you. However, on the other hand, be careful with your negotiation. One school rescinded the offer when the candidate asked for an 8 percent higher salary. The school felt that they were no longer in the same ballpark.

Some things to negotiate: (1) salary; (2) time release to complete dissertation; (3) number of courses to teach in years one through six; (4) number of course preparations in years one through six; (5) summer support; (6) travel dollars for conferences; (7) computer hardware and software; (8) hours of assistances for teaching and re-

search; (9) office location and furniture; (10) correspondence expenses; (11) parking (this can be a big issue on urban campuses); and (12) if in another country, permanent resident status. Again, get your negotiated items in writing.

At some point, you must either accept or reject the offer. When you've accepted the offer, congratulations. Contact the schools that you visited and let them know of your changed status and thank them for their consideration. Now finish that dissertation and start packing.

Author's Note: I would like to give a special thanks to my advisor, Dr. W.C. Benton, Professor of Operations Management at Ohio State University, for preparing me for the interview process and questions.

References

- Heiberger, M. M., & Vick, J. M. (1996). *The academic job search handbook* (2nd ed.). Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Kronenfeld, J. J., & Whicker, M. L. (1997). *Getting an academic job: Strategies for success*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Vesilind, P. A. (2000). *So you want to be a professor: A handbook for graduate students*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Julie E. Kendall
School of Business-Camden
Rutgers University
Camden, NJ 08102
(609) 225-6585
fax: (609) 424-6157
kendallj@crab.rutgers.edu
<http://www.thekendalls.org>

INNOVATION AWARD FINALIST, from page 5

was more effort to prepare video presentations. Even though required effort did not seem to be prohibitive, it did warrant a sufficient portion of the students' grade to encourage them to do a good job. A typical team may spend three hours producing a script and storyboard, three hours shooting the raw video, and three hours editing the video. A PowerPoint presentation may take half that amount of time to prepare.

Epilogue

I continue to make video an optional format for student team presentations. I have found that some teams produce videos without using my equipment, and that the availability of video editing software and the knowledge of how to use it appears to be increasing. My guess is that the day will

come when including edited video in presentations will be as common as using PowerPoint slides is today. That is further motivation for us as instructors to learn about the technology. ■