

# HOW TO STAND OUT IN A CAMPUS INTERVIEW\*

Rice ADVANCE

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## Abstract

This presentation was designed to assist and educate the interviewee regarding Campus Interviews, and was authored by Sherry Woods (UT Austin) and Rebecca Richards-Kortum (BIOE).

*\*(in a positive way...)*

## 1 Assumptions

**"Interview" = entire campus visit**

- Formal presentations/seminars
- One-on-one meetings
- Informal gatherings and interactions
- Sample schedule

**"Standing Out" = Positive & Negative**

- You want to be remembered... for the right reasons
- You are **always** "on"...

## 2 Components of a Hiring Decision for a Research 1 Institution

**Step One: Getting an interview**

- Recommendations from dissertation advisor and others
- Publication record: quantity and journal quality
- Match between institutional needs and applicant's research focus
- The "Hot" factor of research area
- Formal application materials:
  - CV
  - Statement of research interests
  - Statement of teaching interests
  - Start up needs

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\*Version 1.4: Feb 22, 2010 2:50 pm -0600

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### **Step Two: Getting an offer**

- All of the previous (and more...)
- THE CAMPUS VISIT

### **Who Decides if an Offer Is Made?**

- Varies from campus to campus
- Full professors
- All faculty

**Dean has the “final” say**

## **3 Today’s Focus**

### **The formal presentation**

- Practice talks on Tuesday afternoon

### **One-on-one meetings and interactions with:**

- Faculty
- Administrators
- Students

### **Strategies for success and for avoiding common pitfalls**

## **4 Meeting and Greeting Activity**

## **5 General Hints for Success!**

### **Top Rules #’s 1 & 2**

Continually ask yourself these two questions:

1. Who is my AUDIENCE?
2. What is the CONTEXT/SETTING?

### **BEFORE the campus visit...**

- INVESTIGATE THE INSTITUTIONAL PRIORITIES, CULTURE AND NEEDS
- Find out what you are doing and who your audiences will be...AND PREPARE ACCORDINGLY!
- Don’t be afraid to ask for 30 min of prep time before your seminar
- Ask for meetings that will help **YOU** determine if position is a good fit
  - Assistant professors in the department
  - Potential collaborators in other departments
  - Graduate students in your area
  - Female faculty from other departments

### **BEFORE the campus visit... Homework**

- Know who everyone on your schedule is and what their area is
- Find out what research areas the department is emphasizing
- Find out what courses the department needs you to teach
- How to get this info?

### Things to Ask Everyone on Your Schedule

- What are the P&T criteria?
- Expectations about research \$\$ and supporting grad students?
- What is the teaching load?
- What are the strategic directions of the department?
- If you could change anything about the department, what would it be?

### BEFORE the campus visit... Words of Advice

- Presenting oneself as confident and competent is a **balancing act**
- The difference between: “I don’t know” and “I don’t know...”
- “Knowing your stuff” is **NOT** the same as “Knowing how to talk about the stuff you know...”

### Elevator Speech Activity

Elevator Speech Activity module.

### DURING the campus visit...More Words of Advice

- When gender matters and when it doesn’t...
- What to wear and how to wear it!
- When to ask questions and what questions to ask...
- Giving a technical presentation vs. teaching a class

## 6 Anatomy of a Good Technical Presentation

### Introduction - 10 Minutes

- Get them excited
- Why is your work important?
- Background to understand it

### The MEAT – 25 minutes

- What you did (OK to sacrifice detail for clarity, not too simplistic)
- What it means
- Summarize as you go
- Only the experts should follow the last 10 minutes of this part of the talk

### The Implications – 10 minutes

- What does this mean for the future of your field?
- What direction will you take the work?
- Leave everyone with a feeling of excitement about the future

### Important Details

- Clean slides, No typos, Large font
- Outline easy to follow – help people stay with your talk
- Rehearse for knowledgeable audience
- Not too long or too short
- Reference work of others in the field, especially if they will be in the audience
- Practice answering questions
- Don’t get defensive
- Check out the room and projector ahead of time
- Have a backup of your presentation!!
- Begin by saying, “Good Morning! It’s such a pleasure to be here.”
- At the end, say, “Thank You, I’d be happy to take any questions.”

## 7 Questioning Activity

### Expect the Unexpected: “Hard” Questions

- I don't think you've accounted for the research of Barnes and Bailey. Aren't you familiar with their model? I think it invalidates your main hypothesis.
- Unpublished research in my lab shows exactly the opposite effect. You must not have done the proper controls.
- I believe a simple non linear equation explains all your data. Why have you wasted your time on such a complex model?
- (To the candidate) Well you didn't even account for phenomena x. (Aside to the audience) How can all this research be valid if she didn't account for x?
- How does this differ from the basic model that we teach in sophomore transport?
- It looks like you've done some interesting modeling. Is there an application of this work?
- What a wonderful little application. Is there any theoretical support?
- Those results are clearly unattainable. You must have falsified your data.
- You've done some interesting work, but I don't see how it could be considered engineering. Why do you think you are qualified to teach engineering?
- Your work appears to be a complete replication of Fujimoto's work. Just what is really new here?

### Good Responses to Hard Questions

- “That's a really good question...thank you for asking it.”
- “You make a very good point...I have a couple responses...”
- “We've discussed this question a lot in our research group and here's what I think...”

## 8 Final Thoughts

### Strategies for Avoiding Interviewing Pitfalls

- Being too collaborative
- Being too “easy” (“Rice is my first choice!”)
- Failing to ask questions about the work of your host
- Focusing too much on social aspects of department/city

## 9 Preparing Tuesday's Talk

- Who's your audience?
- How long?
- What's the setting? (AV needs?)
- What kind of feedback will be given?
- What if you “bomb”?