Academic Career Paths and Job Search

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Research
engage in scientific discovery, involve graduate and undergraduate students, fund research

Teaching
active teaching, mentoring, advising

Administration/Service
Chair, serve-on committees, etc.
  • Departmental
  • School /College
  • University
  • Professional
# Types of Colleges/Universities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Degree Program</th>
<th>Emphasize</th>
<th>Important</th>
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<tr>
<td>Research Universities</td>
<td>Ph.D.</td>
<td>Research</td>
<td>Teaching &amp; Service</td>
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<tr>
<td>Colleges / universities</td>
<td>M.S.</td>
<td>Teaching</td>
<td>Research &amp; Service</td>
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<tr>
<td>Selective Liberal Arts Colleges</td>
<td>B.S., B.A.</td>
<td>Teaching &amp; Scholarship</td>
<td>Service &amp; Research</td>
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<td>Undergrad oriented</td>
<td>B.S., B.A.</td>
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<td>Research</td>
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Example of Different Expectations Faculty

Research Institution:
- 60% - 80% Research
- 10% - 35% Teaching
- 5% - 10% Service

M.S./B.S. College or Teaching focused at R1:
- 50 - 80% Teaching
- 10 - 30% Professional Development
- 10 - 20% Service
Different Academic Positions within an Institution and Expectations

Professorial Ranks
Assistant
Associate
Full
Distinguished/Chaired/Endowed Professor

Instructor – teaching & service
Lecturer - teaching
Postdoctoral positions - research
Research Expectations: Research University

- Publications – journal, conferences, workshops (focus on top peer-reviewed venues)
- Funding to support research group and summer salary (peer-reviewed, basic vs applied, grant vs industry)
- Graduate student training (and their professional success)
- Reputation and Impact
  - Higher in rank: more visibility and international reputation – invited talks, conference org., journal editor/ed. boards, professional org roles
- Maybe:
  - MS/Undergraduate research mentoring
  - Patents, software artifacts,...
Teaching: Research University

- Teaching load: typically 1:1 to 1:2
- Mix of undergrad and grad courses
- Course material: intro undergrad up through core grad course, seminar in research area
- Teaching assistants for grading, office hours, and overall help

- Promotion and tenure: Good research essential, good teaching useful
- But: you’ll be teaching for years – worth it to yourself to do a good job
Service Expectations: Research University

- Department committees
- University committees
- External Professional Service
  - Program committees
  - Funding panels
  - Professional society involvement
  - Journal editorship; program chair, conference organization

- Higher in rank, more external service
- Pre-tenure: Favor research-oriented service
- Be selective: choose roles that are important where you can engage
Life as a professor at a research university

Pros:
• Freedom for research (but funding needed)
• Work on the frontier of computer science and engineering
• Get to develop your ideas and vision
• Get to teach/inspire/lead/mentor students

Cons:
• Must find funding for students/projects
• Must be smart about balance of research/teaching and work/life
Some advice: What you can do right now to start preparing

Research

• Read broadly: How does your research fit into a bigger vision? Trends?
• Always be on the lookout: Keep a list of potential future research ideas.
• Publish!
• Cultivate your professional network: Seminars, conferences, mentors, ... meet people!
• Communication skills matter: Writing, speaking!

Teaching

• View TA as prep. Ask for chance to lecture.

General

Some advice: pre-tenure years

- Find mentors and prof. cohorts
- Collaborate if you can.
- Learn to say no politely and suggest alternatives
- Prioritize!! Especially in research.
- Write well.
- Choose your teaching and service assignments well.
- Enjoy your work and colleagues!!
On Job Stress

Common Quote: “I chose career path X because I heard career path Y would be too stressful.”

To consider: Any job is stressful if the job’s expectations do not align with the resources available, OR if its priorities do not match your strengths/loves.
What happens when your hobby and your career collide...
Teaching Position

What types are out there?

- Teaching at small college
  - Professor (assistant, associate, full) with tenure
  - Lecturer

- Teaching track at Research University
  - Many different types/titles
  - Teaching Professor
    - Professor of the Practice, Clinical Professor,
      Lecturers with SOE (CA)
  - Few with tenure, most on contracts

- Lecturer, Senior Lecturer
Teaching Position
Expectations

- Teach 2-4 classes per semester
- Have busy office hours
- Teach out of your specific area (e.g. intro programming sequence, non-majors)
- Involve undergrads in research projects
- Attend meetings (dept., campus)
- Serve on campus committees (technology, etc.)
Teaching Position
Research

- Fewer institutional resources
- No graduate RAs
- Get undergraduates involved
  - Distributed Research Experience for Undergraduates
  - Collaborative Research Experience for Undergraduates
- REU through NSF
- Local programs at undergraduate institution
Teaching Position

Getting Hired/Cover Letter Essentials

- Your focus is on teaching.
- You can document relevant experience related to teaching.
  - Teaching Assistant
  - Center for Teaching programs
  - Instructor of Record for a course
- You can teach intro CS courses and courses for non-majors.
- Your teaching focus (e.g., systems) matches what is advertised.
Teaching Position: Challenges

- Perception that less prestigious than research focused/university
- Intense focus on students
- Staying engaged in research
- Infrastructure (e.g., computer services, grant administration)
- Small dept. (~5 profs) or small group in a large research department
- Salary: possibly lower?
Teaching Position: Rewards

Close relationship with undergrads
Be a member of the university culture
Chance for leadership and influence
Matches beliefs/lifestyle
  Teaching is your gift and you want to share it with others
Possibly less travel
Flexible schedule for families
Post-Docs

Transitional period into another career path
  Teaching post-docs & research post-docs both available

Funding
  Fellowship you apply for, OR university/department, OR professor’s research grants.

Best-case Scenario
  2 years, good mentor, high-ranked school that will help you transition to long-term job of your dreams.
Career Path Option

What is a post-doc?

Training opportunity whereby a person can deepen his or her expertise and/or research skills for a few years, en route to a permanent position.

Typically funded either by a fellowship awarded directly to the Post-Doc or by the institution at which they will spend a limited time.

http://cra.org/postdocs/workingpaper.php
Some Post-doc Motivations

Timing: Graduate “off season”, Two-body issues, Difficult job year

Improve job opportunities: Strengthen research, Work in a highly regarded institution

Learn new area, field

Work with a specific expert: additional mentoring

Experience different type of university
What is a GOOD postdoc?

Used to expand experience
  entering a new research discipline
  gaining a distinctly different perspective on the scholar’s current research base

Specific & relevant intellectual growth
  working with a particular mentor or on a particular project

Two years in duration

http://cra.org/postdocs/
GOOD postdoc position offers:

Mentoring & guidance that directly supports professional development
  not simply serve as a contract researcher

Significant opportunities to explore independent research topics
  in addition to supporting existing research efforts of the mentor’s group
  manage operational aspects of a project under the supervision of the mentor

Enhance the breadth of their research
  exploring new fields or new perspectives
  not simply refine material from PhD

http://cra.org/postdocs/
Expectations

Variable, some combination of:

Teaching, Research, Supervising, Mentoring, Organizing

The ratio will depend on your own long-term goals, and the position

Should get a clear understanding BEFORE accepting job
Challenges

Low pay (compared to faculty, industry)
Role in the university
  Not a student, but not faculty
  Depending on school, can feel isolated
May not have independence
  working on PI’s grant
If you have family, can be difficult to move for a temp position
Research Scientist

No tenure
  “Soft money” – grant writing!
Less requirements (service, teaching)
  Can focus on research
Dependent on PI
  Hired to get things done for grant
  Not independent
  Need a good advocate, well-funded lab
Possibly easier work/life balance
Job Search in ~2 years? What to do now?

Publish great work!!
Go to Conferences, meet researchers in your area
Figure out if you want Research/or teaching focused
  If you want a teaching focused position – attend a SIGCSE conference, think about teaching
Attend CRA or CRA-W Career Mentoring Workshops
  At SIGCSE or elsewhere
  http://cra-w.org/ArticleDetails/tabid/77/ArticleID/50/Career-Mentoring-Workshop-CMW.aspx
Job Search – Closer to getting out

Prepare CV and research/teaching statements
Get these materials reviewed
Talk to advisor/other faculty about where to apply
Apply to several places
Prepare/Practice interview talk
Be assertive
- my Duke story
How to get a post-doc

Can be posted in same venues as other academic jobs
Not always advertised
Use Your Network!
Give talks as you get closer to graduating
Remain in PhD lab
Usually for timing reasons only
Moving between schools and positions

University to university

Not particularly difficult

If have tenure, usually get tenure
  • But not in all cases: schools have different rules and moving to higher ranked school

University to teaching-oriented college

Must show evidence of being good teacher

Teaching-oriented College to university

Must show can do research - publications
Resources

CRA-W Career Mentoring Workshops:
http://www.cra-w.org/ArticleDetails/tabid/77/ArticleID/50/Career-Mentoring-Workshop-CMW.aspx

On Academic Life:
http://dynamicecology.wordpress.com/2014/02/04/you-do-not-need-to-work-80-hours-a-week-to-succeed-in-academia/

On Post-Docs:
http://cra.org/resources/bp-view/best_practices_memo_computer_science_postdocs_best_practices/

Tips on doing an academic job search:
http://matt.might.net/articles/advice-for-academic-job-hunt/
http://people.mills.edu/spertus/job-search/job.html
https://homes.cs.washington.edu/~mernst/advice/academic-job.html

Job Ads:
http://cra.org/ads/