THE SEARCH FOR AN ECONOMICS JOB WITH A TEACHING FOCUS

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ABSTRACT

This article provides suggestions for new Ph.D. economists relating to the search for an academic job. It provides general information regarding finding job postings, the timing of events, and preparing application materials. It differs from the existing guides by including additional considerations for the teaching-focused, rather than research-oriented segment of the market and by emphasizing what a candidate should *do* rather than what will happen in the search process. Specifically, it outlines helpful suggestions on effectively answering interview questions, delivering a class lecture on campus, meeting with students, and negotiating a better offer at teaching-focused schools which are absent from other guides.

Introduction

This article provides suggestions and information for new economics Ph.D.s for finding and obtaining an academic position at a college or university. Every school, interviewer and candidate is different but many elements of the job search are universal. This paper provides specific details about the timing of job search events and useful details regarding the preparation required.

This guide provides general suggestions which are applicable to the search for all types of academic jobs in economics. It differs from other job search guides in two ways. First, it contains additional advice and considerations for those trying to secure a teaching-focused[1] academic position, which are not found in other job search guides. Second, it is designed to function more as a guide for what a candidate should be *doing* at each step, rather than describing what a candidate will encounter at each step. For instance, suggestions are offered here for how best to answer questions commonly asked in an interview, whereas others provide only a list of the questions.

These suggestions are tailored toward landing a job that has teaching as a major component. For the purposes of this article, a teaching-focused job is defined as any job

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[1] The labels "teaching" and "research" are used throughout, but are in no way meant to imply that quality teaching is not important at "research" schools or that quality research is not important at "teaching" schools. Almost every academic position has a mix of both teaching and research responsibilities. These terms are used to emphasize that job characteristics for academic positions can vary substantially and, thus, so can the search process. Clearly, there is a different focus in the search for a position that involves a heavy undergraduate teaching load with less emphasis on publication, and one that involves a light load of graduate courses with the expectation of numerous publications in top outlets.

in which teaching comprises a substantial portion of the requirements of the position.[2] This type of job is targeted because i) the existing job search literature is not aimed toward the teaching segment of the academic market and ii) because there are many new Ph.D.s who desire a teaching-focused position. Other guides focus more on academic jobs at research universities and do not adequately address the details, special constraints and considerations that teaching-focused schools face.[3] Thus, they are not as helpful as they could be for new Ph.D.s searching in this segment of the market.

The supply of and demand for candidates who prefer academic positions where the primary job requirement is teaching are significant. The trend at many institutions has been toward a greater emphasis on quality research output (see Bodenhorn, 1997), even at colleges that traditionally have not been research oriented. Many colleges and universities, however, continue to seek candidates who are quality teachers first and quality researchers second. In the U.S., there are 947 colleges and universities that are classified as master's or doctorate-granting institutions and 2,576 colleges classified as bachelors or associate's-granting institutions.[4] These figures do not indicate the number of jobs available at these institutions, much less those specific to economics Ph.D.s, but these classifications serve as rough approximations for the research expectations of faculty at these schools. Assuming that many baccalaureate and associate's colleges are more teaching-focused, searching primarily for candidates who can successfully meet their teaching expectations, these jobs comprise a substantial supply of available jobs.

The demand for teaching focused positions is harder to quantify since application statistics are not typically available to the public. Nevertheless, smaller schools do receive numerous applications, indicating that a sizable proportion of new Ph.D.s are searching in this segment of market. This also suggests that many candidates prefer to land a job that is more teaching-centered than research-centered. Even if a candidate prefers a more research-oriented job, it is important for that candidate to understand the teaching-focused segment of the market. Since research-oriented jobs comprise a subset of all academic jobs, candidates may find themselves in the teaching-focused segment even if it is not their initial aim.

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[2] This definition is deliberately inclusive. Iit is problematic to define a teaching-focused job in terms of research expectations, teaching load, or requirements for tenure, because these are not always mutually exclusive. For example, many schools target their search to quality teachers, even though they offer light teaching loads with significant research requirements. For interviewing purposes, these are teaching-focused.

[3] In addition to published job search guides, some departments (see for example, Harvard (Goldin and Fryer, 2006), Berkeley, (Levine, 2002), Stanford (2006) and Wisconsin (Conlin and Dickert, 2004) have web pages that contain job search tips for their students. As is the case in the published guides, they tend to focus on the "research" end of the academic spectrum and are not as applicable to teaching positions at small schools. The reasons for this gap could be many. First, most of the guides are produced at research-oriented schools with their students in mind. Second, many of the faculty at Ph. D. granting institutions are more familiar with research institutions than with schools where teaching is primary. A third possibility is that some Ph.D. programs prefer to place their graduates at research schools or consulting firms rather than teaching jobs.

[4] Specifically, the U.S. contains 282 doctorate-granting universities, 665 master's colleges and universities, 765 baccalaureate colleges, and 1,811 associate's colleges according to classifications created by The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching (2006). These totals are based on 2003-2004 IPEDS data using the 2005 Carnegie Classifications.

The tips related below were compiled from personal experience as both a job candidate and an interviewer. They were constructed from conversations and inquiries about the academic job search, stories that were shared by people who interviewed me, a review of the existing literature, and advice and insight from discussions with friends and colleagues at institutions across the academic spectrum. These include particularly informative discussions with professors in charge of hiring at small schools regarding the difficulties they encounter.

This paper proceeds in chronological order from the perspective of a job candidate. Section 2 provides practical advice for the summer before the job search and includes tips for finding job postings, preparing applications, practicing a job talk, and effectively answering interview questions. Section 3 relates to initial interviews. Section 4 offers advice for after the initial interviews, including tips for campus visits. Section 5 discusses offers. Section 6 concludes. To the candidate, every step in the search process may seem to take significantly more time and effort than anticipated. It is my hope that these tips will make the process smoother for job candidates.

Preparation

Preparing for the job search is by far the most time consuming portion of the process. The key to a smooth search is to think about the requirements of the next phase of the process long before it occurs. This section offers suggestions, in chronological order, for the months leading up to the main interview period. It contains advice for assembling applications, practicing for interviews, and obtaining information about prospective employers.

The summer before the search:

The decision to go on the job market should not be taken lightly. Be sure to consult your advisor about your readiness before dedicating the considerable time and effort required to seek a job. Before making your decision, read John Cawley's (2006) paper, "A Guide (and Advice) for Economists on the U.S. Junior Job Market," posted on the American Economic Association (AEA) Job Openings for Economists (JOE) webpage, http://www.aeaweb.org/joe. Although Cawley's tips apply more to research-centered jobs, it is a "must read" for anyone on the academic job market.[5] You may not know where your skills fit, or what kinds of schools will see you as a good match until you start to receive interviews, so it is good to be prepared for every part of the market.

The school from which you receive your Ph.D. may influence the perceptions formed by readers of your application.[6] For example, a small liberal arts school with a limited budget is not likely to give strong consideration to a candidate from a top ten graduate program.[7] By the same token a highly ranked school is not likely to consider an applicant from a lower program, unless he or she has an exceptional research and

[5] The present article extends Cawley (2006) by offering suggestions on how to answer common interview questions and providing advice for teaching-focused positions.

[6] If you are unsure about the ranking of an economics Ph.D. granting department consult the U.S. News & World Report Best Graduate Schools rankings (U.S. News, 2008). The most recent rankings, compiled in 2005, assign a rating and ranking to 56 schools. There are an additional 77 schools which grant Ph.D.s in economics that are included, but not ranked.

[7] In fact, many top programs discourage their students from taking such jobs in favor of more lucrative consulting positions.

teaching record. If you are not sure whether you will be taken seriously for a position or not, it is best to apply for the job and let your potential employers make this decision. The marginal cost of sending an application is small relative to the potential payoff. You do not want to find out that you could have been considered for a job that you did not apply for because you underestimated your chance of landing it.

Regardless of the type of job you desire, you must have at least one paper of close to publication quality to send to prospective employers by the end of August. It does not have to be perfect, but you will not have much time to work on it during your job search. A decent paper is very important for landing an interview at many schools. This is true even for employers who are more interested in your teaching abilities than your research interests. Your job market paper is a signal that you know something about economics, a major consideration for anyone hiring a Ph.D. in economics. Even if a job does not require a high level of research output, you must demonstrate that you are qualified for the position. Your job market paper is the best indicator of this.

If possible, schedule a presentation of your job market paper before submitting it as part of an application. This presentation can be done at a conference (such as the Southern Economic Association which is held each year in late November), in a seminar, or informally in your department. The benefit of presenting at a conference is that you are likely to encounter potential employers before the AEA annual meeting held early in January. More details on your presentation are provided in the next section, but scheduling is included here, because you need to apply well in advance in order to present your work at a conference. An on-campus seminar presentation will not require as much advance planning, but may still need to be scheduled late in the summer.

Begin to assemble the "standard" application materials in the summer in order to have them ready for the fall. The majority of academic positions will require a curriculum vita (CV), a cover letter, a job market paper, and three letters of recommendation. Many teaching focused schools will request a statement of teaching philosophy, a teaching portfolio, a summary of teaching evaluations, and possibly a statement of research philosophy. Once you have started to send applications, it becomes very difficult to find the time to write a new document. Also, this allows you to ask your advisor and other committee members for comments. It may take several rounds of revisions before everything is in order.

Getting ready (August-October):

Before submitting applications, gather materials and plan ahead for your interviews. Three things should be accomplished by October at the latest: (1) make your reservation for the AEA annual conference in early January (part of the Allied Social Science Associations (ASSA) conference); (2) request and secure your letters of recommendation; and (3) give your job talk to a knowledgeable audience.

Register for the ASSA conference early and reserve a hotel room as soon as you know that you are going on the market. Ideally you want to get a room in a hotel that is centrally located among the conference hotels, since your interviews are likely to be in many different places. You can find a map of the hotels when you register for the conference. Registering at the student rate will save a few dollars. If air travel is necessary, reserve a flight early in order to arrive and depart at your preferred times (and to take advantage of reduced fares). Arrive on the first day of registration in the early

afternoon so that you can get acquainted with the layout of the hotels and the surrounding area. You can check in at the conference registration desk and check for disclosure codes.[8] Plan to depart on the evening of the last day of the conference.

In addition to making reservations, be sure your letters of recommendation are in order early in the fall. Think carefully about who you would like to write letters on your behalf and discuss this with your advisor. Try to contact your writers as early as possible; they may have many other priorities and may need a long time to do this. You might have to remind them to complete this letter before your application deadlines approach.

As you compile your application materials, be sure to give your job talk to a knowledgeable audience at a conference or seminar. It may seem strange to do this so early, especially if your paper is not quite ready for publication, but this presentation serves several purposes. First, it will provide feedback that you can use to revise your paper. Second, it will allow you to remedy any problems before you interview at the AEA meetings. Third, it will prepare you for a presentation of your research on a campus visit. After getting a campus visit, you will not have much time to work on your presentation.

Sending applications (September to December):

Although jobs are posted nearly year-round, the bulk of academic postings start arriving in September and continue until December. Most academic jobs are posted on the American Economic Association (AEA) website under Job Openings for Economists (JOE: http://www.aeaweb.org/joe). Many jobs are also posted on the Chronicle of Higher Education website: http://chronicle.com/jobs. The Chronicle is especially useful for finding job openings at smaller schools which may not be posted on JOE.[9] The Chronicle site is the main source of job postings for most academic disciplines, but you can limit your search to jobs economics. A third site that tends to have more international postings is: http://www.inomics.com/cgi/job. Many departments will post openings in multiple locations.

The first wave of positions will be posted on JOE in September, with the majority posted in October and November. At this point, you need to decide on the type of school, location, and rank of the schools to which you will apply. Consulting with your advisor may help. These decisions determine the number of applications that you send. Keep in mind 1) that you may not know what jobs employers will think you are qualified for until after your applications are mailed; and 2) that the cost of an additional application is not that large once you have materials in order.

Once you have compiled your list, you can assemble a spreadsheet with the names of the schools and their due dates to keep the information in one place. Double check each application deadline and start preparing materials long before they are due. It will take longer than you think to compile and mail everything.[10] Application materials are handled by several people before they reach the hiring committee and sometimes portions

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[8] More about disclosure codes below.

[9] Cawley (2006, p. 10) claims that, "most economics departments do not advertise their positions in the Chronicle…" This may be true for larger universities but many jobs at smaller schools are posted here and not posted on JOE. If the person placing the advertisement is not a faculty member of an economics department chances are the job will only be posted at the Chronicle.

[10] There are Postal Holidays for Labor Day, Columbus Day, Veteran's Day, and Thanksgiving Day that should be taken into consideration along with application deadlines.

are misplaced. By mailing packets early you will have time to resolve any problems without missing deadlines.

Since you will be sending multiple applications for several different types of job simultaneously, be sure to check that you put the correct materials in each envelope with the proper address label and that you include all of the requested materials. If you are also sending applications to non-academic jobs, be sure to send your CV to academic jobs and not your resume. You do not want to send the wrong materials for any job.

Extra steps should be taken as you assemble applications for teaching-focused jobs that may not matter for research positions. Make sure that each cover letter and CV matches the specific needs listed in the job posting. For instance, if the posting is for a labor economist, do not write that you would prefer to teach macroeconomics in your cover letter. Make sure you explain why you think you are a good fit for the job in the cover letter. Check (and double check) the spelling of the college and name of the person to whom you are sending the letter. Each job may have over a hundred applicants, so schools will look for easy ways to narrow the list. You do not want to give anyone a reason to throw out your application. Personalized cover letters and CVs may not matter at large research schools, but they will to smaller schools. These schools may not have a large budget for the job search and will target their resources to the most interested candidates who appear to be the best matches. You need to convince them that you are serious about wanting the position. The search process works in two directions; candidates and schools both want to find the best possible match. Personalizing your letters to address the specific job, and school, is one way to emphasize that you are a good match for the employer.

Practice interviews (October to December):

In a first interview you will typically have 30 minutes to explain your research, teaching experience, job preferences, and to ask questions of your interviewers. Doing this effectively is perhaps the most important step in the process. It is never too early to start preparing for interviews.

Practice for your interviews by explaining your research to peers, faculty, friends, and relatives as often as possible. Make sure that you are able to explain it in ways that many different audiences can understand. You want be able to explain the basics to your grandparents and also the details to someone who has spent their entire career researching the topic. Some of the interviewers may not be familiar with your field of research. You must make sure that your interviewers are convinced that *you* know what you are doing even if they do not. Smaller departments may only have one faculty member in each field. If they are hiring in your field, it is possible the existing faculty are not familiar with your area of research.

It is good to have one minute, three minute, five minute, and ten minute versions of the explanation of your research. You are unlikely to know how long you will have to deliver your explanation. One strategy is to start out with a general description of the main point (the one minute talk), then briefly discuss what you hope to explain in your research, and then give the reason why you think it is important (the three minute talk). Next, talk about the specifics of your work in more detail. You should go into enough detail to convince your interviewers that you know your own work well, and that you have a good understanding of other work in the same field. Think of your talk as if you

are peeling an onion; you start with the widest ring and move to smaller and smaller rings.[11]

As you practice explaining your research, you should practice discussing your teaching experience as well. Be able briefly describe the courses you have taught, your duties as the instructor or a teaching assistant, and the way you presented the material. Also review the characteristics of the students in your courses: how many students were in the courses, whether the course was introductory taught mostly to freshman, or an upper level course for economics majors. Identify what you liked and disliked. Above all, for position emphasizing teaching, you must convey your interest in teaching. If you do not have any experience, you should think carefully about how you would teach a course.

Look at the sample questions in Cawley (2006) as well as those listed below with suggested answers. Practice answering these questions with others who are on the job market. This is a good way to refine your answers, learn from fellow candidates, and practice in a stress-free setting. Your department earns a better reputation when all of its candidates are prepared, and this reputation will help you in the future.

After you have worked on your own and with other job candidates, conduct mock interviews with your advisor and anyone else who is willing. This may seem like a burden, but it will be extremely helpful. Your advisor may come up with questions that you have never given much thought, and may have suggestions for summarizing your research. A mock interview is by far the best way to prepare for your real interviews.

Scheduling interviews (December):

Most departments require a few weeks to assemble and analyze job applications. You may hear from different schools at different times depending on their deadlines. As a rule of thumb, the majority of decisions begin to be made in the week after Thanksgiving and calls for interviews are made soon after.

In the most common sequence of events, employers contact you to schedule an interview during the ASSA annual conference. For various reasons, however, some schools may conduct phone interviews or videoconferences instead.[12] Do not discount a school solely because it does not conduct interviews at the conference.

The scheduling of interviews continues until the end of the fall term and, as a practical matter, up until the start of the conference. The peak occurs around the first or second full week of December. The timing of the calls you receive most likely indicates the speed of the search committee at a school, rather than your likelihood of landing a job.

When you receive phone calls or emails about an interview, get as much information as possible regarding the day and date, the start and end times, and who will conduct the interview. Conference interviews require more planning so be sure to ask for the hotel, disclosure code, cell phone numbers of the interviewer, and the name of the person who has reserved the room.

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[11] I thank Susan Rose for this description.

[12] For example, some schools offer classes at the same time as the conference and are unable to send faculty members to the meetings. Sometimes the department may not have been granted approval to post a position until after registration for the ASSA conference and hotel rooms had been closed. Others may have decided to conduct interviews but have not yet been approved for reimbursement of travel expenses.

Chances are you will not be able to get all of this information. Disclosure codes are the easiest way to find the location of an interview, if your interviewers use them.[13] , If you at least have the names of the interviewers, however, and the name and phone number for the hotel, you can place a call to the room as a last resort. You receive a directory when you register for the conference that lists all of the people who are registered, along with the names of the hotels in which they are staying. If you have the names of your interviewers, and they are registered for the conference, the directory will often allow you to contact them.

Check the conference hotel map while you schedule your interviews. Ideally, your schedule should minimize travel and potential time conflicts as much as possible.[14] Leave enough time between interviews to write notes about the interview just completed and to review your notes for the next interview, in addition to the travel time required.

Consider the desirability of a given job along with travel time when scheduling interviews. Interviews that are late in the morning tend to go more smoothly for candidates and interviewers, so try not to schedule an interview for one of your top choices late in the day if you can help it. Chances are that you, and/or your interviewers will be exhausted by that time. As the conference progresses, both interviewers and candidates will become fatigued, so you may want to schedule your top choices for earlier in the conference. If possible, schedule an interview for the type of job that you want, but not necessarily your top choice, on the first morning of the first main day of interviews. (i.e. if you want a job at a small liberal arts college, schedule a small liberal arts school at one of your less desirable locations as your first interview.) If your first interview goes well, it sets you up for the rest. It is much harder to interview for a job for which you are not a great fit or one for which you have little interest.

Do your homework to prepare for interviews (Mid December):

Your goal for each interview is to present yourself in the best manner possible. You do not want to leave your interviewers with the impression that you are less qualified for, or less interested in a position, than you actually are. If you are granted an interview, you must have something of interest to the potential employer, and you want to identify what it is and convey that to them.[15] With a little extra preparation you can form a good idea about what each employer desires in a candidate.

Once you are granted an interview, prepare for it by browsing the department websites of the schools where you are interviewing. You may have little prior knowledge about a school until you go to its website. Look at the papers that have been written and the courses that are taught by your interviewers to see how they relate to yours. You may take a look at the faculty members who were hired most recently to give you an idea about the direction and expectations of the department. Check the requirements for

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[13] The name of the hotel and the room number are listed along side the disclosure codes on a bulletin board in the main hotel. One problem with disclosure codes is that you may not have the room information as soon as you would like. This is a problem if your interviewers do not check into their rooms until late in the evening on the first day of registration and you have an interview early the next morning.

[14] In the excitement of actually getting an interview this is easy to overlook. It is good to keep the conference map within an arm's reach of the telephone to avoid being rushed.

[15] After your interviews you want to be able to say, "I think the only thing I could have done to improve my chances is to be a better economist, so I guess it went well." I thank Leonard Kiefer for this quote. If you leave an interview feeling this way you have done your job.

majors to find out if undergraduates must complete a senior thesis or other research. This check of department web pages will provide a surprisingly accurate idea of the questions that you will receive and give you facts to demonstrate your familiarity with the school.

It is necessary to gather background information for each department and school, because the job advertisements themselves are not necessarily informative; almost every job posting will state a desire for excellent teachers and researchers. Before the interview, try to determine whether the focus of the employer's search is mainly for candidates with teaching or research skills. Many departments desire a balance between the two and the department's preference may not be clear.[16] Also try to determine how much the interviewers know about your area of research. Using this information, you can adjust your answers to tell them what they want to know in a way that they understand.

After finding information, make a "cheat sheet" for each school to take to the interviews. Make sure it includes the name of the school and a brief description of the position as posted. Include the time, date and location of the interview. Also record the names of the interviewers, their research interests, and the interests of those with work related to yours who are not going to be in on the interview. Work this into the discussion if things start to get slow. List some questions that you have about the job, the department, and the school. You want to be sure to have something to say when asked for your questions. If you do not have any questions, this signals to your interviewers that you are not interested in the job.

Tips for answering common interview questions:

You need to know the school and know the need that the school hopes to address with the hire as much as possible in order to provide the best answers. For instance, in an interview for a teaching focused job where the interviewers are not familiar with your research area, you should explain your research very broadly and make sure you express an interest in teaching. Do not spend most your interview for a teaching-focused job talking about your research, unless you are asked direct questions about it.

Keep in mind that the schools hiring aim is probably motivating every question asked. Your interviewers are not going to ask questions that are not relevant to their goals. It is very important answer each question you are asked. If you do not answer questions directly, you will not leave a good impression.

Cawley (2006) devotes a section to a good description of conference interviews, especially for research leaning jobs. There are some questions that will almost always be asked. The most popular, regardless of the type of institution, are:

i) Why did you apply for this job?

ii) Tell us about your research and why it is important in economics.

iii) What direction will your research take in the next five years?

At teaching focused schools, you are likely to be asked these questions as well:

iv) How will you involve undergraduates in your research?

v) What do you like most about teaching?

vi) What three courses would you most like to teach?

vii) How would you teach course X? Or what are the most important concepts that you want your students to learn in the course?

viii) What is your teaching style or pedagogy?

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[16] The hiring committee may not agree on what kind of skills they desire in the candidate.

Make sure that you have a good answer for all of these questions. While these questions are well known, existing job search guides offer surprisingly little advice on answering them. Here are some things to think about as you formulate your answers.

Why did you decide to apply for this job?
What to say: Say something about the school and/ or its location that makes it desirable. Perhaps the school is similar to the one that you attended in terms of size, student composition, and institutional goals, making it the type of place where you feel comfortable. Be sure to mention any geographic preference for the area: you know someone who lives nearby, or you have interests that make the area a good fit.[17] These little things help to convince the interviewers that you are not just applying because the posting matched your fields. If there are many quality applicants for the position, an extra connection to the type of institution, or the area, may be the deciding factor in getting invited for a campus visit. Make sure that you have something good to say about the school that makes it a good fit for you. If you cannot think of anything that makes the job desirable, do not bother doing an interview.
What not to say: Do not say you applied for the job simply because it fit your teaching or research interests. This is likely true for everyone who applied. If you want to stand out, you have to convince your interviewers that *you* want the job as much as you need to convince them that they want *you* for the job.

Tell us about your research and why it is important in economics.
What to say: Your response depends on your research which you should know well. Your advisor would not allow you to earn a Ph.D., or interview for an academic job, if you cannot answer this question. Knowing the answers and explaining them concisely to others, however, are two different things. Review the suggestions for practicing interviews above and practice often. Ask your advisor and others if your explanation makes sense. Be able to answer questions about your data and methodology. Defend them if necessary. It is very important to act excited about your research. This signals that you can bring energy and enthusiasm to the department. If you do not appear to be excited about your research, chances are good that your listeners will not be either. Your interviewers listen to dozens of candidates describing their work. A dull description is easily forgotten.
What not to say: Do not say that your work is unimportant or severely flawed. Every paper has deficiencies, so there is no need to draw attention to these unless you are asked. If this happens, it is better to indicate that you have thought about the problem, than to argue that it is not a problem.

What direction will your research take in the next five years?
What to say: Your response should be well thought out - enough to convince your listeners that you have more ideas. Outline the next two ideas that you plan to pursue. Specific ideas for several new papers are helpful, but if you do not have them, be prepared to discuss some general areas that interest you. If research is a priority,

[17] For instance, if the school is located in Florida, you may want to mention that you do not like the cold. If it is in Maine, point out that you like to ski.

interviewers want to make sure that you can start your new projects when you arrive at their school. If you have a good set of ideas and are not asked this question directly, you should volunteer this information when you have an opportunity.

What not to say: First and foremost, if you are asked this question you do not want to say that you have not given it much thought. This indicates that you do not have a research agenda. This is likely an important consideration for the interviewers or they would not ask the question. Another thing to avoid is an unrealistic research agenda. One may be ambitious, but do not state an agenda that is beyond the resources of the position or beyond your abilities as a researcher. If your agenda cannot possibly be successful due to budgetary, time, or infrastructure limitations, your interviewers will conclude that you are not a good fit.

How will you involve undergraduates in your research?

What to say: Your answer depends on the type of research that you plan to conduct. Think carefully about how you could involve undergraduates. Answering this question effectively goes a long way toward convincing your interviewers that you have given serious thought to a job with undergraduate teaching as a focus. If the department requires a senior thesis, or research project, for graduation, you may mention ways that you would help students with their research. Of greater importance at teaching focused schools is the help that you can give to the students, rather than the help that they can give to you. At the very least, students can assist with data collection, finding references, or proofreading in almost any type of research. Another way to involve students is to test new teaching strategies on them. Some teaching focused schools encourage pedagogical research, so it may be helpful to have a few ideas in mind to try with your classes.

What not to say: Do not say that undergraduates cannot help you in your research or that you do not want to work with undergraduates on research projects. Teaching focused schools want teachers who interact well with students. This is a signal of a bad match from the prospective of the employer.

What do you like most about teaching?

What to say: Your answer depends on your personal preferences and these may be harder to determine than you think. You may want to say that you enjoy interacting with students; that you enjoy convincing students with a negative view of economics that it is really interesting; or that you like students to leave your class with a greater understanding of the world around them. Since many candidates will give these responses, it is best to have a quick story about one of your actual teaching experiences, or one of your experiences as a student, to use as an example. Specific examples are more effective, and often more sincere, than broad reasons.

What not to say: You maynot have an obvious "favorite" part of teaching, but do not say anything to indicate that you do not like to teach. You would not be asked this question if the interviewers were not concerned about your desire to teach. Your response should not appear to be "canned" or insincere; your interviewers will notice this.

What three courses would you most like to teach?

What to say: You need to provide a good answer here for a teaching focused job, and it should be easy to do so. First mention the courses that you have already taught and are

prepared to teach again. If you have done your homework, mention the courses that you know the department wants the new hire to teach. A good match aligns their needs and your interests. If the posting does not list specific courses, mention topics related to your research fields, and other courses that you would enjoy. Some liberal arts schools emphasize interdisciplinary courses, so you may mention one of those, if applicable.
What not to say: Everyone prefers to teach some courses over others, so do not say that you do not have a preference. Try to avoid courses that are already staffed (especially by the most recent hires) by the department. It is unwise to state a course that you do *not* want to teach; it may well be a course taught by the new hire.

How would you teach course X? Or, what are the most important concepts that you want your students to learn in the course?
What to say: This question is usually asked to determine if you are qualified to teach a course. It may be asked to check your truthfulness in your answer to the previous question. If you have already taught course X or a similar one, then mention what you did. If not, it will pay to have done your homework. Think about how you would teach all the courses listed in the job posting before you go to the interview. If you have previously taught any of these courses, you may want to bring a syllabus with you. If you have not taught the courses, find out which textbooks are commonly used in them and which topics are covered. Make this into a course outline and distribute it in the interview. This shows that you have given careful thought to the position.
What not to say: There may not be a bad answer to this question, as long as your answer is appropriate to the course and demonstrates knowledge of the topics to be covered.

What is your teaching style or pedagogy?
What to say: Above all, indicate that you have given this careful consideration. If you are asked this question, you want to convince your audience that you can offer more than a standard lecture. If you have taught a course using different teaching strategies, discuss two or three ideas that worked. Provide some evidence that an activity was successful, such as better scores on exams or greater interest in the course. Different students have different learning styles and teachers can effectively conduct their classes in many different ways. Be honest about what you do. For example, think about having your students work together in groups, having informal class discussions, doing small market experiments relating to course concepts, conducting student presentations, or using technology in the classroom. The optimal teaching strategy often depends on the type and level of the course. Generating a productive class discussion about current economic issues in a principles of economics course populated by freshmen may be difficult; discussion may be may be much easier to generate and more beneficial in upper level courses. Offer strategies that are appropriate to the course you would teach.
What not to say: Do not say that you have not thought about your teaching style, or that you plan only to lecture. Be careful not to suggest too many new or novel teaching techniques or your response may appear insincere. Academic economists as a group have been somewhat slow to adopt new teaching techniques over the traditional "chalk and talk" lecture format. Some view innovations with great skepticism. Your interviewers may well be chalk and talk traditionalists, so be sure not to offend them.

General tip:

If you are asked a strange question, be especially careful about your answer. For example, you may be asked if you would be willing to teach a course with 600 students, work with low-ability students, teach online courses or at off campus locations, do research without adequate funding, or teach an interdisciplinary course. If you are asked a question like this, chances are that it is an important consideration for the job. Answering *NO* likely means *NO* job, so be very careful. During the course of an interview, you may fall into the habit of giving a quick response to each question and your initial thought may well be negative for these questions. One strategy is to always say that you are willing to do whatever is asked. Then after the interview, you can decide if the issue really is a problem. On the other hand, being too agreeable to imperfect situations may make a candidate seem insincere. Another strategy is to acknowledge the issue in a way that does not indicate that it is an insurmountable obstacle. For instance say, "Well, I would prefer to teach a smaller section, but, I am willing and able to teach a course with 600 students." In either case, you can always change your mind later if you previously said *yes*. If you say *no*, you cannot take it back.

Questions to ask:

Have some questions to ask in each interview. You may refer to a short list of questions prepared before the interview. It is much easier to ask questions than to answer them as well as important to do so. Asking questions signals a genuine interest in a job.

If you have a list of questions some, if not most, of them likely will be answered before you have to ask them. In an initial interview, be sure to ask about the course load, number of preparations, number of students in each class, and which courses the new hire is likely to teach. You may also ask about the typical students in economics classes, or if there are sources of funding (such as instructional development or research grants) within the department, college, or university. Also ask if these are competitive or if there is a high acceptance rate for new faculty. Ask at least one question that is specific to the job. For instance, ask about something that looked interesting on the department's website. You may also ask about the general atmosphere within the department or if the faculty typically engage in social activities together.

There are some questions that should not be asked at this point. Most importantly, do not ask about salary until you are offered a job! This signals that you only are concerned with yourself and not the job. In further interviews you may want to ask how summer courses are allocated, but this may not be the best time. Some departments have a difficult time finding teachers for summer courses, while others give senior faculty preference. Be sure to ask this question in a neutral manner which does not reveal whether or not you would want to teach in the summer. A department may discourage new faculty from teaching in the summer in favor of research, whereas others treat summer teaching as a near a requirement for new faculty.

Initial Interview

Many different interview methods may be encountered. Most schools will set up interviews at the ASSA conference, but some schools may instead interview by phone or video conference. Regardless of the format, your goal is to distinguish yourself from the other job candidates in a positive fashion. The number of interviews granted for each

position is unknown, but the average is probably 25 to 30 candidates per job. If you have done thorough background checks, and have your cheat sheets organized, the interviews themselves are likely to go smoothly.

Write notes about each interview. Do this immediately after the interview or as soon as you have a chance. It is easy to forget important items if you wait too long. Include details regarding the school, the position itself, and your general thoughts and impressions about whether it is a good match for you. Record the names of those who interviewed you, since they may be different from what you were expecting.

Send thank-you notes to your interviewers soon after the conference or phone call. Mention that you enjoyed talking with everyone and that you feel like the department is a good fit for you. Both may be true, but even if the interview did not go well, sending a thank-you leaves a good impression.

Interviews at the ASSA Conference

The ASSA conference is both exciting and stressful. At the height of the interviews, a lot of economists will be in the area around the conference hotels and it will be extremely hectic. Time spent preparing over the past several months will limit the stress so that you can focus on making a good impression. Taking a few additional steps at the conference will make things easier for the next part of the process.

Be courteous and professional for your entire stay. Many people in the profession are around. Think of the entire conference as one continuous interview. You are likely to encounter some of the people conducting your interviews, so be polite to everyone. It is difficult to act as if you are on an interview for three days, so try to get together with your friends who are on the job market and others you may know at the conference. You might want to go to dinner in the evening to share stories. After a day of interviews, it is a nice change to talk to someone who is not considering you for a job. Even though you will be talking to people all day, you will appreciate talking with familiar people.

If you arrive early, get acquainted with the area, determine the exact locations for your interviews, and find the fastest route to each interview. This will help your travel between interviews and deflect some nervous energy. Try to relax as much as possible before the start of the interviews.

Phone and video interviews

Phone or video interviews take various forms. You may receive a brief phone call asking if you are still interested in a position, and if so, to schedule a longer phone interview or video conference. Alternatively, you may be asked a full set of questions on the first call. If you are not prepared to give quality answers to questions, and you have the option to reserve time for an interview in a few days, it is in your best interest to do so. Just because the phone interview feels less personal does not mean that you should enter one unprepared.

Your interviewer may have a standard list of questions to ask each candidate or it may be more informal. Above all, be courteous and professional. For phone interviews, you have the advantage of being able to refer to notes that you may have made about the school. Have the notes ready. If you are not sure who you will be talking to, be sure to record the name as soon as it is given.

Campus Interviews

The hardest part is now over. You have time to rest and wait, but be prepared to make a campus visit with only a few days notice. The key is to be ready before you ever have a scheduled visit. Ideally, you have already presented your job talk and are now ready to present it on an unfamiliar campus.

When you get a campus visit, it may be helpful to send emails to the other schools where you interviewed and that you think would be a good match. In the email, indicate your preference for the job at their school over the job where you have a campus visit. Ask where your application stands in case you receive an offer. If nothing else, this signals that you are still seriously interested in the job. Despite your efforts in the interview, you still may need to convince the interviewers that you are willing to take the job. After sending these emails, you may find out that you are no longer under consideration, but at least you will know. Schools move at very different speeds after the initial interviews.[18] You do not want to make a decision on an offer before you have a chance to make another campus visit. By letting schools know that you have another visit, they may move a little quicker and help you to avoid these conflicts.

Mechanics of the visit

Schools typically bring between two and four candidates to campus for each position. Consequently, if you are invited to campus, you are a finalist for the job and are a good fit for the position. Now the hiring committee is looking for the best colleague. It is especially important to be polite and friendly to everyone in order to convince them that they would like to work with you. It is beneficial to make a positive impression, but it is even more important to avoid making a negative impression on a campus visit.[19]

You must do your homework again before an on-campus interview. Fortunately, much of the preparation is the same as for your initial interview, but now you have more information. Make sure you know as much as possible about the department and the need(s) they are trying to fill with the new hire. Try to find out who will meet with you. Print out some information about these people, such as CVs and papers. If you do not know who you will meet beforehand, print at least some information about everyone in the department. If you know the courses you will be asked to teach, make an outline. If you are really ambitious, make a course syllabus. Bring several copies to hand to anyone who asks you how you would teach the course. This is easy to do and it shows that you are serious about the position.

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[18] Smaller schools are likely to take longer to schedule campus visits. Many of the top tier schools decide on candidates and schedule campus visits before leaving the conference. Other schools do not want to waste resources by inviting candidates to campus that are going to take other jobs, so they wait for the top end of the market to clear. Schools also have different levels of bureaucracy to go through before inviting candidates to campus. Finally, the timing of the conference in early January means that many schools are not in session and the entire hiring committee may not be available to discuss campus visits for a few weeks.

[19] Avoiding a bad interview is important for many reasons. First, suppose three candidates visit campus for an interview. Candidate A gives an excellent interview, candidate B an average interview, and candidate C makes a bad impression. The college first offers the job to A. If A turns down the offer, B is then offered. But even if B declines, C may not get an offer. Second, it is possible that the department may be hiring for another position in the near future and may consider you for it if your visit goes well. Third, over time faculty may move to different schools, so you may encounter the same people more than once.

Be prepared to ask a lot of questions on campus. If you thought it was hard to fill the time with questions in a 30 minute interview, imagine what it will be like over a day or two. After asking about the department and the school, you may resort to questions about the area, the climate, local school system, recreational activities, or other items of interest. This also helps to convince interviewers that you are a "normal" person who will make a good colleague.

Be sure to have the major details for your visit as to meeting times, dates, and places. Find out where you are staying, who you are meeting, and the activities planned for you. Most of this will be provided in an itinerary, so be sure to ask for one if you are not given one. If air travel is required, make sure you know who will meet you at the airport and how to get in contact with them if your flight is delayed. You also want to have the small details of your trip worked out.[20]

Depending on the job, you will be asked to present your research and/or teach a lecture. In either case, before you go to campus you must know: (1) your audience, (2) how long you have to present, and (3) the capabilities of the room that you will be using. Someone may neglect to tell you these details unless you ask. In addition to presentations, you are likely to meet individually with faculty and administrators, and to go to dinner. Some schools may reserve time for you to meet with students.

Presentation on campus

You will be asked to give a presentation in some form while on campus. Departments differ in what they require, but you are likely to be asked to present a class lecture if the job has a large teaching component, and to present your research if the job has a large research component. In some cases, a school may require both of presentations.

Presenting your research:

By the time of your campus visit, you have already presented your research and are prepared to answer most of the questions that may arise. Be sure to ask how long you will have to present your research. Typically, you will have somewhere between 45 minutes and an hour and a half. You must say everything you want to say in the allotted amount of time. It is unprofessional to have extra time, but, at the same time, you do not want to be rushed. Everyone should leave your presentation knowing the main contribution of your research. Give an overview of your talk at the very beginning and include your main result right from the start. If your audience has the result in mind, unrelated questions that can consume much of your valuable time may be avoided.

Make sure you know the audience for the presentation. Will the audience include only faculty? Undergraduates? Graduate students? Will they be from the economics department or from other departments as well? The presentation of your research for a teaching focused position may be slightly different than for a research focused position. Although there is substantial variation among departments and individuals, your audience for a teaching focused interview may be more concerned with *how* you present your work, while a research focused audience may be more concerned with what you did for

[20] For example, you may have to check out of your hotel room the morning before your interview. If so, make sure that you pack all of your things before going to breakfast. Little things can add needless stress if you are not prepared for them.

your research. These important considerations may affect the way you present your work and the questions that you may receive.

Presenting a class lecture:

You may be given a course and lecture that you are to present, or your choice of course and topic. This lecture may be delivered to an actual class, or presented to faculty only. The format depends on the department. Ask how long you have to present your class lecture. You may have less than the scheduled class time if, for example, the students are asked to evaluate your lecture at the conclusion.

If you are to teach a specific topic to a class, be sure to have a well-prepared and interactive lecture. To aid on both fronts, ask which textbook the instructor uses before assembling your lecture. Terminology may differ slightly across textbooks and you do not want the students to be confused.

If you are given the choice of a topic, try to pick something that you understand well, but is somewhat difficult for undergraduates at first. The best outcome for interview purposes is for students to ask you questions and for you to provide good answers. If the students do not have any questions, it is difficult to demonstrate your abilities. Avoid the temptation to pick an easy topic or to conduct an in-class activity that takes time away from the lecture. Your interviewers want to see you *teach* or they would not have you deliver a lecture. Students' evaluations of your lecture may be a component of the hiring decision, so you must do your best to make the lecture relevant to them. If you have to choose a topic and do not know where to start, try something like elasticity. Effectively explaining the different elasticities to undergraduates, bringing in real life examples of price sensitivity, will convince your interviewers of your teaching abilities.

Meeting with faculty and administrators

You will also have the opportunity to meet with faculty members, the department chair, and possibly the dean or provost. The exact protocol is specific to the school. It is helpful to think of these meetings as a series of initial interviews. As such, approach each of them in much the same way as your initial interview. Remember that everyone is looking at you as a potential colleague and is trying to gauge how you would fit into the department.

Ask questions that are relevant to your interviewer's position. For instance, ask the department chair about the goals for the department, the dean about the goals for the college, and the provost about the goals for the entire institution. The probability that your interviewer has fully read your credentials, and has knowledge in your field, decreases as you move up the administrative ladder. Be careful not to make disparaging remarks about other academic disciplines, since you may not know the background of the administrator.

Meeting with students:

In some cases, you will have the opportunity to meet with students. The importance of this interaction may have either a large or a negligible impact on the hiring decision, depending on the school. In either case, student feedback may be the determining factor at the margin. Students are more concerned with how approachable you are, than with

your economic knowledge. They can be the harshest critics that you face.[21] If you have time to meet with students, treat them with the same respect as faculty. Ask them questions about the student body to show that you value their opinions. This meeting will give you more information about the interests and abilities of the students, and the job in general, so take it as seriously as the other portions of the campus visit.

Getting all the facts:

In the excitement of the campus visit, it is easy to look at every job in the most positive light. You may leave each campus visit feeling that you would accept the job if offered. Take some time to fully consider each position before you objectively compare them. You may not be able to return to the campus before you have to make a decision, so be sure to consider all aspects of the job while you are there.

Keep in mind that the school may be trying just as hard to convince *you* they are a good fit as you are trying to convince *them* that you are a good fit for the job. Assuming that everyone is lying to you is not wise, but remember the school is putting their best foot forward just as you are. Some negative aspects of the job may get left out. Look past the nice dinner and hotel room; think carefully about the job itself. Try to gather as much information as possible about the true job environment while on your visit. When you get a chance to ask questions, ask about the *best* aspects of the job. Chances are you have already heard all of these things. After listening to the positives, ask about the *worst* aspects of the job. Ask what the goals are for the department in the short and long term, and determine the areas where the department is trying to improve. These are great questions and the answers may give you a good idea of the obstacles that you will encounter.

You may be surprised at how willing some faculty members are to volunteer negative job aspects. Some of the best information in this area comes from are those who have been with the department for a few years and are either close to getting tenure or recently tenured. You will get more information by asking about the worst parts of the job in small groups.

Another way to obtain negative information is to say, "Everyone that I have talked to so far seems to have great things to say about working here. Obviously, the people who are here like it or they wouldn't stay around. How many people have left the department since you have been here?" Then ask why those people left. Again, this may give you an indication about the true work environment.

After a campus visit, be sure to send a thank-you note as soon as you get home. This courtesy signals that you are still interested in the job.

Getting an Offer

Once you get an offer, notify the other schools that you visited. If you have not already done so, you may want to contact some of the schools where you did not receive a campus visit, but where you feel you would be a good match. Once you have an offer, the other schools may begin to move a little quicker. Schools move at different speeds and some may still have more candidates coming to campus.

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[21] Nothing prevents a student from saying, "I just didn't like that candidate," whereas faculty may want to base (or at least appear to base) their evaluation on objective criteria.

There are many things to consider when evaluating an offer and comparing it to others. Some important factors are the teaching load, research requirements, cost of living, and additional opportunities for funding, such as grants and summer courses. A factor pertaining to salary offers that is often overlooked is the level of autonomy of the department within the college or university. This is especially important at small schools, and those with a union, because the department may not have the authority to make a better offer. For instance if there is a bargaining agreement with the union, it may require that similar starting salaries be offered to every new employee, regardless of field. This may hurt those holding a Ph.D. in economics as they are typically in lower supply than most fields.

Faculty salary information collected by the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) can be found on the Chronicle of Higher Education website at http://chronicle.com/stats/aaup (Chronicle of Higher Education, 2007a). This page provides average salaries for assistant, associate, and full professors at almost every U.S. college and university and is an indication of how salaries at an institution compare to those at other institutions. The AAUP reports averages by rank for the entire college or university, however, so the salaries posted may not be a good indicator if there is agreat deal of variation across departments within a university. The average salaries reported by AAUP for assistant professors (not just new hires) are much lower than those reported for new economics Ph.D.s by Cawley (2006) as indicated in Table 1.

Table 1
Salaries by Institution Type:
Newly Hired Economics Ph.D.s versus
Assistant Professors at the 60th percentile by University Mean

	Newly Hired Economics Ph.D.s (2005–2006)[a]	All Assistant Professors: 60th percentile by University mean (2006–2007)[b]	Difference
Associate	-	48,083	-
Baccalaureate	60,087	49,694	10,393
Master's	70,026	54,799	15,227
Doctoral	86,078	66,263	19,815

Sources: [a] Cawley (2006), [b] Chronicle of Higher Education (2007c).

For example, average salaries for newly hired assistant professors in economics at baccalaureate institutions for 2005-06 were $60,087 (Cawley 2006). By comparison, assistant professors in baccalaureate institutions with mean salaries at the 60th percentile (by institution mean) earn $49,694 (Chronicle of Higher Education 2007a).[22] These differences may not factor into offers made by economics departments at doctoral

[22] In fact the average starting salaries reported for economists fall well above the 80th percentile of institutional averages for assistant professors for each category. Since Cawley (2006) reports a small number of responses, the averages for the sample of bachelor's institutions may not be representative.

institutions, which are more likely to have the ability to adjust salaries. These differences are important to consider at baccalaureate colleges where the department may not have this ability. These colleges are also the most likely to have a teaching focus.

When negotiating, you should consider your offer in relation to the averages for economists and also the averages for the college or university as a whole. For small schools, chances are the offer will be low relative to economics, but high relative to the rest of the college. You may find that the economics department knows your market value much better than the administrator who ultimately determines the salary offer. If you get an offer that is far below your market value, you may not want to reject it quickly if you do not have another alternative. It may help the department fight the battle with the administration to mention that the offer is far below average for the position. Generally, it does not hurt to ask for things as long as you do it without being rude. When a school cannot do anything else for you they will let you know.

Cawley (2006) suggests that you get an offer in writing as soon as you can, but that may not be possible. Do not be surprised if you receive nothing more official in writing than an email from the dean or department chair. Schools may prefer that you make a verbal commitment before they go through the time-consuming process for the official paperwork. If they compose an official contract before you make a decision, they may lose other candidates for the job if you ultimately decline the offer. Obviously, it is best if you are able to get an official contract in writing before you must make a decision, but if not, just make sure you have as many facts as possible. Save all correspondence that you receive regarding the job, and check the details before you sign the contract.

Conclusion

This article offers suggestions for conducting a successful search on the academic job market to new economics Ph.D.s. The general recommendations are applicable to all academic jobs regarding the timing of events, finding job postings, preparing for questions asked in interviews, and preparing a job talk. In addition, it outlines specific suggestions pertaining to schools in the teaching-focused portion of the market that are not found in other job search guides. These include suggestions for personalizing job applications, effectively answering interview questions about teaching, delivering a class lecture on campus, meeting with students, and factors influencing negotiations for a better offer at a small school. These special considerations for the search for more teaching-centered (as opposed to research-centered) academic jobs are important since there is both a large supply of and demand for academic jobs with the emphasis on teaching.

The job search is time consuming and stressful, especially for new Ph.D.s experiencing it for the first time. By following these suggestions, the reader will be better informed about the process. Knowing what to expect at the various stages will save time and minimize stress. Being well-prepared makes the search easier and promotes a more favorable outcome. I hope you find these tips useful in your search.

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