

Professional Development Notes: Professor Vazirani

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Useful websites: They exist!

* <http://math.harvard.edu/graduate/index.html#jobs>

* Eric Shue, in Math Education at SF State has some great information for teaching statements:

<http://math.sfsu.edu/hsu/jobs.html> <http://math.sfsu.edu/hsu/jobsearch.html>

* Look for websites with technology that can help you (ex: macros for cover letters)

* AMS cover sheet

* MathJobs

General Statements about applying for jobs

- CV (in the days of VIGRE, list if you are USA citizen)
- AMS Cover Sheet: change the AMS code depending on the school. If they are really looking for one field and you're in between 2 fields, list the code that they're looking for or have a stronger emphasis in.
- Apply early! They'll start looking at applications before the deadline so if it's finished send it in.
- Read directions & include all requested items
- Apply even if they aren't advertising if you REALLY want it. It's possible that \$\$ will pop up later. Also, in this case, highlight things other than math that you can do. Could you teach Stats, CS, etc... that might lead to another source of money.
- Apply to a wide range of places. If you have geographic constraints, realize you might end up w/ no job come April. (But don't give up then.) Try to be flexible.
- For Research postdocs: Pick a school w/ someone who you will learn something from. Look for a mentor.
- Follow up at the application with an email to profs. If they know you (or your advisor) they'll push you forward in the application pool. You can't expect them to know your app is there in the days of MathJobs (100s of applications in the pile). So let them know that you are applying there. It's NOT pushy, it's informative and it helps them sort through the piles of applications.
- Network years in advance--go to conferences, send copies or links to your
- Your adviser (or other influential faculty): Get them to ask around on your behalf and push for you.
- How many places to apply: If you have contacts at all 20 schools who are going to fight for you then 20 is ok. Otherwise err on the side of blanketing the market and try for closer to 80 schools.
- The clock resets when you get your PhD (so don't worry as much about how long it takes you, focus on quality of experience while in grad school).

Teaching Statement:

They want to know what you're like as a teacher. Use your statement to paint a snapshot of a day in your classroom.

- Experience:
 - List all class these that you have taught
 - Highlight which class did you like teaching the best, why did you like teaching this class?
 - Highlight 1 or 2 of your most successful experiences.
- Discuss technology - do you use it in your classroom?
- Be positive, don't be negative. If you don't use technology focus on what you do rather than spending time talking about how technology is evil.
- Your teaching statement should differ depending on what you're looking for:
 - Longer for teaching schools. You may have to convince them you're not on the research track, ie will be happy and contributing there.
 - Shorter for research postdocs (1 side of 1 page)
- Try to contact people at the school and find out what they'd like to hear about.
- Pick out some of your student evals and send a copy (even if they don't ask for it).
- Look at other people's teaching statement.

- Question: How do you make it original?
 - It's ok if your statement is the same as others. Repeating other people is fine.
 - Personalize it by using specific examples.
 - Make it stand out with genuine interest and sincerity in what your writing

Research statement:

- Wording: be assertive. No need to think about it in your 1st draft, but when you go back and edit it, cross out words like "I think" or "I believe" and just assert that "it is".
- Talk about your past research and your future research plan.
 - For the future, it's ok if you say things you don't actually end up doing/solving later; they don't check up! But of course you don't want to say you'll solve the Riemann Hypothesis. So don't exaggerate, be realistic, but don't be too conservative. Get rid of your fear.
- Keep in mind readers will have read mannnnnnyyy proposals and appreciate a good intro, and good organization.
 - Dividing ideas up into sections, highlighting certain words perhaps when you are stressing a main idea, use boxes to make theorems stand out. Otherwise, they may just skim and not pay attention too much.
 - Some do it like theorem, proof. Some do it more as overview and discussion. I also feel that it is field-dependent. Algebraists like a certain format, analysts another. Your advisor should have advice on that.
 - Highlight your contribution to the research. Don't just throw out facts, show how you've contributed to the field.
- Ask others (advisor) to read it.

Letters

- Approach letter writers early (at least 1 month is polite, let them know if you know further in advance).
- Build relationships w/ faculty, even outside ucd. A great way to do this is to ask people to explain their research to you and to ask them lots of questions. They'll think you're so smart and they'll love sharing their research. Also, you could invite them to your teaching lecture and ask them for feedback.
- It's ok to send your papers to an expert and ask them for a letter.
- When you ask for that letter, things to come armed with: (Lists you should make for yourself long in advance anyhow)
 - a list of schools you're applying to (or the categories/constraints) - Ask them if they know anyone who works there,
 - list of your letter-writers (they might talk with each other and you'll get better letters that way),
 - your research statement,
 - your CV,
 - whatever they know of you (which classes you took w/ them, TA'd for etc)- Don't assume they remember. Remind them what to think of you. Think about personal compliments they said when you were their TA or when they came to your research presentation.
 - whatever deadlines there are, (Remind them! It's YOUR responsibility)- Use post-its and emails.
 - who you'll apply for an nsf with, (the more who apply, the more awarded)
 - who you'll apply for a pres postdoc (only at UC) with,
 - other things you're eligible for,
 - how you're keeping track of all this,
 - how ucd is helping (dossier service, labels, etc), ... it is SUCH a pain w/o dossier service!
- You: Follow-up letter writing requests with email reminders. It is NOT pushy!