

mentum? Again there are a number of possibilities, although the ones I've found all require an increased flow to the department of the kinds of resources that are typically controlled by key administrators. The exploration of these possibilities, therefore, requires some initial good will, the willingness to negotiate, and some skill in forging pathways to joint gains. Sometimes, an External Reviewer can elicit initial expressions of good will, facilitate negotiations, and add negotiation skills.<sup>2</sup>

In conclusion, I think that serving as an External Reviewer, if it's done well, is a little like trying to be a constructive theater critic for a show opening in Philadelphia, except you arrive during an ongoing drama of indeterminant length, and, once there, you have to figure out what has happened thus far, see where it's going, and, before it's over, try to pass on your advice to the actors so that they can try to make it a hit.

As the analogy suggests, it's hard to get the actors to listen. But, in my experience, they do listen and, I hope, sometimes find a new sense of allied, if not common, purpose — a sense which, if nurtured by good will and (even grudgingly given) mutual respect, can lead to an improved curriculum, a renewed sense of professional engagement, and a more vital institution.

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### About the Author

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### Notes

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1. As I have argued elsewhere, political institutions can be understood by identifying their goals, constraints, and resources, and by analyzing the ways in which they seek to create and transform resources. See Paul A. Dawson, *American Government: Institutions, Policies, and Politics*. Glenview, Ill.: Scott, Foresman, 1987.

2. Since the answers to these questions will affect the ability of a department to improve itself, reviews of any and all departments, one might argue, should be carried out by political scientists, although I have yet to do so persuasively with any non-political scientist.

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## The Long Voyage Home—Concluded

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Donald Chisholm  
Ohio State University

In the first half of this essay on gaining an initial academic position,<sup>1</sup> I discussed developing a standard placement file, finding out about job openings and the fit between oneself and a recruiting department, applying for the position, getting to the interview, and speaking with individual faculty and students. In this concluding segment, I turn first to the most crucial part of any academic interview, the formal presentation of one's research to the assembled faculty of the recruiting department, and then finish with a discussion of what to expect if you receive a job offer and how to react if no such offer is forthcoming.

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### The Formal Presentation

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The formal presentation of one's current research (usually the dissertation) is the single most important segment of any visit to a recruiting department. Here is where the department en masse has the opportunity to see you in the crucible. The typical format is a short (30-40 minutes) formal talk by the candidate followed by a question and answer period of similar length.

Because of the relatively short stay during any interview visit, recruiting departments tend to fill every available moment of the candidate's time. Eventually I grew savvy enough to ask for a half hour free prior to the formal talk, time to cool out and think a bit. Otherwise, one is likely to end up going directly from talking with a series of prospective colleagues to giving the presentation, followed by a question period, and, ultimately, brain death.

It is a well-kept professional secret that few members of a department will ever have read any of the written material a candidate is usually required to submit with his application.<sup>2</sup> Candidates' curriculum vita's are often circulated, but specialization of knowledge by subfield, the heavy

costs of doing good research on job candidates, and the press of other, more immediate duties such as teaching or writing deadlines (structured time drives out unstructured time), all conspire to render it improbable that anyone outside the search committee will have read anything sent to the department by the applicant. The safe rule, then, when making the formal presentation is to assume that no one has read the written material on which it is based.

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*Recruiting departments tend to fill every available moment of the candidate's time.*

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The positive corollary of this fact is that you can be sure that you know more about your research topic than anyone, however senior, who may be in the audience. This alone should strengthen your confidence. My advisors suggested to me that I aim my talk at intelligent, educated generalists. In retrospect that appears to have been sound advice. This also means that you know far more about your topic than can be adequately conveyed in the short time allotted for the talk. The problem is to pare the material down to a size that will not test too severely the patience of your audience; the trick being to include the important hypotheses and data, leaving more ancillary material for another time. It took me several presentations to figure out how to do this.<sup>3</sup> Also, it makes no sense to talk about something new to you; talk about what you have already mastered thoroughly, even if it repeats written work in your file.<sup>4</sup>

Perhaps the best advice given to me by my then advisor—Martin Landau—was never to sit down while giving my formal presentation. Standing almost compels one to be animated, to modulate the voice, to engender a palpable excitement in a topic that many of the audience may initially find rather tangential to their own interests. Indeed, the key tasks of the pre-

sentation go well beyond simply conveying information about your research. In addition to demonstrating that one has researched the problem in a reasonably appropriate and professional manner, one must convince the audience that it is an important problem and that you yourself find it compelling.

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*It is a well-kept professional secret that few members of a department will ever have read any of the written material a candidate is usually required to submit with his application.*

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A concomitant of this is that reading one's presentation from detailed notes is likely only to send the audience drifting into somnolence or out the door. I used only 1-2 pages of notes in order to avoid the terrible temptation of reading the material verbatim: if the words aren't written down, you can't read them. In lieu of that approach, one might make more extensive notes and highlight key sentences. After you get to know your talk well enough you can go at least several sentences without having to look down, at which point the sight of a few key words will probably give you enough momentum to go for another minute or two. After experimenting with xeroxed handouts of charts, figures, and tables I decided to stick with drawing those I needed on the blackboard. It seemed to hold the attention of the audience better.

I never used the same notes for my presentation twice, throwing away each set after giving the talk for which they were written. There were several reasons for this apparently wasteful practice. As my

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research and writing progressed I understood more about my topic and with each interview I learned something new about how to present my material more effectively. So the talk changed over time. I also found that re-thinking the talk and writing out fresh notes as I winged my way to each interview put the material more firmly in my head and bolstered my confidence.

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*My advisors suggested to me that I aim my talk at intelligent, educated, generalists.*

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And it provided a soothing, familiar ritual to perform prior to the opening kickoff. Toward the end I found that my notes were nearly superfluous.<sup>5</sup>

A number of my graduate school colleagues found it useful prior to going out on their first interview to give a practice presentation before other students and selected faculty. Trial runs provide an opportunity to make errors in a situation where they don't count and help to demystify the interview process. Both contribute to one's confidence. Such practice sessions help most when they approximate the character of an actual talk: people enter and leave in the middle, there is a mix of difficult and friendly questions, the audience is composed of specialists and individuals from a range of subfields; and when advice on the style and tenor of the talk (in addition to its content) is tendered at its conclusion.

You are also being looked over as to how you think about doing political science. Departments comprised of serious pragmatic scholars who have a reasonable grasp of the scientific endeavor will be looking for someone who is competent, has something to contribute, and who is stimulating, while those departments whose balance is tipped by tyros and pedants may be more inclined to seek conformity to predetermined, narrowly defined "correct" methods of inquiry, for the sort of methodological orthodoxy that

goes well beyond commitment to standard canons of scientific inquiry. I decided somewhere along the way that academic positions don't pay enough for me to conform to more than the basic canons of science.

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*... never sit down ...*

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I also had to learn that not all questions are created equal. During the question and answer period, one is under no obligation to treat every question with the same consideration. Within the constraints imposed by courtesy and professionalism, you can choose the queries to which you will respond, and the depth and quality of those responses. Sadly enough, it is the case that some questions following the presentation may have as much to do with internal department politics or the desire by the questioner to appear intelligent or erudite before his colleagues as they have to do with the character and quality of your work. Conversely, do not overlook the friendly planted question by a sympathetic department member who may have a real stake in seeing your interview go well. Just as often there are questions from genuinely interested people whose thoughts have been stimulated by something you said; from these people you can learn. The departments that most impressed me were those in which the bulk of questions fell into this last category. One may also choose to handle "dumb" questions by

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*Reading one's presentation from detailed notes is likely only to send the audience drifting into somnolence or out the door.*

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mistaking them and turning them into answerable ones. The key point is to remain calm and appear unflustered, no matter the turmoil your stomach may be experiencing.

This is also an opportunity to observe the group dynamics of the department, to get an idea about how it is the members interact and whether it is a place where you might fit. Some departments seem to like an open, free-for-all, brawling style of discussion, while others prefer a more genteel and (outwardly, at least) collegial manner of interaction. My own relatively informal style of presentation did not sit well with some schools at which I interviewed. So be it.

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*You are also being looked over as to how you think about doing political science.*

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Ad hominem attacks may occasionally surface for reasons the candidate can hardly predict ahead of time. During a cocktail party at one mid-western department I was queried about the peacock feathers, hot tubs, and BMW's of northern California. I was too stunned at the obvious idiocy and irrelevance of the question to offer any response at all. But there it was.

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### When an Offer Is Forthcoming

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Department chairs seemed to become ill at ease when it came time to discuss salary toward the end of the interview. A certain vagueness sometimes crept into their words. Professional academics are, as is well known, motivated by a thirst for truth and knowledge, not lust for the filthy lucre. But, within the constraints imposed by university pay scales, college deans, department budgets (not to mention state legislatures), academic salaries are subject to the same sorts of bargaining and negotiation that characterize any formal organization. And one has to eat. You can be confident that if you do not look out for your financial welfare, there will not be anyone doing it for you. If you can be hired for less, why should a department pay more? One should be diplomatic, courte-

ous, and firm in discussions of salaries and benefits, once an offer has been made.<sup>6</sup> To a person, every one of my graduate colleagues with whom I spoke who had been recently appointed an assistant professor told me that he or she wished they had seriously bargained over salary instead of simply accepting the offer which came their way.

Do not overlook the possibility of summer salary. It may also be that the department has more room to adjust teaching loads and schedules, leave, and research support than it does salary. Then too, composition of the course load may be a matter for discussion. If you teach several introductions to American politics (or international relations, or methods, or comparative politics, or whatever), will you have the opportunity to teach other courses in which you may have a stronger interest? If not this year, how about next year? What is the mix of undergraduate and graduate courses you are being asked to teach? Do not forget to ask about compensation for moving expenses. And what is the department's policy on paying for trips to professional meetings? One might also wish to consider the status and treatment of junior faculty in any given department; departments vary from essentially egalitarian treatment to strict hierarchies.<sup>7</sup> Finally, one may be able to negotiate arrival time and the term during which one is to commence teaching. This is especially important if one is just finishing the dissertation. Teaching a full load at a new school while trying to finish a Ph.D. is not necessarily an optimal situation.

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*One is under no obligation to treat every question with the same consideration.*

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The tenure rate is another important factor to consider. Some universities or departments hire on the assumption that only a tiny fraction of junior faculty will be given tenure, while others hire on the basis

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that the individual selected is tenurable and a slot will be available. These factors are especially important should one find oneself in the fortunate position of having to select from among more than one offer.

Above all, one should never forget that despite the collegiality which describes the academic life, departments and universities are no different than any other formal organizations, that is, organizational interests, as defined by those constituting the dominant coalition, usually will out over the interests of the individual job candidate. The problem becomes finding a common ground.

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*Ad hominem attacks may occasionally surface for reasons the candidate can hardly predict ahead of time.*

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Organizational dynamics may sometimes intrude to obstruct or reverse decisions made in good faith by individuals within them. Thus promises are made which may or may not be kept. Perhaps an offer made by a department chair will be vetoed by the college. One friend turned down a job offer from one institution after receiving an oral offer made in good faith by the chair of a department at a better university. That offer was later withdrawn by the dean at that school, and my friend was left without a position. An oral offer to another colleague was withdrawn after the department discovered it probably had not adequately advertised the position. Yet another had received oral promises in addition to the written offer which were not kept. I made a decision to accept a one-year position on the basis of an offer (made to me in good faith by the acting chair of the department) which later turned out to be in error regarding salary, position title, and teaching load. It is simply a fact of life that institutions are more powerful than individuals in negotiations over contracts, notwithstanding the 19th

century Supreme Court's rulings on the 14th Amendment and "substantive due process." Irrespective of the reason, a good rule of thumb to follow is never to make any irrevocable decisions about a position until you have the offer in writing.

Because the interviewing season stretches over many months, you may receive interviews widely spaced over time. This becomes a problem only if one of the departments interviewing earlier makes an offer that you are required to accept or turn down before you hear from other departments either about interviews or offers. One department at which I interviewed in November made an offer in early December, before I had responses on several other applications, and, moreover, wanted an answer within a week. This is a tactic commonly used by departments which feel they may be at a disadvantage going toe to toe with wealthier or more prestigious departments: interview and make offers early on the assumption that candidates will find a bird in the hand worth two in the bush. There is no way to know how to respond, however, until you find yourself in that situation.

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*Department chairs seemed to become ill at ease when it came time to discuss salary toward the end of the interview.*

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In another case, I interviewed at a school in October. It first offered the position to someone else, who delayed before rejecting the offer. The position was not offered to me until late January. I had two interviews scheduled for February, and told the chair I would like to visit those schools before deciding. He replied that the department couldn't wait, an immediate answer was required, in an attempt (or so I perceived it) to pressure me to accept. I declined. There is simply no harm in asking

for more time to consider an offer. All the department can do is to say no.<sup>8</sup>

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**Getting the Bad News**

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Some departments may never tell the remaining applicants when someone has been hired, although almost all will acknowledge receipt of your application. More likely, they will send out a form letter. They may not notify applicants who failed to make the short list or may only do so months after the fact. If you are interested, it does not hurt to call and ask what's happening. Departments may fail to tell those on the short list that an offer has been made to someone fearing that the offer may not be accepted and they are unwilling for you to know that you are only second or third on their list. And no one that I know likes to be the bearer of bad tidings. You sometimes have to take the initiative.

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*What is the department's policy on paying for trips to professional meetings?*

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Although it is enormously difficult to maintain a relaxed, if not disinterested, perspective on the whole process, one is better off not taking personally the rejection that will likely come one's way. Because getting a "real job" is as important a rite of passage for the budding academic as finishing the dissertation, the process is often invested with more significance than it probably warrants. As with the dissertation one should not take rejection or an offer as the sole criterion for one's academic worth. Failure to receive an offer or to gain even an interview is as likely to result from departmental politics, misapprehensions by the search committee, or other organizational problems, as it is from any personal deficiencies one may possess. Of course, most often you will not know exactly why you did not get an

interview or an offer; your imagination will be only too happy to fill in the blanks.

Unfortunately, sometimes positions are advertised that have already been filled. Formal requirements that positions be widely advertised do not mean there are no longer inside jobs, simply that it is more difficult, if not impossible, to detect their existence. Departments sometimes know exactly who it is they wish to hire and go through the charade of interviewing other applicants in order to meet legal guidelines, especially with respect to affirmative action. A close friend, who had been told he was a top candidate for a position, didn't hear back from the department chair for several months, only to be told that someone else had been hired. His informal contacts told him that they had made the hire as a personal favor to a powerful member of the department.

One may be invited to interview because a faction within the department was strong enough to achieve that end, but insufficiently influential to persuade other factions in the department that an offer should be made to you. It is virtually impossible to distinguish this situation from one in which you simply did not interview well, unless you are able to obtain additional information.

In general, except for those rare few young academics who early on are identified as rising "stars," it is difficult to predict who will get interviews and who will not. As a rather sage colleague of mine once observed: "People are different."

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*It is simply a fact of life that institutions are more powerful than individuals in negotiating over contracts. . . .*

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One of my graduate colleagues sent out over thirty applications before receiving a single interview (and, ultimately, a job offer), while another had three immediate

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interviews and two job offers during the same time period. It wasn't clear to me that there was any marked disparity in ability between the two.

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*Never . . . make any  
irrevocable decisions  
about a position until  
you have the offer in  
writing.*

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In retrospect, it occurs to me that gaining an initial academic position resembles successfully completing Ph.D. qualifying exams or finishing a dissertation in one key respect. Unless I am greatly mistaken, of those who begin doctoral programs but do not earn the Ph.D., the overwhelming majority elect on their own to pursue other endeavors; few are formally shown the door. Assuming minimal levels of ability and knowledge, earning the Ph.D. becomes a question of motivation and willingness to pay the not inconsiderable costs it entails. Thus, each formal step along the way becomes an obstacle which some individuals will choose not to overcome. So it is probably reasonable to expect that some percentage of those who go on the job market will not stay long enough to find jobs; it is built into the structure of academia.

It takes some grit to persevere through a series of unsuccessful attempts. The problem is compounded when one is simultaneously writing the dissertation and looking for a position. Success in each activity requires the ability to retain one's self-confidence in the face of a lack of obvious progress or when confronted by an absence of interviews or offers. Talking over one's experiences with others going through the process at the same time helps to lessen the isolation and anxiety one sometimes feels. At Berkeley, where I did my graduate work, each fall the department placement office puts together a seminar for those going on the job market, featuring talks by individuals who have

either been on the market already or who have found jobs. These seminars have been invaluable adjuncts to informal chats among graduate students about the process.

## Some Final Remarks

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Because I have aimed to contrast the realities with the institutionalized myths by which our profession lives, admittedly the picture I have sketched is a little darker than the images conjured by the myths. I don't have any particular agenda for reform, it just seems better to know a little about the process ahead of time, if possible, instead of having to learn it all while on the voyage, when there may be little time to make corrections. Although I have described some less than completely admirable behaviors on the part of recruiting departments, for every one of those experiences, I can also recount several acts of absolute fairness or kindness that went well beyond any professional requirements. We expect the latter and are usually unpleasantly surprised by the former, tending to take them personally, when really, it's just business.

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*It is difficult to predict  
who will get interviews  
and who will not.*

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Gaining a first position is mostly filled with hard work and uncertainty, accompanied by an occasional pleasurable and exhilarating experience. Although I am not sure that the process has any special intrinsic value, it does permit one to test out ideas, to meet others in one's profession, and to see how political science is done at other institutions.

Good luck and good sailing!

## About the Author

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Donald Chisholm is assistant professor of political science at Ohio State University. Winner of the 1985 Leonard D. White dissertation

award, Chisholm is author of *Coordination Without Hierarchy* (University of California Press, 1989).

Notes

1. See "The Long Voyage Home Begun," *PS* (Fall, 1988), pp. 901-907.
2. I am aware of several smaller departments in which all members read the material submitted by the candidates who come for interviews. This appears to be the exception rather than the rule.
3. Conversely, while you may begin to tire of your presentation after giving it a few times (I surely did), it may be worth resisting the temptation to radically alter it to make it more "interesting." If it ain't broke, don't fix it.
4. The worst job talk I have ever had the misfortune to hear was one in which the candidate chose not to discuss his excellent dissertation, but to try out ideas related to new research. He came across as ill-prepared and incapable of rigorous thought.
5. Except, perhaps, to demonstrate that I had "prepared" for my presentation.
6. The *Chronicle of Higher Education* annually publishes a list of salaries for different ranks at American colleges and universities. This gives one at least a basic idea of the possibilities at any given institution.
7. For this one should ask junior faculty, not the department chair!
8. The American Political Science Association's professional guidelines state that a candidate has two weeks to decide upon receipt of a *written* offer.

**A Survey of Teaching by Graduate Students\***

Jonathan P. Euchner  
and  
Malcolm E. Jewell  
University of Kentucky

Ph.D. programs in political science, for the most part, produce college and university teachers. Since 1972, more than four out of five new positions in our profession are in academic settings, where teaching is almost always a major responsibility.<sup>1</sup> Consequently, it is surprising that so little information exists about the role of grad-

uate education in the training of new political scientists as teachers. This paper is a first effort toward developing a better understanding of the current state of teacher training in our discipline. We are interested in: the use of graduate students in the classroom, the preparation and evaluation of student teachers, and the level of responsibility given to them, and the institutional support given to student teachers.

*One measure of the importance that departments attach to providing teaching experience for graduate students is the extent to which teaching experience is required in the graduate program.*

To take this first step, a survey on "Graduate Student Teaching in Political Science," was prepared and sent to all 118 Ph.D. programs in the United States, as listed in the *Guide to Graduate Studies in Political Science 1986*. The return rate for this survey was excellent, with a total of 95 schools participating, for a response rate of 80 percent. The survey, consisting of four parts, was initially sent to all department chairs, asking them to answer the questions, or give the survey to the person in each department best able to provide answers. In most cases, either the department chair or the graduate director completed the survey. In analyzing the data from this survey, our main interest was in the aggregate results, not in identifying or comparing practices at particular institutions.

**Variations in Use of Student Teachers**

We started by asking each school whether graduate students are used to