



**University of California  
President's and Chancellor's Postdoctoral Fellowship Programs**

**Academic Spring Retreat  
Sunday, April 21, 2024**

**Sunday Discussion Topics and Questions from Fellows**

**GENERAL GUIDELINES:**

- The faculty-led discussions are scheduled from 9:00 am – 12:00 pm on Sunday, April 21. Discussion topics will include publishing (30 min.) job search (30 min.), grant writing (30 min.), tenure process (30 min.) and questions from fellows (45 minutes).
- **Fellows submitted specific questions in advance for faculty to address. See pages 4-7. (45 min.)**
- There will be 20-30 participants per session.
- Faculty participants have agreed to co-lead interactive discussions on publishing, job search, grant writing, tenure process or another topic of concern. Faculty should be prepared to participate in discussions on this topic that are informed by questions (pages 4-7) that the postdocs have submitted in advance.
- Session participants will include fellows, faculty mentors, and faculty supporters in discipline-based groups.
- Try to make the session interactive. Faculty facilitators should consider having faculty serve as a panel.
- Fellows should leave the sessions with concrete and relevant suggestions, contacts, and products in hand.
- Please send electronic copies of any handouts you would like to distribute.

## **PUBLISHING**

### **Present or demonstrate general characteristics of a publishable paper in your field.**

- Have fellows develop publishing plans. Ask them to consider or write the following:
  - ✓ List the current papers or research data that you can transform into a publishable paper or book?
  - ✓ Develop a timeline for publishing one or more of the items you listed.
- Have fellows share their plans and give feedback. Ask fellows and faculty to suggest journals and publishers who might be interested in their work.
- Explain how to come up with a title of book that speaks to your research, publishers and larger audience.
- Explain how to define your audience, outside readers and unique positioning with respect to field, etc.

## **JOB SEARCH**

### **Present or demonstrate general guidelines for conducting a job search in your discipline.**

- Discuss the various aspects of applying (cover letter, CV, job talk, interview, etc.)
- Have Fellows develop Job Search Timeline:
  - ✓ When do they plan to go on the job market?
  - ✓ How/When will they look for open positions?
  - ✓ When will they develop their materials? Job talk?
  - ✓ What kind of practice opportunities might they have for interviewing? Job talk?
- Have fellows share their timelines and give feedback. Ask fellows and faculty to identify potential sources for open positions in their field. Share contacts.

## **GRANT WRITING**

### **Present or demonstrate general characteristics, tricks of the trade, regarding successful grant proposals in your discipline.**

- Have fellows develop potential grant proposal topics and consider:
  - ✓ What topics are they interested in?
  - ✓ What preparatory work needs to be done prior to writing a proposal?
  - ✓ How can they make their topic attractive?
- Have fellows share their topics and give feedback. Ask fellows and faculty to identify potential funding sources that might be favorable to their topics. Share contacts.

## (Sunday Discussion Topics, cont'd)

### TIPS FOR TENURE

- Present or demonstrate general guidelines for getting tenure in your discipline.
- Discuss things to consider and ways to balance the demands (publishing, course load, service, advising students) of the first few years as a faculty member.
- Discuss the hopes and fears of being a first-time faculty.
- Have fellows develop tentative Tenure Timeline for the first few years of their faculty position which includes:
  - ✓ Publishing
  - ✓ Developing syllabi and preparing to teach courses
  - ✓ Committee participation
  - ✓ Advising students
- Have fellows share their timelines and give feedback. Ask fellows and faculty to identify potential strengths and challenges of each other's timelines. Share strategies.

### SPECIFIC QUESTIONS FROM FELLOWS ~ Faculty Discussion Topics

**In addition to Job Search, Tenure Process, Grant Writing and Publishing, fellows would like faculty participants to discuss these specific topics during our Sunday morning session:**

#### Arts & Humanities

- how do we begin the process of finding or connecting with a publisher?
- What were faculty experiences in the humanities when writing the book proposal?
- information about process of getting book deal with publishing press; also what to consider regarding differences in presses
- I've been having trouble publishing, I would like to hear perspectives on when to decide if a piece needs to be revised or abandoned all together.
- How do you approach publications that are not tied to your book? Do you view this as a way to explore other topics or do you feel it's important to retain a coherent research profile across publications and the book?
- at what point should you begin the publishing portion so that it may count toward tenure-track positions?
- Publishing: What are some basic rules or guidelines to publishing in the first three years of your career?
- Publishing process: How to approach editors at academic presses and at what stage (book proposal, entire manuscript)? What are the criteria one should take into consideration when picking the best press?
  - How to approach UC departments and faculty to pitch a research/job talk
- How can this fellowship train "mentors" to be better sponsors and advocates?
- Getting support with getting talks. Better platforms to make our work visible and legible beyond immediate fields

## Arts & Humanities cont.

- Navigating the hiring incentive and reaching out to possible departments
- Using PFP hiring incentive after fellowship completion (how to stay on radar for UC hires)
- How can this program overcome the skepticism of Departments that view its purpose and function as a threat to their autonomies, especially their ability to set their own hiring agendas?
- How to tell when something is a job talk or research talk when invited to give a talk as a PFP; how to continue to take advantage of the network as a PFP alumni if one has not yet been placed in a UC job but is interested in the future (in other words: how to keep signaling the departments that I am interested in a UC job, once I become a PFP alumni); what are the expectations of a candidate when giving an invited pfp-related job talk and how should one conduct a talk.
- Advice to be successful in the job market.
- Job Search: What are ways that we can increase the likelihood of getting campus visits? Of the the variables that we can control, what are things we should be doing as postdocs to let departments know we would be great colleagues?
- -Hiring/negotiation sessions
  - Mentoring for junior faculty and preparing for the tenure review process
  - Tips and advice for writing grants for research/book writing
- Appointments in 2 departments.
- What percentage of fellows are hired into the UC system? What are some of the barriers the remaining percentage has encountered? What percentage of fellows whom the UC system has not hired remain in academia?
- Careers outside of academia, for those of us who may not have landed a position in our final year of the postdoc.
- -I would also also a session by former pfps who got faculty positions at the UCs to give us insider info about ups and downs of the process and what they wished they knew beforehand
- How to be approach first year in the TT job and pre-tenure time to prepare for obtaining tenure. How to negotiate multiple research projects. Balancing writing/teaching/service. Obtaining grants.
- How to facilitate good working relationship with other faculty, some tips
- How to navigate balance of research, teaching, and service.
- I would like to learn about PFP alumni's experiences as post-docs. How did they transition from post-doc to first-year assistant professor?
- Tenure process: Can we talk about the tenure process for an interdisciplinary scholar in a traditional department vs being in an interdisciplinary department?
- Job talks, campus visits, tenure process, job negotiations, UC rank steps
- Tenure process: How to balance teaching and research to make sure that progress is made towards getting tenured?
- Relationship with students: How to manage one's relationship with undergraduate and graduate students? How to set boundaries etc.
- What are some of the most common changes/considerations when revising a dissertation into a book? For example, beyond just restructuring and rewriting, did faculty consider new audiences?
- What is a standard teaching load at a UC for an assistant professor?

## Arts & Humanities cont.

- How many days a week are assistant professors on campus?
- Do you have tips for managing teaching with research during the quarter?
- What recommendations do tenured faculty in the humanities have for the book proposal process? When is it too early to contact book editors? What kind of support should we be thinking about or trying to obtain? Should we submit the book proposal after we've done a book manuscript workshop or is it ok to do so before?
- Are there things you wished you had known when you transitioned into a faculty position, in terms of paperwork, logistics, planning for classes, things to ask your chair or coordinator, etc?

## Social Sciences & Professional Fields

- How did you turn lunch invites with senior faculty (that you initiated) to express your interest in being hired within their department?
- Developing a book proposal
- When is a good time for a book proposal?
- Selecting an academic press/book series
- Publishing a single-authored peer-reviewed journal article
- Publishing for interdisciplinary scholars
- Focus on how to improve a job talk and what are they looking for when hiring. Publication of books, journals and other forms of publications.
- How do I set up job talks on the PFP?
- How is a job talk different than other long-form presentations?
- How do we deftly engage with the question and answer portion of the job talk?
- Job search/preparing application materials for interdisciplinary scholars
- How do we project our future productivity beyond the first project?
- How to balance geographic flexibility with job fit during the search?
- What are you looking for on a job talk? How do you convey that information to the applicant?
- Strategies to remain viable for faculty jobs after 2nd year PFP program.
- Advice on preparing NIH funding as early TT professor without any previous history of NIH funding as a graduate student or postdoc
- Advice on starting your first semester
- -Do you have any guidance on how to write competitive research grants for professional fields (education)? Do you have any guidance on how to be a strong, thoughtful, and supportive mentor to graduate students as a faculty member? Do you have any guidance on how to balance writing for publishing with teaching and mentoring?
- How are budget cuts affecting the hire of PFP's? What resources and funding opportunities available on writing your book based on your dissertation?
- How to navigate/advice on what to do strategically if you have earned a tenure track job outside the UC system but still want to use the hiring incentive in the future.
- Steps to prep for tenure during the postdoc and in the first few years of a TT position; book publishing - how to build connections with potential publishers
- Strategies for the tenure track market; book writing; managing teaching; mentoring students

## Social Sciences & Professional Fields cont.

- Tips for your first year as an assistant professor. Tips for writing your first grant as an assistant professor. How did you know what opportunity was the right fit for you as an assistant professor?
- What do you wish you would have known when you were a postdoc?
- What is an ideal balance and pace for taking on multiple projects (e.g., publishing dissertation as book while beginning new solo and collaborative projects)? I don't want to take on too much, too soon but I also don't want to miss opportunities. I imagine this balance and pace varies across the career trajectory, and I would love guidance on what's advisable for postdocs and early career faculty.

## Life Sciences

- When do you know its time to publish your results? How do know its time to apply for a faculty position? Should I have the best publication record and grant portfolio to be the best candidate? Does having the UC postdoc fellowship guarantee a faculty position at a UC?
- Would love to hear from STEM faculty about their career path, publishing and grant writing. Often times we have very lengthy postdocs and that can come with a different approach and outlook to preparation and timing of events.
- How to maintain mental health & work-life balance during the transitional period (including postdoc/tenure-track phase)
- What part of your work you think made the difference for you to get a professor job?
- How many jobs should I apply to on my first year? How strategically use the search waiver?
- More about you can help us follow-up with people who have invited us for job talks or might be considering us for employment. Do you contact them on our behalf?
- What are some differences in applying for R1 vs R2 institutions?
- How do you stay true to your identity as a researcher when you apply to many different jobs?
- Any tips on job search negotiations? What are some red flags concerning department culture to look out for?
- How to secure first grant after obtaining the faculty position
- -Applying for a K99 and/or foundation grants for transitioning into faculty role.
- Grant Writing resources as well (K99/R00, for life sciences and other grant opportunities not widely known):
- What are the main challenges when writing grants, and how do you overcome them?
- -Tips for identifying the true nature/dynamics of the interviewing department, I would prefer to land into a nurturing and supportive environment but worry that the interview is not enough to learn dynamics.
- As someone in life sciences, I would love to know more about Chalk talk, job application (Proposal, Diversity statement etc).
- Potential job interview questions?
- What are some 'green flags' and 'red flags' when visiting a campus for an interview?
- What is the best advice you can give to the fellows that are looking for jobs?
- What were your main weaknesses as a researcher when applying for jobs, and how did you overcome them?

## Life Sciences cont.

- For life sciences research faculty, what advice would you give to someone who is starting their new lab concerning hiring? What was your strategy? Would you change anything?
- How do you choose students to be in your lab? What are ways you motivate students?
- How do you keep radical hope alive as a faculty member in the conservative neoliberal academy?
- How do you translate TAs into teaching experience?

## Mathematics, Engineering & Physical Sciences

- How do you know you are ready to apply for jobs in the academia?
- Do you know about remote jobs that are somehow related to the academia? For example, the Art of Problem Solving is a company in which you can find remote jobs teaching courses. Are there other companies with similar positions out there?
- How do you avoid getting stuck on the "postdoc treadmill"? This is particularly relevant for fields that require multiple postdocs to be considered for faculty jobs.
- How do you write a standout research statement when you just started a postdoc position? (How to set your statement apart from your PhD advisor's research tools/projects?)
- Also, what are some of the most important skills that I should focus on developing as a postdoc to help me succeed as a faculty -- or even to land a faculty position?
- how to find out which UC campuses are hiring people from my subfield
- I would like more information on how to apply to departments that don't have an open call.
- If there is not an open search happening in our field in the fall, how would you recommend contacting the department/chair/faculty to see if a position can be created?
- When to start to looking for a job?
- Would you recommend reaching out to faculty/department chairs in departments we're applying to before/after submitting our applications?
- Would you recommend asking to give a talk at a university before the application process starts? Or just wait to receive an interview?
- How would you recommend navigating faculty applications when your partner is also applying in the same cycle?
- How to write your first grant? Can you ask for NSF career proposal from colleagues to use as example?
- Is it more important to focus on developing major ideas rather than generating publications?
- What to do during first 2 years as a faculty
- When to start thinking about tenure
- The future of higher education, particularly funding
- What should we consider when thinking about start-up funds?
- What are the main challenges of becoming faculty?