Committee on Academic Career Opportunities and Placement

2020–2021 Membership

Sam Cowling, chair (2023)
Gil Hersch (2021)
Ram Neta (2021)
Seth Shabo (2021)
Chloe Armstrong (2022)
Lauren Ashwell (2022)
Christopher Kulp (2022)
Paul Bohan-Broderick (2023)
Eileen S. Nutting (2023)
Benjamin S. Yost (2023)

Barak Krakauer, Committee on Non-Academic Careers, ex officio (2021)

Richard Legum, Committee on Philosophy in Two-Year Colleges, ex officio (2022)

Thomas Ames, GSC Liaison (2021)
The Academic Career Opportunities and Placement committee (ACOP) focused its efforts on three projects throughout the majority of the period under discussion. Each of the projects flowed out of a committee-wide discussion and call for projects in late summer of 2020. Given the scope of the projects, a subcommittee was formed for each of the following:

(i) Personal Websites: A frequent topic of conversation among jobseekers and hiring committees is how to design and host a website and where jobseekers might find some reliable guidance on this front. A subcommittee consisting of Tomy Ames, Gil Hersch, Eileen Nutting, and Sam Cowling began work in October of 2020 and met three times via Zoom to produce a document by February 2021, which was subsequently posted to the APA blog (linked here). As we update relevant APA documents in the future, this should provide useful material to draw from and, for the time being, it will steer potential jobseekers to a pre-existing APA document as well as some discussions of the topic elsewhere.

(ii) Archiving Previous Job Market Guidance Material: Members of ACOP noted that APA meetings regularly include sessions that are, if not specifically focused on the job market, directly relevant to it. The fact that the insights disseminated in these sessions are available only to those attending the meetings (not to mention the sessions themselves) is regrettable and raises concerns that jobseekers who most need support and guidance are too often the least likely to receive it. A subcommittee consisting of Chloe Armstrong, Christopher Kulp, Seth Shabo, Ben Yost, and Sam Cowling convened in September and divided up the last eleven years of APA meeting programs as well as the various APA newsletters (e.g., Teaching Philosophy and Two-Year Colleges) with an eye towards mining them from papers and other documents that we might recirculate or revive for the APA blog. Upon reconvening in January, we were surprised to discover that there was effectively no paper trail for the content of APA sessions related to the job market. (In many cases, there were also no participants listed.) Without enough content to start a repository or series, we discussed ways to prevent the work behind these sessions from disappearing and resolved a new best practice for our committee: any APA session ought to yield at least one brief but written outcome on a job market-relevant topic that would ideally be published on the APA blog. Our hope is that this will ultimately generate an archive of useful discussions from which to draw.

(iii) Best Practices in Describing Positions: Committee member Lauren Ashwell raised the issue of how best to describe positions when advertising job opportunities especially with regard to the pursuit of a diverse applicant pool. A taskforce consisting of Lauren Ashwell, Ram Neta, Paul Broderick, and Sam Cowling met in October and discussed potential strategies for raising awareness of this topic and making inroads into articulating some best practices in this regard. After on-going discussion about the issue (e.g., whether an “Open/Open” job is ultimately conducive to a diverse applicant pool), we decided that further discussion and research was needed. Since one of our subcommittee members is now heavily involved in the APA Live
initiative and another has cycled off, work on this topic will likely be folded in our updates to the APA Handbook of Placement Practices.

Throughout the last year, the work of the committee has been significantly disrupted by the pandemic. But, along with the projects above, we have found a variety of ways to continue to serve our mission.

(i) With the help of panelists Gary Ostertag, Victor Kumar, and Lauren Ashwell, ACOP hosted a well-attended (and recorded for subsequent access) webinar on the job market in early December. Subsequently, Lauren Ashwell kindly agreed to serve as our committee liaison to the APA Live initiative. Lauren then hosted another webinar featuring committee member Ben Yost and other panelists in August.

(ii) ACOP reviewed and discussed a letter regarding practices surrounding student evaluations of teaching that was shared with the committee in February. Those discussions, which took place largely via email, lead to a proposal adopted in the May Board Meeting to create a taskforce charged with updating APA documents that touch upon student evaluations of teaching. Our committee member, Eileen Nutting, generously agreed to lead this taskforce.

(iii) ACOP discussed and provided feedback on an exceptionally timely project courtesy of Sally Scholz, which presented a comprehensive range of best practices regarding remote interviewing. This document offers critical assistance to departments hiring amid the pandemic. ACOP members were grateful for the chance to support Prof. Scholz’s excellent work and are sincerely appreciative of her efforts on this front. The resulting document was made available via the APA Blog (linked here).

After putting a pause on sessions at divisional meetings last year, we are returning to “regularly scheduled programming” with David Suarez and Chloe Armstrong running a session on the job market and social media for the 2021 Central Meeting. Planning for a Pacific APA session are underway. It should also be noted that Chloe Armstrong has kindly agreed to serve as liaison with the Philosophy in Two-Year Colleges committee and has been in active discussion about possibilities for future collaboration.

Based upon discussion in our committee meeting in July, our primary aims for the foreseeable future are to re-establish our in-person presence at divisional meetings, update the APA Handbook of Placement Practices, and support—usually through the work of individual committee members—projects like APA Live and the taskforce on student evaluations of teaching. Our focus on updating the Handbook represents a return to the more standard workflow of the committee after taking a year to see what the pursuit of some smaller projects might look like.

ACOP is grateful to Seth Shabo, Gil Hersch, Tomy Ames, and Ram Neta for their contributions to the committee and have happily welcomed David Suarez, Kelly McCormick, and Isabel Canfield as new members.