How to find an academic job

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Introduction

My background:

Ph.D. 2003 Baylor College of Medicine, Houston, TX, Margaret Goodell

Postdoctoral Training: 2003-2010 Children's Hospital Boston, Boston, MA,
George Daley

Grants:
As student: None
As postdoctoral fellow: ACS, ASH Scholar Award, NIDDK K01

First Author Publications:
As student: 1 PNAS, 2 Experimental Hematology
As Postdoctoral Fellow: 2 Blood

My Job Search:

- 12 First Visits
- 6 Second Visits, Scientific spouse also visited these institutions
- Negotiated with 6 institutions, resulting in 3 formal offers for myself and 2 for my spouse

Identifying Opportunities

Know Thyself

-Are you OK with teaching?

-Do you want to interact with clinicians?

-Do you want to focus entirely on research?

-Do you need access to expensive specialized equipment not likely to be found at all institutions?

-Do you want access to graduate students?

-Would you enjoy being a mentor/personnel manager?

-Are you restricted geographically?

-Is cost of living a big issue for you?

Medical School

Large University

Private Research Institute

Small Teaching University

Research Hospital

National Institution

Non-Academic Path

Identifying Opportunities

Look for Job Postings

-Journals (Nature, Science, Cell, etc…)

-Society Websites (ASH, ISEH, ISSCR, etc…)

- Institutional or Departmental Websites

- Job Boards at Meetings

Be Proactive and Create Your Own Opportunities!

- Ask your graduate and postdoctoral mentors to write to colleagues

- Write to senior colleagues yourself

- Write to heads of Departments/Institutions

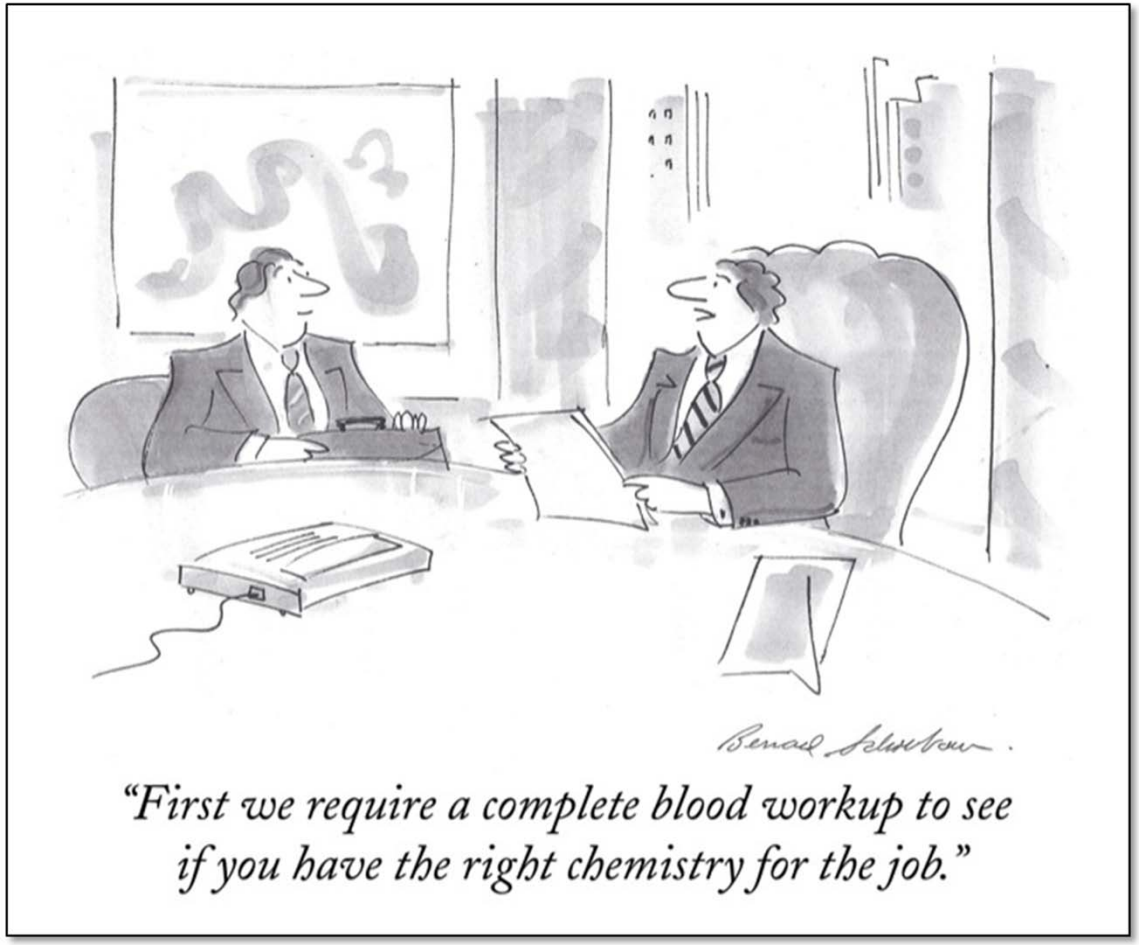
- Approach senior colleagues at meetings

My perspective

- PhD in UK and Postdoc in Boston
- Faculty at Baylor College of Med in Houston since 1997
- Direct lab of ~15 trainees, and a stem cell center that has recruited 4 junior faculty
- Participated in many other search committees/recruiting efforts

How does a search committee approach the search?

- Sometimes a specific expertise is sought- may not be explicit in the advert
- Committee often has broad expertise
- Hiring is a huge investment- Looking for promise of future success
- Success
  - Grants and papers
  - Bringing new directions to department
  - Possible collaborations and enrichment



"First we require a complete blood workup to see if you have the right chemistry for the job."

How do we identify candidates and predict success?

My perspective- med school which is totally dependent on outside funding- must be able to raise grants and become independent; tougher now than ever

- 1st screen → > 100 applications – every typo matters. Every review, paper, and reference counts.
- 10-14 candidates make cut, and further research is done- phone calls, queries (status of papers?) Phone interview (language skills?)
- ~3 brought in for interview

To make first cut

- CV
  - Primary research papers (CNS)
  - Mentor
  - PhD history (mentor and papers)
- Letters of reference → have them sent automatically
  - Specific, and not obviously written by the candidate!
- Research plan- what will their first grant look like? Can they write?
- Cover letter → well written, neat

Visits

- 1st visit
  - Quality of talk
  - Quality of chalk talk
  - Quality of interactions
  - General mutual interest level/feasibility of recruit
  - Feedback from all people who met (including students)
- 2nd visit
  - Fit/personality
  - Recruitment of spouse/partner
  - Still can win or lose job at this stage
- Negotiation

Preparing for Interview

First Visit

-Seminar – practice practice practice and then practice some more!!!

- Do not overwhelm with data
- Put research in context of field
- Emphasize your unique contributions
- **BRIEFLY** outline your future research plans (2-3 slides)
- DO NOT GO LONG! Leave time at end for discussion

-Know the department

-Request an itinerary ahead of time and know the work of your interviewers

- Review their latest papers/abstracts on plane and prepare questions

-Prepare questions to assess institutional environment, especially when meeting with Assistant Professors

-Do they fell well-supported
-Quality of personnel

-Mentally prepare some questions for dinner

-Does not have to be science-related (the city, schools, etc…)

-Write your thank-you notes on the plane ride home and send them the next day

Preparing for Interview

Second Visit – Chalk Talk

– Practice practice practice and then practice some more!!!

-Find out ahead of time if slides are OK

-Practice with and without slides

- Prepare **FEW** slides (6-8) that are broad outlines of experimental plans and emphasize why your work matters

-Stand

- Be prepared to answer the following quesitons without being defensive:

- What is the first experiment you would do in your new lab?
- How will you prioritize amongst your experimental goals?
- What if none of these experiments work?
- I really don't think that experiment is going to work as you think…
-Isn't that too ambitious?
-Why aren't you doing these experiments in mice/zebrafish/worms/whatever?
- How will you adjust to moving from a large well-funded lab to a lab of 2-3 people with limited resources?
- How can you compete with Dr.HHMI-funded investigator in your field?
- What will be the aims of your first R01?
-Who are your collaborators in this department/institution?
-Besides NIH, where will you look for funding?

Preparing for Interview

Second Visit

-Again, Request an itinerary ahead of time and know the work of your interviewers

-Be prepared with a list of needs (equipment, mouse space, fish facility, etc…)

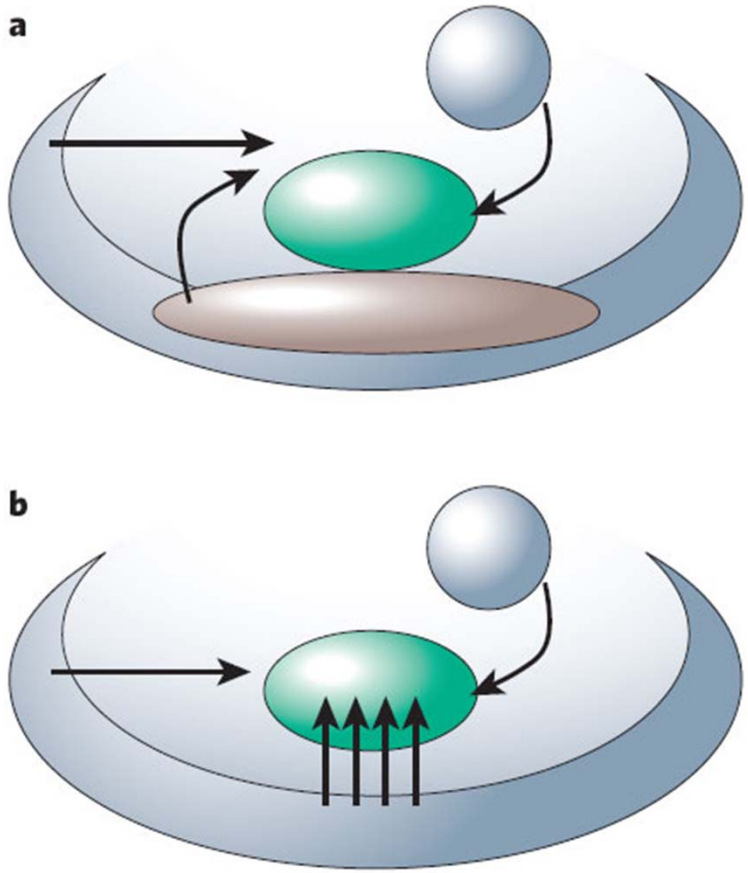
-Be prepared to have productive tour with realtor

-Write your thank-you notes on the plane ride home and send them the next day

What should YOU be looking for?

The right niche!

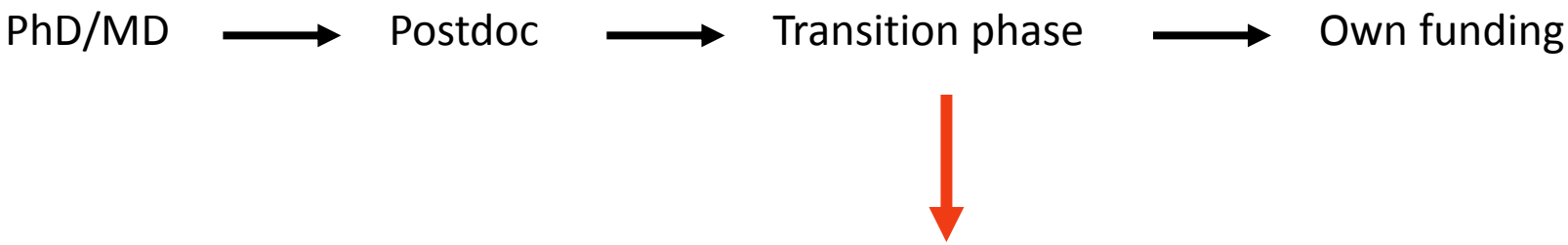
- Is there sufficient financial support?
- Is there mentorship?
- Do I fit?
- Colleagues → they will change your work



The path to research independence
–
an MD perspective

Dr. Michael Heuser
Hematology, Hemostasis, Oncology, and Stem Cell Transplantation

The path to research independence



- A mentor is good, a patron is better
- Write 2-3 proposals
- Preliminary experiments
- Students/PhDs

How to find a new position?

- Create your own one.

The path to research independence

PhD/MD → Postdoc → Transition phase → Own funding

- DFG (Emmy-Noether Program*, individual and group grants)
- Deutsche Krebshilfe (Max-Eder Program*)
- José-Carreras Leukemia Fund
- Wilhelm-Sander Stiftung
- European Research Council (ERC starting grants*)

* Proposals may include position of PI

Max Eder Research Program

- medical doctors, clinically oriented basic researchers
- apply within 6 months after postdoc
- own position, PhD, postdoc, (technician)
- institution has to provide lab space (and technician)
- funding period: 4 years (+ optional 3)
- interview
- time from application to funding: > 1 year

Questions?

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