

Dean

Big Picture

- What is the long term plan for this school/institution?
- How does this department fit into the long-term plan?
- What is the outside perception of this department? Strong? Unified? Interactive?
- Admissions profiles:
 - Undergraduates: who applies? who is accepted? who comes here? Where do they go after graduation?
 - Graduates: who applies? who is accepted? who comes here? Where do they go after graduation?

New Faculty Assimilation/Success

- What sorts of programs are available for new faculty members?
 - Formal mentoring?
 - Orientation?
 - Written faculty handbook?

Research

- What resources are available to initiate student research?
- Is there support for summer research by undergraduates?
- Are competitive, within-institution seed grants available?
- What are the indirect costs of grants?
- What are the expectations for the summer? On campus? Or is field work ok?

Teaching

- What are typical teaching opportunities, across the college?
- How much variation is there across departments?
- Are teaching training opportunities available? What kinds? How often?
- Can one buy out of teaching obligations?

Faculty Review/Tenure

- What is the schedule and mechanism of faculty review?
- How much of the department is already tenured? Is there a quota?
- Who decides tenure and how?

Sabbatical Policies

- Are sabbaticals available?
- If so, how do they work?
- Do benefits continue?

Dean, continued

Details

- Salary?
- How paid?
- Can grants be used to supplement summer salary?
- How do raises work?
- What are the benefits?
- What retirement plan(s) would be available?
- What type of health plans are available?
- Any benefits for tuition for family members?
- Will they pay moving expenses?
- Are there resources available to assist spouses in locating jobs?
- Who insures equipment?
- Who would I be negotiating with?
- What is the time frame for making a decision?

Department Chair

Big picture

- What is your vision for the department/school? Where is it going in the next 5 years? 10?
- When was the last planning exercise? Can I get a copy?
- How does this position fit in to that vision?
- Is the department growing or shrinking?
 - Which subfields?
 - Are there tensions among the subdisciplines?
 - What are current plans for future hires?

New Faculty Assimilation/Success

- What sorts of programs are available for new faculty members?
 - Formal mentoring?
 - Written faculty handbook?

Department Administration

- How big is the department?
- Is it unified, or split along disciplinary lines?
- How often does the department meet to discuss departmental business?
- How are decisions made?
- How is chairmanship determined? How long is the term?

Students

- What kind of graduate students do you attract?
- Where do they go once they finish their degrees?
- Who pays for graduate students? Are there any training grants?
- Do students have a say in search decisions?
- Do students have a say in department administration?
- What interdisciplinary collaborations are already in place? (Are there any training grants, for example)
- How many undergraduate majors come through the program each year?

Research

- What is available as "set up" money?
- Is there department research support available? Of what kinds?
- Are there vehicles available for field trips/research use?

Department Chair, continued

Teaching

- What secretarial help is available for working with courses? With grants/papers?
- What is the teaching expectation through time? How many courses?
- Which courses?
- What would this person teach over the next 3 years?
- How much flexibility in what an individual teaches?
- How much flexibility in when courses are scheduled (within a week, within a year)?
- How big are classes? Are teaching loads weighted by the number of students in the classes?
- Is there time to prepare the first course?
- Can I teach a seminar the first semester/quarter?
- Are TAs available? For what courses?
- How much funding is there for courses, particularly new ones?
- How do ideas for new courses get processed?
- What are the teaching labs like?
- Are there computer teaching labs? Software? Support personnel?

Service

- What non-teaching expectations are there?
- What are the “standing” department committees?
- How does undergraduate advising work?
- How does graduate advising work?

Promotion & Tenure

- Are there annual reviews before tenure?
- Who decides on tenure?
- On what criteria are decisions made?
- Are the criteria written down and handed out to new faculty?
- What are the unwritten criteria?
- What percent succeed?
- Is there a “tenuring up” policy?
- schedule -when do people come up for tenure?
- What are the criteria for promotion to full professor?

Details

- Can I see the space for this person?
- How much office space, lab space, offices for graduate students?
- How long to remodel? Who pays?
- Ethernet? Networks? Email? Who pays?
- Reprints? Page charges?

IMPORTANT FOR YOUR SANITY: When will a decision be made? When might I be

notified?

Faculty Members

Big Picture

- What do you like best about this place?
- What do you like least about this place?
- What are you looking for in this new position?
(want to know: is there agreement? Or are there opposing ideas?)
- What are hiring priorities for the future?
- What else does a newcomer need to know?

New Faculty Assimilation/Success

- What sorts of programs are available for new faculty members?
 - when you started
 - now
 - what do you wish you'd known?

Higher Administration

- How is the [higher] administration? Rigid? Flexible?
- Are they fair?

Department Administration

- How often does the department meet?
- How are decisions made?
- Do you feel that faculty have an adequate say in day to day operations?
 - In major decisions?

Graduate & Undergraduate Students

- How about the students? Are they motivated? What do they do after graduation?
- What support is available for graduate student research? Enough computers?
- What support is available for undergrad research?
- Are work study students available from time to time?
- Is there travel support? How often? How much?
- Do all biology majors do research?
- Do they have to submit a thesis?
- Are there any curriculum changes in the works?
- Do grad students with TA's have time to get their own research done?
- How are most grad students funded?

Faculty, continued

Research

- What support is available for research?
- How's the library? Journal availability? Where do you go for the obscure stuff?
- Does the administration support travel to scientific meetings? How often? How much?
- How much equipment sharing is there?
- Do you feel like this is a congenial environment?
- How much collaboration is there within the department or college?
- How much external collaboration is there? Is this supported by the administration?
- Who does grant book-keeping?
- Is there access to mainframe or UNIX-based computers?
- How much technical support is there for computing?

Teaching

- What do you teach?
- What is the general teaching expectation through time? How many courses?
- What would you like this person to teach over the next 3 years?
- How much flexibility in what an individual teaches?
- How much flexibility in when courses are scheduled (within a week, within a year)?
- How big are classes? Are teaching loads weighted by the number of students in the classes?
- Can I teach a seminar the first semester/quarter?
- Are TAs available? For what courses?
- How are TAs trained?
- How much funding is there for courses, particularly new ones? Can you buy what you need?
- How do ideas for new courses get processed?
- What secretarial help is available for working with courses? With grants/papers?
- Is this a Mac based or PC based department? What are the student computer labs like?
- Who sets up equipment and washes glassware for teaching labs?

Responsibilities/Loads

- How are administrative committee responsibilities?
- How about advising?
- How many minor committees for graduate students?
- What percent of your time is spent on teaching, research and service?
- What is the average class size?
- What is the average lab size?
- What is your overall work load?

Sabbaticals

- What is the policy on sabbaticals? Do they have them? When? Are they automatic? How much?

Faculty, continued

Promotion & Tenure

- Are there annual reviews before tenure?
- Who decides on tenure?
- On what criteria are decisions made?
- Are the criteria written down and handed out to new faculty?
- What are the unwritten criteria?
- What percent succeed?
- Is there a “tenuring up” policy?
- schedule -when do people come up?
- What are the criteria for promotion to full professor?

Details

- How's the salary?
- How do raises work?
- Are the benefits any good? Are they transferable to other schools?
- What are housing costs?
- Is good housing available?
- What's it like to live here? Where do most people live? In town? Elsewhere?
- Schools?
- Crime rate?
- Cultural events on campus? Locally?
- Tuition assistance?
- Opportunities for spouse/partner?
- How's the parking?
- Family leave policies? Maternity coverage? Day care?
- Who pays for photocopying, phone calls, interlibrary loans, faxes, page charges, reprints?

Miscellaneous Questions

Salary/Benefits (Ask administration, untenured faculty, or benefits coordinators)

- How much?
- Hard money or soft money?
- What are the fringe benefits like?
 - health insurance. Who pays? What %? How does copay work?
 - maternity coverage/leave. How long a leave is guaranteed?
 - sick leave
 - retirement plans (TIAA-CREF? How do they do it? Matching? Who pays?)
 - any mortgage assistance programs?

Raises (Ask administration & untenured faculty members)

- what are the typical ranges?
- On what criteria are raises granted? Who decides?

Living

- cost of living: high/low?
- housing costs

Start Up

- How much money for equipment, supplies and travel as "set up" money?
- Can the spending be spread over a number of years, say two or three?
- Summer salary included?
- How about summer salary for undergraduate and graduate students until grants?
- Is there seed money available from the college/university?

Tenure

- schedule -when do people come up?
- Are there annual reviews before tenure?
- Who decides on tenure?
- On what criteria?
- Are the criteria written down and handed out to new faculty?
- What percent succeed?
- Is there a "tenuring up" policy?

Graduate Students

Big Picture

- What do you do?
- Why did you come here?
- What do you want to do after you finish?
- What's the best thing about this department?
- What could be improved?
- What's the best thing about this institution?
- What could be improved?
- What do you want from the new person?
- What skills/courses/seminars could I offer that would be especially helpful to you?

Student Life: What's it like to be a Ph.D. student here?

- How much camaraderie is there among the students of different professors?
- How much say do you have in administrative decisions? Job searches?
- Do students worry about support? How are the TAs? RAs?
- How many students have their own grants?
- Do you have enough money to live on?
- Is there a department social life? Within the grads/postdocs?

Department Politics

- Do the faculty get along? Are there hierarchies? Clear schisms?
- How do things work day-to-day? Does each professor have their own lab, which works independently of other labs? Or have professors banded together in groups with more shared equipment?
- What do you hear from faculty about:
 - job satisfaction
 - department politics
 - tenure issues
 - salaries
- What do you think about these issues?

Courses

- What's a typical junior/senior course like?
- What's a typical grad course like?
- What classes are hard? How much out of class work is there? Is there a lot of variation among different sections of the same course?
- What's the grad curriculum, beyond the core courses? Do students take many courses?
- How do you like having required core courses?
- What's this statistics core course like from a student perspective?
- How big are the classes?

Graduate Students, continued

Teaching

- Do you have time to do your own research when you're teaching?
- How much teaching does the average student do?
- Do you get trained?
- If so, how?
- Would there be interest in seminars to improve teaching methods?
- Can you take a more active role in teaching, if you want to?

Research Training

- How many of you had M.S. degrees when you started here?
- How many of you had research experience as undergrads or as technicians?
- Do you feel like you're exposed to sufficient techniques here?
- Is there support to get training elsewhere if it's not available here?
- Do you have enough computers/equipment to get your research done?
- What do you need that I could buy with startup funds to help the community?
- Do you have enough time to do your research if you're also teaching?

Details

- How's the food? Beer?
- Do alumni come back and tell you about life after graduation?

Questions to be Prepared For

In one of my interviews, I was given these four topics in advance:

- Future research plans: what directions do you see your research taking in the next 5-10 years? What will be the topic of your first major research proposal as a new faculty member, and where will you submit it? What balance do you anticipate between field research and lab/office based research? If field work will be important, what field sites would you want to consider in the first few years?
- Education: Given our curriculum needs within the X group, how will you contribute to the undergraduate and graduate curricula? In particular, what graduate course(s) what you like to teach, and what will be your basic teaching model (e.g. lecture, lecture + lab, discussion, etc)?
- Graduate and undergraduate research: How will you engage graduate and undergraduate students in your research program? That is, what style of advising/mentoring will you use?
- Resources: What critical resources do you need in order to establish a successful research program? What critical resources may already be here? What kind of help would you want from the X group, the Department, and the University for you to achieve your goals?

From Everham & Smallridge, ESA Bulletin Dec 1994

- What is the main point of your dissertation?
- What are your professional goals?
- What is your concept of teaching in a 4-year college as opposed to a research university?
- What specific research will you pursue if you are selected? How do you anticipate funding it?
- How has your experience and training prepared you to teach the courses required?
- What other courses might you teach?
- Why do you want this job?
- Why should they hire YOU?
- What strengths would you bring to the department?
- What would you expect from this department and administration?
- What kind of start-up funds, facilities, and equipment would you need?
- What experiences or interests do you have in college-wide activities and service?

From an underground primer by Peter Kareiva (UW-Seattle) and Dan Doak (UC-Santa Cruz):

- What research will you be doing when you show up here?
- What projects will you start next?
- Why would you want to come here?
- What teaching would you like to do?
- What is your philosophy of grad student training? How will you support students? What types of projects do you expect them to work on?
- What do you contribution to the department that is not already well covered by the faculty?
- What makes you think you could ever get any outside funding?
- What is the best idea you ever had?

- What do you do? (the 3-5 minute summary of your entire research agenda)
- Where do you see your work going in the next 10-20 years?

Questions to be Prepared For, continued

From an underground list of questions used by graduate students at the University of Arizona

- What kinds of tools would be available in your lab for grad student use?
- In what areas do you think your work would uniquely contribute to this department?
- With whom in the department do you envision interacting the most? Outside the department?
- What meetings do you attend? What societies do you belong to?
- What do you envision as your ideal lab: # grads, undergrads, postdocs, techs, participation of grads who are not your own students?
- To what degree do you see integrating grad students into your research program?
- Is their work usually closely related to your research focus or is it fairly independent?
- How do you help grad students get started on a project?
- What's your perspective on grad student funding?
- How would you respond to a student who is floundering (early vs. late)?
- What types of mentoring have you experienced -- and what would you do similarly or differently?
- What courses have you taught before?
- What do you see as the major challenges of teaching at a large (small) university?
- What do you want to teach? (grad, undergrad, seminars) Statistics?

Questions Known To Catch People Off Guard

- The illegal questions: spouses, children, etc.
 - For example: will anything need to be done for your spouse/partner (like find them a job)?
- Would you take this job if it were offered to you?
- How would you handle an interpersonal conflict in your lab?
- A break-up between two members of the lab who were involved?