

Faculty Job Interviews Part 2: Visiting the Institutes

 simplyblood.org/2019/10/faculty-job-interviews-part-2-visiting.html

ISEH Headquarters

October 31, 2019

simply blood

Deconstructing Blood Cell Research
Building the Hematology Community



In this two-part blog about my experience with the interview process for academic faculty positions, I previously covered the application process. This post will be about the ten visits I went on. In most places, the first visit will be one day with a seminar and one-on-one meetings with current faculty. Sometimes the first visit also includes a chalk talk. Some institutes organize a symposium where all the applicants give their talk, followed by one-on-one meetings with the search committee.

For your seminar and your chalk talk, the key is to prepare early and practice many times. Practice with colleagues and anyone you think might listen. The search committee will most likely include people that are not in your field, so make sure the big picture comes across clearly. Ideally you can convey a trajectory of research from your graduate work to your postdoctoral work. This should logically progress into your future research plans, which can be addressed with a few slides at the end of your talk. These future directions are worked out in more details, with specific aims, in your chalk talk. Again, practice is key. Practice in front of others, record yourself, watch and start over. The chalk talk should lay out the aims of your first grant application and how you might collaborate with your future colleagues in the search committee. Be prepared for tough questions like, what will your first hire do and who are your competitors in the field?

One-on-one meetings are the fun part of the interviews. Some people will take you through a slide deck of their research and you should be prepared to keep the conversation going. Quickly read up on everyone on your itinerary, their position in the institute and their research. Prepare a few questions for everyone you meet. Also take a list of generic questions you can ask everybody, such as: How many people are in your lab? How do you recruit trainees? What are the teaching requirements? How is mentoring of junior faculty organized? What project in the lab are you most excited about? These meetings are also a great opportunity to ask about resources such as patient samples, flow cytometry, sequencing, animal facilities, computational infrastructure, etc.

A few last pieces of advice: write down a few keywords during or after each meeting. This makes it so much easier to write thank-you emails the next day! Also take a notebook and pens, water bottle, a (caffeinated) snack and markers for your chalk talk.



Peter van Galen, PhD
Hematology Division, Brigham and Women's Hospital
Assistant Professor of Medicine, Harvard Medical School
Associate Member, Broad Institute of MIT and Harvard