Through the looking glass: What's next after a systems Ph.D.

John Linwood Griffin

PDL meeting talk • June 29, 2004

The job-search process

- My personal observations:
 - I've learned a lot about myself
 - · I've made a boatload of personal connections
 - The process can be remarkably fun and low-stress
 - · There are no disastrous, unrecoverable choices
- Easy to forget the decision is about you:
 - If something feels wrong (or right), it probably is

2

Outline

3

- Pre-interview
 - Where to apply?
 - When to apply?
 - Interview travel logistics
- Interview
- Post-interview

Where to apply? Do you want to continue doing what you're doing? Yes: post-doc, academic research Maybe: corporate research, government lab No: development, teaching, business, peace corps "Where to apply" changed for me during the process I wish I'd cast a wider net from the beginning Choose your thesis committee with job search in mind Useful to talk with folks across the spectrum of job types Also folks from different groups within an organization

When to apply?

- · Have your materials ready before the winter break
 - Allow time for 4+ letter-of-reference writers to write
 - · For publications: include reputation, acceptance rates
- Academic applications (pull-driven): January→February
- Corporate "applications" (push-driven): March→April
- Interview season: March→May (or →June...)
 - · You set the deadline for when you want offers
- Everything has taken longer than I expected
 - · But I could have aggressively pushed the schedule

5

Outline

7

· Pre-interview

- Interview
 - Things I did right during the interviews
 - Things I did wrong during the interviews
 - · Questions I frequently answered
- Post-interview

Interview travel logistics

- · Making your own travel arrangements wastes your time
 - · Use a travel agency or let interviewer handle details
 - No expectation to share costs among interviewers
- · Avoid taking the last possible flight before your talk
- · Make use of taxis or rental cars for ground transportation
- Recommended to wear a suit, and for "casual" wear a tie
- Bring a laptop for your presentation; theirs won't work
- Make copies of your receipts before submitting them!

6

Things I did right during the interviews

Don't try to tell them what you think they want to hear "What do you (dis)like about what you've seen here?"

- · Show passion about your work and your future plans
 - · Defend a position, but be flexible when appropriate
- · Be confident about your expertise in your background
 - · Most questions are interrogative; they want to learn
- Go slow: ≤ 2 interviews in one week; ≤ 3 in two weeks

8

Things I did wrong during the interviews

- Take the time for thoughtful, well-structured answers
 I have a tendency to ramble on without wrapping up
- Emphasize your contributions, not just the end result
 - · Give specific examples of your project involvement
- Make the most of your one-on-one meetings
 - Sometimes it's up to you to steer the conversation
- Eat lightly at lunch, or else you'll feel bloated on day two

9

Outline • Pre-interview • Interview • <u>Post-interview</u> • What should I consider? • What's important to me? • Where are my choices? • So where will I go?

11

Questions I frequently answered

- "I was unfortunately unable to attend your talk..."
- "What projects/areas do you want to work on next?"
 - "Where do you see your group/funding in Y years?"
- "Where else are you interviewing?"
 - "Why are you interested in our/their group?"
- "I've always wondered about this thing about storage..."
 - "Why is storage company C doing such-and-such?"

10

What should I consider?

- The people
 - Officemates, management, company support
- The job
 - "Freedom": choosing projects/colleagues, funding
- · The location
 - · Office aesthetics, geography, commute, social life
- The compensation and benefits
 - "We'd like to make this a non-factor in your decision"

What's important to me?

Realization: this isn't about finding my "ideal job"

- Will I enjoy being there as much as I enjoy being here?
 - Are the folks there excited about being there?
- What are my opportunities for visibility and mobility?
 How is the organization viewed internally/externally?
- Will this job get me closer to my long-term goals?
 - Which doors are opened; which doors are closed?

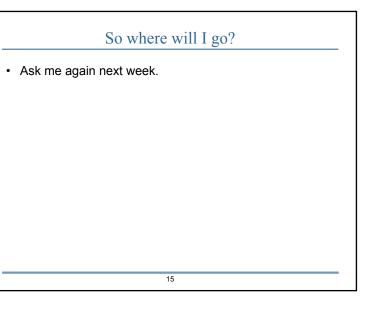
13

Tenure-track faculty positions 17 applications, 3 interviews, 1 offer (1 pending) Corporate research laboratories 3 resumes sent, 2 interviews, 1 offer Corporate research and/or development 7 resumes sent, 4 interviews, 0 offers (1 pending)

Where are my choices?

- Management consulting
 - 1 application, 1 interview, 0 offers

14



Closing thoughts

- Don't rule out any opportunities too early
 - · On-site visits will change your perception of a place
- Talk over your thoughts with anyone who'll listen
 - · Lots of useful "insider" bits about places will surface
- It's reasonable to think in terms of the next 3-5 years
 - · "Your interests & opportunities will continually evolve"

16