

an interview, but remember that no one expects you to be perfect. No matter how good you are in the classroom, there is always room for improvement. What interviewers want to see is that you noticed something went awry and you are thoughtful and intentional about the changes you plan to make as a result. This question and others like it come up frequently. You'll be at an advantage if you've given questions like this some thought beforehand. Check with people in your department, friends who have been through the interview process, or the career center at your institution to see if they have a list of common questions asked by interviewers. Spend time thinking about how you would answer these. You don't want your answers to sound rehearsed, but thinking critically about and reflecting on your teaching and career goals will put you in a better position to handle tough questions that you weren't expecting.

At the end of each interview you will typically be given time to ask questions of the interviewer. This is another opportunity to show interest in the position and to make a positive impression. Have a number of questions ready that are applicable to all jobs, but also try to have at least one question that is specific to the institution at the interview. You may get ideas for specific questions in advance by looking at the website: Do they have an interesting senior seminar? Do they have a club or program you want to work with? Great! Then ask about those to show that you want to get their job, not just a job.

Handling the Psychological Pressure

No matter how much you prepare for specific questions or research each institution, you'll still need to be ready for the emotional stress of interviewing at the JMM. It's a wholly different experience from Skype or phone interviews and it can be exhausting. Try to give yourself space between interviews; take a walk, bring some snacks, and break the process up for yourself so that you can approach each one with renewed focus and energy. Try not to compare yourself to other people on the job market, and avoid asking people how many interviews they have set up. You may find out that someone has 20 interviews and be crushed because you only have 3. No good can come from dwelling on others, so don't let this weigh on you. Who knows, maybe that person applied nationwide whereas you restricted yourself to a certain geographic region or maybe their field had a lot of openings this year. Focus on yourself and treat each interview like that position is your top pick. You may have a rocky interview; that's okay. Learn from it! Did a question you weren't expecting throw you? When you have time, think about how you might answer it differently if asked again. In the moment you want to shake it off and move on. Try not to let the rest of the interview get derailed and, most importantly, don't carry your anxiety into the next interview. It's easier said than done, but remember that each interview is a fresh (and precious) opportunity to show a potential employer why you are a good fit for them.

During and After the Interview

Dress and act professionally. Be confident, be yourself, and be sincere. Preparing for the interview beforehand will let your answers come across as genuine. After the interview, send a thank you email to the people who interviewed you. Be sure to mention something specific from your interview to express your excitement. Share something you are looking forward to learning more about. Hopefully, you'll hear from them again soon inviting you to an on-campus interview. Good luck!



Katelynn D. Kochalski

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Author photo is courtesy of the author.

Embracing the Job Search

Nicola Tarasca

This piece is addressed to those who are currently applying for jobs. The ambitious goal is to instill some positivity while waiting to hear about your job applications. I have started writing this while actually waiting to hear the results of my job search. After all, who could better represent the situation than someone who is currently involved in the search in the first line? So I am writing this piece in the hope that it will cheer me up as well.

With the complexities of the job search gradually unfolding, I found myself learning some lessons that I would like to share here. Securing a new job is no small feat, and I can easily find many reasons to be worried: the uncertainty of the future is daunting! The good news is that most accomplished professionals have walked in these shoes too. So the best we can do is to embrace the process and use our scientific skills to make the most of it.

It is certainly very helpful to discuss your job application with your mentors and senior colleagues. Hearing about past experiences could help to have a better picture of the process: grasp what is sought-after by the hiring managers and search committees, and anticipate questions from

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interviewers. The more inputs you gather, the better, so don't pass on opportunities to talk to—and read material available online from—those who are generous enough to share their experience. Be mindful, though, that each experience is unique. There are no golden rules, and emulating previous efforts does not guarantee the outcomes you expect. The process of matching employers and candidates depends on many conditions, which are seldom replicated. Ironically, after you successfully secure the position you were looking for, you will realize that you can hardly call yourself an expert on how to apply for jobs.

So the moral is to learn from the experiences of previous job seekers without attaching too much weight to the past. As a corollary, be mindful that it may take longer than you wish. One should gear up for the possibility of having to weather a long search before landing a desired position. In particular, consider applying for positions that would foster your professional growth while waiting for your dream job to materialize.

This brings me to an important lesson that I have learned, synthesized by the slogan: *It's never over!* I confess that I used to think that there is a designated path for success and if you don't get to stay on it, life only goes downward. Actually, this is far from the truth, and it is easy to meet many notable professionals with unconventional paths.

In fact, the tedious and stressful job search could become an opportunity for professional growth. During the process, one is naturally led to improve communication and writing skills to present ideas and accomplishments. And at the same time, while being on the lookout for jobs, one also becomes aware of interesting professional paths that would not otherwise have emerged.

So I encourage you to take up the job search as an opportunity for self-improvement and a transformative journey towards a new chapter of your life.



Nicola Tarasca

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Getting Involved in Your MAA Section

Pamela Richardson

Participation in the activities of professional societies is part of being in academia. Membership in a professional organization provides you with resources for research and teaching, access to journals and other publications, exciting conferences to attend, and other perks. If you are reading this, you are probably already familiar with the benefits of membership in the American Mathematical Society (AMS). Have you also investigated what the Mathematical Association of America (MAA) has to offer? If not, you should. In particular, I encourage you to get more involved in your MAA Section.

To help foster community in the mathematical sciences, every MAA member is automatically affiliated with a Section, a subgroup of members who live in a particular region. There are currently twenty-nine Sections, and you can find yours by using the MAA's "Find My Section" tool (<https://www.maa.org/programs-and-communities/member-communities/maa-sections>). Many MAA Sections cover a relatively small geographic area, making it easy to connect with other faculty members near you. Let's discuss the benefits of MAA Sections, as well as how you can get more involved.

MAA Sections provide opportunities for networking and professional development. Going to a Section meeting is a good place to start. Each MAA Section holds at least one conference per year, and since there are so many Sections, these meetings are often relatively close to home (and are usually considerably less expensive than a national conference). Every Section meeting has its own unique program, but they usually include invited addresses, contributed papers on both research and teaching, activities for students, and social events. Going to faculty talks can inspire you to try a new technique in the classroom or introduce you to a new research area. Attending student presentations can give you good ideas for undergraduate research projects for your own students. The social events are valuable networking experiences, helping you get to know faculty members at other institutions. Most Sections also offer faculty development programs or workshops, such as Section NExT. Modeled after the national New Experiences in Teaching (NExT) program, Section NExT organizes events to help new faculty integrate into the academic profession (e.g., sessions on improving teaching and

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