significant other do? I encourage students and postdocs to be ready with an answer for these questions (I don't mean they should answer the questions: I mean they should have a response ready to go, e.g., "It is not appropriate to ask that question during a job interview.") It is hard to muster the courage on the spot to say something like this; practicing the answer beforehand can help deliver it when the time comes. These situations are unpleasant and they *will* happen. In my case, when they did, I politely informed the chair of the situation before leaving campus.

Rolling With It

Interviewing is stressful. All the preparation in the world won't eliminate the anxiety a candidate feels the night before or the morning of. But once an interview starts, there is little time to think. Preparing your students and postdocs for the experience will help them successfully navigate the day.

Anthony Várilly-Alvarado

Credits

Author photo is by Joe Rabinoff.

Keeping Perspective While on the Job Search

Rafe Jones

Applying for jobs is disconcerting—and occasionally exhilarating—even in a normal job cycle. Randomness plays a large role at several junctures in the process, including which positions are open, what kind of candidate each hiring committee seeks, and which applications (often out of hundreds) make it through the early cuts where they frequently are read by only one or two people. Euphoria can accompany an invitation to visit a campus for a job near the top of your list, perhaps followed by despair if the offer goes to another candidate. These tendencies grow more pronounced in a cycle with a smaller than usual number of jobs, where each open position feels particularly precious.

My goal is to help you push back the tide of stress. First, take the long view. You're playing an elaborate game of chance, and it's only natural that it takes a few spins—and thus a few annual job cycles—for you to get a result that you really want. The path from receiving your doctoral hood to settling into a job you're content to do for the foreseeable future is rarely linear. When the poet Joseph Brodsky wrote, "What should I say about my life? That it's long and abhors transparence," he could have been writing about academic career arcs.

So don't let it get you down when one job cycle doesn't lead to the tenure-track position you'd been dreaming about. This is common, and when it happens you typically have two options. First, you can figure out a way to stay at your current institution for another year; second, you can take a temporary (often one-year) appointment at another institution.

If you're finishing graduate school and there's a graceful way to remain there and get your degree one year later, there are many benefits to doing so. In my experience it is an unspoken convention that t=0 in your career occurs when you receive your doctorate. Spending an extra year as a graduate student should only help your future career, as you get another year to beef up your scholarship and teaching. Financial considerations might make this option less attractive, however. If you're no longer a graduate student, it might be harder to stay on at your current position, but sometimes a need for someone to cover additional courses emerges in late spring or summer.

Taking a temporary appointment at another institution has many benefits as well, though it comes with some risks. Benefits include forming new professional relationships and gaining broader experience that can strengthen your application in future job cycles. If your temporary appointment is the kind of position you would like long-term, a letter of recommendation from a new colleague can be quite useful—especially if your colleague is well connected in the math community or well known for excellent teaching. A letter with detailed first-hand comments carries the most weight, so make sure to arrange for your letter-writer to observe your teaching, preferably more than once. If you're teaching online, you might consider inviting your letter-writer to sit in on a virtual class meeting, or providing sample course materials.

On the other hand, temporary appointments often come with heavy teaching loads that can make it a challenge to maintain research momentum. It's also natural to want to pour yourself into your new institution: to not only teach brilliantly but also be a departmental hero who organizes extra events, takes on independent studies, and has the evening office hours students love. These activities will be massively—and sincerely—appreciated by the faculty and students at your new institution. But you should be

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choosy about your time commitments: make sure that the activities you take on are aimed at your long-term career goals. If your dream job involves doing lots of research with undergraduates, or mentoring students of color, then jump at a chance to do those (and both have the added benefit of being a top priority at some departments, especially liberal arts colleges). It can be hard to say no to other service requests, but empower yourself to do so. In the wider job market, being a generally outstanding departmental citizen may help you less than, say, submitting a paper for publication. The latter aids in establishing your research program as a sustainable entity, something many hiring committees look for. So: devote as much of your energy as possible to activities that are going to best help you in the future, even if it means being less of a hero to your new department.

However your next job search turns out, it probably won't be your last one. Keep working on becoming the educator and mathematician you want to be, and keep in mind that finding a good-fit position usually takes time. You might try asking a colleague or two about their career trajectories; the stories you get most likely will have plenty of twists and turns.

Rafe Jones

Credits

Author photo is courtesy of Laura Chihara.