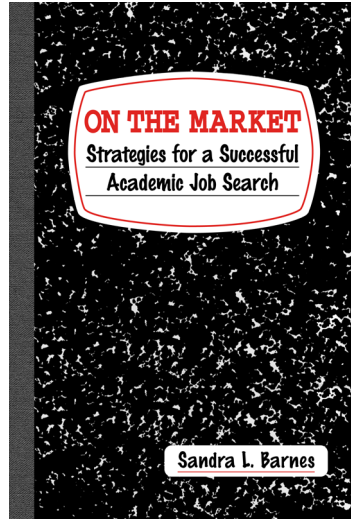


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On the Market: Strategies for a Successful Academic Job Search

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1

Introduction

Entering the academic job market can be an exciting time. It can also be quite harrowing. Although graduate students may be excited about finding a tenure-track position or that prestigious postdoctoral fellowship, many are also nervous about competition, completing the dissertation, graduating, and beginning an employment process that can be quite overwhelming. *On the Market: Strategies for a Successful Academic Job Search* is a guide to help the reader successfully identify, apply for, compete for, and get a tenure-track position in academia. This resource is a hands-on approach to organizing each step of the process from pre-application to job acceptance.

This book examines professional and personal issues every candidate should think about before entering or re-entering the job market, or when considering, accepting, or rejecting a position. Included are suggestions, practical strategies, “quick lists,” publishing strategies, and advice from faculty, as well as observations and ideas developed during my personal employment search process. Chapters 2–7 focus on professional issues and Chapters 8 and 9 on personal ones. I contend that a comprehensive search must consider both of these important arenas. Although no resource can guarantee a successful search, utilizing the material contained in this volume will increase a candidate’s chances of finding an academic position that meets her or his professional and personal needs.

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Chapters 2, 3, and 4 focus on maximizing the graduate school experience and developing a competitive, comprehensive application packet, as well as how to respond to advertisements, garner letters of recommendation, and develop a curriculum vita. I also provide a proposed timeline, to be used while in graduate school, to organize and schedule important milestones in the employment search and map each phase of the process.

Chapter 5 addresses one of the most important resources to distinguish yourself from other candidates—the teaching portfolio. In the past, teaching portfolios were required primarily for candidates applying at comprehensive liberal arts institutions or teaching colleges. This is not so today—many institutions now require a teaching portfolio as part of the application packet. To be more competitive, you should know how to create this important documentation of your teaching experience. Chapter 6 specifically addresses issues related to interviewing, including how to organize an on-campus academic presentation and teaching demonstration, as well as social dynamics to consider during onsite visits and when negotiating employment offers. Other academic and nontraditional job opportunities are examined in Chapter 7. A variety of personal or nonacademic issues that should be considered before accepting a position are included in Chapter 8. Candidates often overlook this area and it can dramatically influence their quality of life after a position has been accepted. Topics include how to assess the campus and departmental climate and balancing professional and personal considerations. Chapter 9 examines topics of interest specifically for racial or ethnic minorities, women, older or single persons, and candidates planning to relocate to unfamiliar regions. These nontraditional or underrepresented groups are entering the academic market in increasing numbers and their often-unique considerations have not been addressed in other books about the academic employment search. Chapter 10 includes information for junior faculty who are interested in re-entering the job market prior to tenure. Throughout the book, I also include suggestions, ideas, and anecdotal information to expedite the employment process.

This book has been developed to reduce the anxiety associated with entering the academic job market. Because there are a variety

of issues to consider when applying for a position in academia, many people may feel overwhelmed. Others may feel competent about applying, but are not sure about the appropriate steps to take. And even those for whom applying and interviewing are “old hat” may fail to consider options that might make them more competitive candidates. A variety of problems of scale face graduate students during this period, which is, perhaps, the most important first step in their academic career. Certain oversights may cause minimal negative effects during the application process, while others may have long-term consequences. And junior faculty who are contemplating re-entering the market must also be better informed before and during that process. People who follow a formal, structured, organized process have a better chance at landing a position and may also increase their chances of landing their ideal position.

On the Market incorporates a variety of guidelines to better prepare candidates to enter (or re-enter) the job market, to better inform them about often-overlooked issues, and to expand their knowledge to minimize the challenges associated with a competitive academic market. It is my hope that the reader will benefit from my personal experiences and those of other professors who have successfully located positions in academia.

Readers should consider two important caveats regarding use of this resource. First, although I have attempted to examine many issues central to a successful job search, this resource should not be considered or used as a substitute for locating and establishing relationships with mentors in academia. The wisdom, experiences, and advice of faculty, graduate advisers, and administrators are crucial in both performing a successful job search and having a positive, productive career in academia. *On the Market* was written to be used as a helpful tool to augment information and suggestions provided by seasoned advisers and mentors. Thus this resource should complement rather than compete with human resources in your respective disciplines. Second, readers should note that the academic market can vary considerably by discipline. What might be the case in the social sciences may be less so in the humanities—and irrelevant in the physical and life sciences. Although certain themes are germane regardless of the discipline

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(for example, the importance of maximizing the graduate experience and performing an organized search), this resource focuses on job search efforts in the social sciences and, to a somewhat lesser degree, the humanities. Again, mentors and graduate advisers will help tailor portions of this resource to meet the specific job search dynamics in your discipline.

On the Market can be a valuable resource for the newly graduated student who is just entering the market, an ABD (all but dissertation) who wishes to begin early preparation, graduate students who are considering nonacademic posts, nonacademics who wish to transition into academic positions, as well as current non-tenured academics who are re-entering the market. Competition can be keen and no one is guaranteed a successful job search or that their first position will be ideal, but, with proper preparation and this guide, students and faculty members can maximize their efforts for locating an academic position.