Building Communities of Support toward a Successful Academic Job Search

Paula D. Wishart, Rackham Graduate School
Lynne Sebille-White, The Career Center
Today

Context – Why this matters
Building communities on and off campus
Methods for success
Advice for current job seekers
Follow-up and maintenance of relationships
Resources
Successful Academic Job Search Strategies

- Select someone whose work I know
- Hire someone whose work I've seen
- Use a trusted colleague’s experience with job candidate
- Use an ad I placed
- Use a CV

Adapted from Bolles, The Job Hunter’s Survival Guide  2013 Edition
Exploring while Building Communities
Why Community Building?
Process Spans Your Career

- Beginning an ongoing process of building relationships
- Consider what is “stage appropriate” as you build relationships
Campus Communities

Who & Where

Your mentor                      Your cohort
Your department                  Related disciplines
Campus events
The Basics

Show up

- Go to meetings and ask questions
- Share your thesis in conversation
- Ask about the work of others

Speak up

- Attend multidisciplinary events
- Follow-up on posters or talks

Follow up

- Set up individual meetings
- Join journal clubs
Seek Multiple Advisors

Don’t rely on an n of one!

Don’t expect mentors or contacts to do your work

Guiding Mentor
Sponsor
Peer-mentor
Informational contact
Experienced straight-shooter
Conferences

People you plan to meet
People you know
Talks you attend
Poster sessions
Social events
Post-event
Strategies for Success at a Conference
Methods for Conferences

Submit a poster
Research before you attend
Become involved in conference planning
Attend newcomers meetings
Strategically plan whom you want to meet
Invite faculty to visit a poster at upcoming event
Ask questions in large rooms with lots of people
| YOU take the lead | Who you are  
| | Why you connected with them  
| | What you want – *the specific “ask”*  
| | Next steps  

*transparent and authentic ⇔ full disclosure*
“Dear Dr. Who,

I will be attending the Northwest Summit Conference in December. My work is in the area of X and I think it complements areas of investigation in your department. I will be presenting a poster at the Wednesday poster session and invite you to stop by ...”
Prepare, prepare, prepare...

- Write out what you are going to say
- YOU lead the discussion
- Stick to agreed time
- Have a list of researched questions
- Follow-up with a thank you note
Building Relationships while you are on the market to be successful in your job search
Reaching out Before you Apply

Grad Chair
Chair of Department
Most Senior faculty
Most Junior faculty
Other Graduate Students
Things you Might Say

“I have always admired your department’s work in X and would like to set up some time to learn more from you...”

“I am planning to apply to your department and would benefit from your perspective as a (junior/senior) faculty...”
You’ve Been Invited to Campus

- Administrators of job searches (be kind)
- Chair of Graduate Studies (reach out)
- Search Committee (know who they are)
Know before you go...

✓ Your significant accomplishment(s) as a graduate student.

✓ Overall goals for your research as you progress in your academic career.

✓ Experience and qualifications that make you particularly well suited to achieve those goals.
Effective Follow-up & Maintenance

You’ve gotta’ give to get
Thank you note is *not* overrated!
Do what the contact suggests
Update contacts on your progress
Don’t overlook the intrinsic give-backs
Plan ahead & schedule follow-up
Post Conference Follow-up

Job candidate follow-up with potential job:

“Dear Professor Who,

It was wonderful to meet you. I appreciate the time you took in discussing your department and how my research might complement your work. Our discussion deepened my interest in your department and I look forward to submitting my materials...”
Grad student building a relationship:

“Dear Dr. Who,

Thank you for visiting my poster and for your thoughts on my work. I gave some consideration to our discussion and think that it would be good for me to investigate further... I am wondering if I can prevail upon you to review a draft copy of the manuscript we are preparing for this work...We plan to submit it by May 1. If you are amenable to this, I will mail it to you next week and would welcome any suggestions or comments...”
3 Steps to Building a Plan with Accountability

1. Map out your plan

2. Set number goals for weekly or monthly contacts

3. Meet bi-weekly with an accountability partner or group → Meet for one hour, share what you have accomplished, make commitment to goals for next two weeks.
Ecomap Networking Exercise

On the figure below, the lines between the scholar in the center and the other bubbles indicate the strength of the connection.

A solid line ______________________ indicates a good relationship.
A double solid line ============= indicates an especially strong tie.
A single dotted line --------------- indicates a weak relationship.
A line that is broken by horizontal markers ----------| |---------- shows a former connection that has not been maintained.

The absence of any line indicates that the person or organization is one with whom the scholar would like to make a connection, but that no relationship exists at present.

1. Using this ecomap as a model, make your own map showing your current and desired relationships, and the strength of those relationships. Once your map is completed, highlight the connections that need your attention. This could include past relationships you want to rekindle, existing connections you hope to strengthen, and people you would like to meet.
Resources

The Career Center
Rackham Professional Development Events
Rackham-CRLT Intercampus Mentorship Program
U-M Graduate Student Professional Development FB Fanpage
Center for the Education of Women Program & Events
Versatilephd.com – Premium Membership
LinkedIn Groups at Institutions of Interest

Others to Consider:
Student Chapters of National Groups *e.g.*, Association of Women in Science – Ann Arbor Chapter
Relevant Professional Associations
Your Department/Program