A Year in the Life of an Early Career Faculty Member

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Topics to cover

- Searching, applying, interviewing, and negotiating for faculty positions
- Balancing responsibilities
- Challenges
- Resources and a few final thoughts

Please interrupt with any questions you have!

Things to consider

- What kind of school?
- Where do you want to live? (Or, more appropriately: where are you willing to live?)
- What balance of research, teaching, and service?
- When to search and apply?

- Who's hiring?

  Note: with a PhD from CSU, your application will be noticed!

Places to look for announcements

- AMS online job board
- Eos
- Met-Jobs mailing list
- Word of mouth / networking

Applying

- Application materials
  - Cover letter (important!)
  - Statement of research
  - Statement of teaching
  - Reference letters
- Don’t be afraid to apply, even if you think it’s a long shot
  - Unless you’re sure there’s no way you’d ever take the job – then it’s a waste of time for everyone
  - If you don’t get an interview, at least you got your name out there, lined up your references, prepared your statements, etc.
  - If you do, even better!

Interviewing

- Congrats!!
  - If you made the short list to be interviewed, this means they think you are qualified for the position
- On-campus interviews: a grueling day or two
- They’re looking for whether you’re a good fit for the department and would be a good collaborator, etc.
- Just as important is that you can learn about how the department and university operates and decide if it’s a good fit for you

The result

- If the answer is no, don't get discouraged
  - Searches for these positions are really complicated – it isn't necessarily because of anything you did (or didn't do)
  - If you feel comfortable, try to get some feedback from people at that department that you can use in the future
- If the answer is yes, congrats! (But don't accept the offer on the same phone call they offer you the job.)
- If you get more than one offer – super congrats!

Negotiating your position

- This will vary a lot based on the type of school, your specialty, what's important to you, etc.

- You can negotiate just about anything in your contract (but that doesn't mean you should)
  - Salary (not fun to talk about, but now's the only time you'll ever be able to)
  - Startup funds (more important at a research university, and especially if you have a need for expensive lab equipment or computers)
  - Start date
  - Courses to be taught
  - Months of salary paid
  - First semester/year teaching reduction
  - First year(s) summer salary
  - Office/lab space
  - Support for graduate students/IT staff/etc.

- Negotiate the things that are most important to you, and will give you the best chance to succeed in your work. The university wants and needs you to succeed too!

Questions about job searches?

Responsibilities of an early-career professor

- As a graduate student (at CSU especially), you're most likely focused on a single research project, and not a whole lot else
- That's going to change!

Balancing responsibilities

- Research
- Teaching
- Advising
- Service
- Management
- Getting established

Your official job description will probably list a percentage for teaching, research, and service, but don't expect that every day (or every week) is going to be divided in this way!

Research

- Ideally, you can use your first semester/year with reduced teaching to prepare and submit some publications from your PhD/postdoc research
- Take advantage of this time – it may be the last time in your career when you can sit in your office fairly uninterrupted and work on research!
- Use this time also to write and submit proposals (more on this later)
- And find out what your new colleagues (both inside and outside your department) are working on to see if there are opportunities for collaboration

Teaching

- You'll want to spend your time thinking about and preparing for the classes you'll be teaching
  - Preparing texts, organizing the syllabus, preparing lectures, refreshing yourself on the material, etc.
- Hold yourself to a high standard, but don't aim for perfection the first time you teach a class
- Learn about some of the latest pedagogical research
- Any teaching experience you can get as a graduate student or postdoc – take it!

Teaching, continued

- Who are my students likely to be?
- When they leave at the end of the semester, what do I want them to know, and what do I want them to be able to do?
- How can I design the class to achieve those goals?

- Learn by watching and talking to teachers who do these things well (and those who don’t!)

Advising

- Who would've thought that just a few years after being a grad student, you'd have grad students of your own!
- The interests and abilities of students applying to work with you will vary depending on the school, etc.
- Your first student or two are very important – try to find those who are a good fit for your work, meet them and talk with them in advance, etc.

Service

- As much as you might want to get involved in university service (department and campus committees, etc.) try to limit the amount of time you spend with this
  - Hopefully your department will be supportive of this as well
- Do get/stay involved in service to the field, though
  - Reviewing articles and/or proposals
  - Thesis committees

Management

- As a scientist, you weren't necessarily trained to be a manager
- However, this might be one of the most important skills you need to have!
  - How to manage your own time
  - Leading your research group and the students in your department – creating a community and setting the direction for the future
  - Managing budgets – you now have financial responsibilities for spending your (often limited) funds wisely and appropriately

Getting established

- And you're expected to do all of this stuff in the first few months in a new place!
- You need computers/equipment/instruments up and running
- You want to meet with all of the new colleagues and get to know the students
- You need to find a social life in a (possibly) strange new place
- Get started on all of this stuff as soon as you can – the first semester or two can really set the tone for things going forward

Challenges

- Proposal writing and obtaining funding
- Establishing your own program of research
- Being a quality teacher

Proposal writing and funding

- Positive: Many agencies have programs designed for early career faculty (NSF CAREER, NASA NIP, etc.) or otherwise provide preference to early-career scientists
- Negative: The waiting is the hardest part (6+ months to get an answer is a **long** time)

Establishing your own research

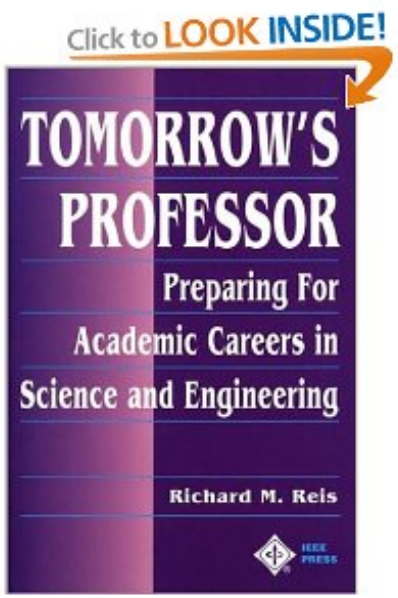
- You studied at CSU with the top people in the field, completed a great research project, but now you're on your own
- What to study?

- One tip: do something new. Not so new that it's outside your area of expertise, but different enough from what you've done before.
  - You can always come back to your PhD research and extend/develop it
- One other: do something that's important, but also that you enjoy. If you don't like going to work and working on it, you're not going to accomplish much and you won't be happy.

Quality teaching

- At a teaching-intensive university, this will be the primary thing you're evaluated on
- At a research-intensive university, it's a challenge to find the right balance
- How much time and effort to devote to perfecting your classes vs. doing research, writing, etc.?
- How to know what you're doing well and what you're not?

Resources



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Richard M. Reis (Author)

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Related mailing list at:
http://cgi.stanford.edu/~dept-ctl/tomprof/postings.php

Resources

- Carleton College early career faculty information: http://serc.carleton.edu/NAGTWorkshops/earlycareer/

Resources

Friday, August 5, 2011 NEWS FEED

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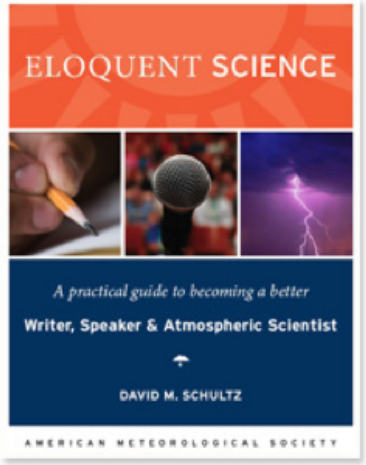
Book

Eloquent Science: A Practical Guide to Becoming a Better Writer, Speaker, & Atmospheric Scientist was conceived from a two-day workshop that I taught for six years to undergraduate students at a summer research experience. The volume is divided into three parts: writing, reviewing, and speaking, and offers tips on poster presentations, media communication, and advice for non-native speakers of English, as well as appendices on proper punctuation usage and meteorological concepts. Sidebars written by experts in the field offer diverse viewpoints on reference topics important to the reader, and a recommended reading section at the end of the book guides the reader to the best additional resources. Although the book is aimed at students and early career scientists, even senior scientists will find useful nuggets inside.



Resources

"Who is listening? What do they hear?" (Physics Today, December 2008)

http://ptonline.aip.org/journals/doc/PHTOAD-ft/vol_61/iss_12/49_1.shtml