



Academic Jobs

Colleges and universities offer a wide range of opportunities for individuals with graduate-level training. A professorship or faculty position is perhaps the most well-known, and typically includes a focus on research and/or teaching. Most professors must have attained a PhD in a specified field in which they are qualified to teach, conduct research, and/or share knowledge. Professors generally have the opportunity to work with and mentor undergraduate and/or graduate students, training them in a specified field or content area within a classroom or research lab setting. Professors may also have other responsibilities, including publishing, grant writing, curriculum planning and development, faculty meetings, committee participation, and national and international conference participation.

In this section, we discuss faculty positions. While other roles for individuals with graduate training exist in colleges and universities—including research, program management, student and academic affairs, and business administration—we do not discuss these here.

Depending on school type, area of study, tenure, and departmental need, the specific nature of an academic faculty job will vary. Relevant factors include how much emphasis is placed on teaching, research, and/or service to the institution. The next section provides a high-level overview of the different types of academic institutions and some of the faculty opportunities within them (for additional discussion, see resources from the [University of California Berkeley](#)). This section is followed by links to resources that can help students find current faculty openings and support their application process. When trying to identify opportunities that are a good fit, the following key questions may help guide students' decision making:

- Do I prefer teaching or research, or some combination of both?
- Do I want to work with doctoral students?

Research vs. teaching institutions

Research institutions are doctoral degree-granting universities that also place an emphasis on faculty conducting research. The [Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education](#) classifies research universities into one of three categories: R1 institutions are those that have the highest level of research activity; R2 institutions have the next-highest level of research activity; R3 institutions tend to have a moderate level of research activity. R1 schools give high priority to research and are typically committed to graduate education through their doctoral programs, but also offer a wide variety of baccalaureate programs. Schools must meet certain requirements to be classified at each level. For example, R1 institutions must award a certain number of doctoral degrees each year.

Teaching institutions tend to prioritize teaching over, or in addition to, research. Faculty positions within institutions that prioritize teaching typically allow a greater opportunity to engage with students and place less of a focus on research and publishing.

The resources below help clarify the differences in the types of academic institutions.

Resource	Description
Carnegie Classification <i>The Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education</i>	Website describing the Carnegie classification, how it started, and what it means for different types of institutions
Carnegie Classification Institution Look-up <i>The Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education</i>	Search engine to look up any institution's Carnegie classification
The Transition From Graduate Student to Assistant Professor <i>University of California, Berkeley Career Center</i>	Overview of types of academic positions

Tenure-track faculty positions

Some academic faculty positions are tenure-track positions. That is, faculty can work toward and earn tenure at their institution which, once achieved, grants them an ["indefinite appointment that can be terminated only for cause or under extraordinary circumstances such as financial exigency and program discontinuation."](#)

The tenure process varies across and within institutions. Most commonly, institutions and academic departments will have a tenure policy that outlines the requirements to obtain tenure. Policies often focus on tenure requirements in three areas:

- **Research**—Comprised of a faculty member's overall research agenda and publication record while at the institution. An institution's tenure policy may not explicitly state the number of publications needed to obtain tenure.
- **Teaching**—Includes the number of preparations (the number of unique courses a faculty member teaches; for example, teaching two "Intro to Psychology" courses is one preparation), a faculty member's teaching load (the number of courses they are expected to teach each semester), and student evaluations of courses taught, among other things.
- **Service**—Typically includes being an active member of administrative or academic committees in a faculty member's program or department, as well as within their college or university (e.g., Institutional Review Board [IRB] committee or curriculum committee).

As part of the tenure process, professors assemble a file that includes evidence of their accomplishments within each of the above areas. This file is then reviewed by (all or a selection of) tenured members of the department, who then make a recommendation. Depending on the institution, the tenure file may then go to a secondary committee of tenured faculty across multiple departments for review. Finally, the file will go to the provost (or president or chancellor), who generally makes the final decision, informed by the departmental (or other) recommendations. To better understand the specific tenure requirements and process at each institution, current or prospective faculty should ask search committees or departments for their tenure policy and ask questions about the tenure process during interviews.

Resource	Description
<u>What I Wish I'd Known About Tenure</u> <i>Inside Higher Ed</i>	Blog post describing the intricacies of tenure from the perspective of an assistant professor of mechanical engineering
<u>What is Tenure Track?</u> <i>Discover PhDs</i>	Blog post explaining the purpose and practice of tenure in the United States and the United Kingdom
<u>Tenure</u> <i>American Association of University Professors</i>	Informational article addressing various questions about tenure, including eligibility, benefits, downsides, and other considerations
<u>Establishing Your Scholarly Identity</u> <i>Inside Higher Ed</i>	Article describing how tenure-track faculty members can develop a scholarly identity

Non-tenure-track faculty positions

Many academic faculty positions are non-tenure track. Full-time non-tenure-track positions go by many names, including lecturer, contract faculty, visiting professor, and professor of the practice. At some R1 institutions, non-tenure-track full-time positions may include a high teaching load and instructors may be expected to teach four courses each semester (a 4-4 teaching load). At other R1 institutions, non-tenure-track full-time positions may include a high research load covered through funded projects for a specific time (also referred to as a “soft money” position). Part-time and adjunct are often used interchangeably to refer to instructors hired to teach one or more classes.

Non-tenure-track positions are typically secured with a contract that outlines the number of years for the position and its workload requirements. Although there is less security in non-tenure-track positions than in tenure-track positions, scholars often choose non-tenure-track jobs for reasons such as location, prestige, timing, fit, and work-life balance.

50/50 appointments

Faculty who have interdisciplinary research or work interests may seek out a joint appointment. This means that a faculty member is affiliated with more than one department in the institution, although they typically have only one administrative and instructional home department. The administrative department takes the lead in determining the terms and conditions of the faculty member’s employment. However, the joint appointment department may help determine levels of effort, instructional courses, and specific roles. When considering joint appointments, a candidate should request information regarding service requirements and expectations, tenure eligibility, resource allocation, evaluation procedures, and student advising requirements across the different appointing departments.

Community college careers

Community colleges are nonresidential junior colleges. Typically, community colleges offer students the opportunity to enroll in specific degree programs to earn an associate degree or certificate, or to take general education requirements which can be transferred to a four-year university to finish a bachelor’s degree. Community college professors generally do not have research requirements, so working as a faculty member within a community college is a great option for individuals interested in teaching-focused careers. These types of faculty positions typically require a minimum of a Master’s degree.

Resource	Description
Community-College FAQ: How Long Before I Get Tenure? The Chronicle of Higher Education	Blog post describing the tenure process in community colleges and the differences between working at community colleges and four-year universities
Community-College FAQ: You Teach How Many Classes? The Chronicle of Higher Education	Blog post describing how many classes faculty are likely to teach at a community college
How the Job Search Differs at Community Colleges The Chronicle of Higher Education	Blog post describing how the application, interview, and offer process for community college positions differ from positions at four-year colleges and universities
How to Land a Community College Job Inside Higher Ed	Blog advice for applying to community college positions, including job expectations, learning about students, teaching focus, and teaching demonstrations

Applying to Academic Positions

The academic job market can be intimidating. It is helpful for applicants to be well-informed about the process and about the state of [the job market](#). In this section, we provide resources on the academic job market, from where to look for academic job announcements to how to negotiate offers.

Where to look for academic job announcements

Academic job announcements tend to be posted in the fall for positions beginning the following fall. The resources below provide a starting place to look for academic positions. Many professional organizations (e.g., American Sociological Association [ASA], Population Association of America [PAA], American Economic Association [AEA], American Psychological Association [APA], Association for Public Policy Analysis and Management [APPAM]) will also post relevant positions on their websites or through their newsletters. If you are interested in postdocs, see our [postdoc guide](#).

Jobs, Funding, and Opportunities Alert

Sign up for the [Jobs, Funding, and Opportunities alert](#) from the National Research Center on Hispanic Children & Families to get information on new jobs, funding, postdoctoral fellowships, calls for papers, conferences, and other opportunities!

Resource	Description
Academic Positions	Website to help applicants search for jobs by field or type of job (e.g., assistant or associate professor, lecturer, postdoc, researcher, management, etc.)
The Chronicle of Higher Education	Website with several tools to help applicants find jobs in higher education, along with numerous career advice blogs by experts

Resource	Description
Higher Ed Jobs	Website with tools to help applicants search for jobs in higher education settings—including faculty, administrative, or executive positions—by type of school and by location
Inside Higher Ed Careers	A go-to online source for higher education news, thought leadership, careers, jobs, and resources, including a career opportunity search engine for faculty, administrative, and executive administrative jobs, and for jobs outside higher education

Preparing application materials

The specific application materials required for a particular position will vary by institution and position, but typically include a curriculum vitae (CV, or the academic version of a resume), cover letter, research statement, and a teaching statement. The resources below will help applicants learn more about each of these elements. Applicants should read job announcements closely and include all required elements in their application packet.

Resource	Description
Job applications	
Guide to Faculty Job Applications <i>University of Pennsylvania</i>	Guide to faculty job applications, including research statements, teaching philosophy, diversity statements, sample interview questions, and negotiating job offers
CV and Cover Letter	
CV and Cover Letter Advice <i>Jobs.ac.uk</i>	A series of blogs on how to update a CV and cover letter
Research statement	
What is a Research Statement? <i>Cornell University Graduate School</i>	Blog post including information on why applicants write a research statement, along with information on formatting, organization, style, content, and describing future goals
Research Statement <i>Harvard University</i>	Example research statement from a quantitative social science researcher
The Golden Rule of the Research Statement <i>The Professor Is In</i>	Blog post describing best practices for writing a research statement
Statement of Research <i>UMass Amherst</i>	Example research statement from a social science researcher

Resource	Description
Teaching statement	
Example Teaching Statement <i>University of Minnesota</i>	Example teaching statement
Teaching Statements <i>Vanderbilt University</i>	Resource guide describing the purpose of a teaching statement, what it includes, guidelines, reflection questions for applications, and standards for applicants to evaluate their teaching statements
Writing a Teaching Statement <i>Cornell University</i>	Presentation with teaching statement examples, advice, context guidance, and exercises to get applicants started
The Dreaded Teaching Statement: Eight Pitfalls <i>The Professor Is In</i>	Blog post describing common errors when writing a teaching statement
Writing Your Teaching Philosophy <i>University of Minnesota</i>	A series of posts on getting started in writing a teaching philosophy, creating a draft, and assessing the draft, along with other examples
Teaching Portfolio Expectations <i>Boston College: Center for Teaching Excellence</i>	Resource document that provides expected components of a teaching portfolio and guidance on tailoring a portfolio to exceed hiring committee members' expectations

Job talk resources

Most institutions require a job talk as part of the interview process for a faculty position. Job talks, which are typically open to faculty and graduate students in the hiring department(s), generally last about an hour. During this time, an applicant will present their own research (often from a dissertation) and then spend some time answering questions from the audience. The resources below will help orient applicants to the interview process—which typically involves two full days of interviewing in addition to the job talk—and provide tips for giving a strong job talk.

Resource	Description
Why Your Job Talk Sucks <i>The Professor Is In</i>	Blog with tips on improving a job talk that describes what the hiring committee is likely looking for
The Campus Visit and the Job Talk <i>University of Berkeley</i>	PowerPoint describing elements of the campus visit, including the job talk and advice on structuring the job talk
How to Stand Out in Your Interview and Job Talk <i>American Psychological Association</i>	Blog post by hiring committee chairs on how to make an interview and job talk stand out
Tips for a Successful Job Talk <i>Inside Higher Ed</i>	Article discussing preparations for a job talk and advice on delivering one successfully

Negotiating an offer

Once a job offer has been made, applicants may want to negotiate the specific terms of the agreement. The resources below provide tips on negotiating an offer.

Resource	Description
It Can Hurt to Ask <i>Inside Higher Ed</i>	Advice on when and how to negotiate a job offer
After the Offer, Before the Deal: Negotiating a First Academic Job <i>American Association of University Professors</i>	Article discussing how to navigate the negotiation process, including negotiating salary and other forms of compensation
You Deserve Better* <i>Inside Higher Ed</i>	Article describing the benefits of negotiating job offers, particularly for academics of color
How to Negotiate Your Tenure Track Offer <i>The Professor Is In</i>	Blog post providing advice on negotiating an offer, with examples from a career consultant
Negotiating for Novices: A Guide to Negotiating Faculty Positions and Postdocs <i>UPenn Career Services</i>	Presentation with advice on the basics of negotiating, negotiating well, role playing, things to do and not do, nonacademic offers, and practicing negotiation
Advice on Tenure-Track Job Negotiations <i>Medium.com</i>	Blog post on approaching the negotiation process, including what and when to negotiate, and what to expect
Yes, You Should Negotiate <i>Inside Higher Ed</i>	Article with tips on negotiating once an offer is made

