SHOOTS AND LADDERS IN THE ACADEMIC JOB SEARCH

Adrian J. Wurr
University of North Carolina at Greensboro

This paper originates from a happy hour debate several years ago between students who thought the job market for SLAT graduates was limited and those who maintained a more optimistic view. Having recently completed a successful tenure-track job search, I thought the time was right to share what insights I was able to glean from the process with other SLAT candidates and perhaps persuade the happy-hour nay-sayers that there is every reason to remain confident about employment prospects upon graduation from the SLAT program.

The October 2001 MLA *Job Information List* (*JIL*) indicates that once again, it's an applicant's market for post-secondary teachers in the Humanities. According to MLA employment researchers David Laurence and Elizabeth B. Welles (2000), there were 2% more English positions and 14% more foreign language jobs advertised in *JIL* in 1999 than in the previous year (p. 6). This increase continues a decade-long trend in improving job prospects for new Ph.D.s as faculty hired in the boom years of the 1960s reach retirement age, 1980s baby boomers reach college age, and an increasing number of immigrants enter the country seeking higher education for themselves and their children.

Although the 1994 federal law ending mandatory retirement at age seventy (Haggard, 1993, p. 49) and an increasing number of degrees awarded in the Humanities tempers the job outlook somewhat, in 1999 there were still more positions announced in foreign languages than there were degrees awarded: 672 jobs were announced for 642 new Ph.D.s in foreign languages (Laurence & Welles, 2000). The market for English majors was a little more competitive, with 899 English positions available in 1999 for 1,076 doctorates (Laurence & Welles, 2000), but compositionists still fare well because, as one English faculty member noted, "your average composition Ph.D. person coming out of an established program is still able to apply credibly for a wide range of composition jobs. Your average 18th century British lit Ph.D. person can't really apply for a medievalist position, or a modern British lit position" (R. Sanchez, personal communication, February 2, 2000).

In sum, Ph.D. candidates in foreign languages and composition can approach the job search with optimism, and may even be selective in considering jobs. International graduate students seeking employment at American universities admittedly face a more difficult scenario, but the following insider advice on navigating the job market successfully will help make the search for the ideal job easier and more effective for all concerned.

PREPARING TO GO ON THE MARKET

Know the lay of the land

Your first year of doctoral study is not too early to begin preparing for eventual graduation and employment, according to Trudelle Thomas (1989), director of the Writing Program at Xavier University in Cincinnati, Ohio. She advises graduate students preparing for the job market to view the job search as a research project since this is a familiar task that can be approached with confidence and vigor. In this research project, your goal is to "learn as much as you possibly can about job opportunities in light of your own desires and abilities" (p. 313). Begin by reading job announcements in the *Chronicle of Higher Education* (also available online at http://chronicle.com/jobs), the *MLA Job List* (published in October, December, February, and March), and those posted on department bulletin boards and listserves within your specialty such as Linguist list <linguist@linguistlist.org> and Writing Program Administration Listserv <WPA-L@listserv.asu.edu>. These ads will give you a sense of the types of jobs, common conditions of employment, and salary ranges that exist for various types of jobs, and thus allow you to plan accordingly. Some common distinctions to note are "instructorship vs. tenure-track positions, jobs which are for generalists vs. those for specialists, positions at teaching institutions vs. research universities, small liberal arts colleges vs. big state schools, community colleges vs. four-year institutions" (Thomas, 1989, p. 313).

In addition to knowing the professional landscape, you should also consider the geographical area in which you most want to live and work. While willingness to move to any part of the country or world will afford you more opportunities in the job market, the present job market may allow you to pick and choose between urban and rural, mountain or valley, north, south, east, west or central regions of the country. Invest in a good atlas so you can inform yourself of where various schools are located. The *Places Rated Almanac* (Savageau & D'Agostino, 2000) is an excellent source of information on the quality of public education, recreation, climate, medical care, crime rate, and average cost of homes in over 300 metropolitan areas nationally.

Teaching vs. research: What type of institution is right for you?

The distinction between teaching institutions such as two-year colleges and many state universities, and four-year universities emphasizing research is one worth considering carefully. Realizing that the distinction is not an either-or proposition but rather a continuum that balances research with teaching, the two types of positions often mimic values and class differences found in society as a whole (Bowles & Gintis, 1976). Differences in "salaries, teaching loads, class size, faculty development, secretarial support, photocopying budget, and so on," writes John Trimbur (1996), are especially pronounced in the political economy of writing instruction (p. 139). Looking

ahead, one can also see a sharper division between teaching and research-oriented institutions as many universities begin "starving their master's programs and promoting their doctoral programs in ways, that before too long, will define them as Ph.D.-only institutions. Most graduate students, 10 or 20 years from now, will pursue their master's degrees at small liberal arts colleges or regional campuses of state universities, then enroll in doctoral programs at large graduate research institutions" (Lindemann, 1996, p. 178). Newly hired assistant professors will likely see both immediate and long-term differences in work conditions and job duties depending on the type of institution for which they work.

ABD Blues

For graduate students who have suffered in near-poverty for many years at graduate teaching assistant (GAT) salaries, the lure of the professional status and recognition that comes with lectureship positions can be very tempting at times. Starting salaries for positions that accept candidates with Master's degrees or ABD (All But Dissertation) are generally more than twice what GATs earn. However, lecturers still earn considerably less and spend more time teaching than assistant professors. This fact is one of many reasons for the increase in the ratio of part-time adjunct positions to full-time faculty appointments that has occurred over the last ten years. Kurt E. Müller and R. Douglas LeMaster, research associates for the MLA, ADE, and ADFL, noted back in 1984 that many postsecondary institutions, especially community colleges and state universities, seemed to favor hiring faculty with lesser degrees not only because they were cheaper, but because dissertation research was not as highly valued as more practical teaching experience in a variety of courses and settings. Whether or not this influences some unscrupulous deans and department chairs to keep ABDs distracted with heavy workloads is controversial, but everyone agrees that "accepting a full-time position before completing the dissertation will slow down your progress towards the degree, sometimes sealing your fate as a life-long ABD" (Thomas, 1989, p. 315).

A better course of action is to aim to complete your dissertation at about the same time you expect to begin interviewing for jobs, so that you can reap the benefits your new 'Dr.' title affords. The October MLA *Job Information List* is the major debut for the academic hiring season, and so having your dissertation complete or nearly complete by this time is ideal in that it allows you to focus 100% of your attention and energy on the job search. The next important date arrives in late December, between Christmas and New Years, when the annual MLA Convention is held and universities begin interviewing finalists. Having a degree in hand at this time will give you an edge over ABD applicants who hope to finish their dissertation soon because, as Alexander Pope once said and hiring departments have learned the hard way, "hope springs eternal in the human breast." In other words, a degree in hand is worth two in the bush. More will be said later about where and when

to interview, as the MLA is certainly not the only chance one has for finding a job. But with regards to planning your graduation, aim for graduating in fall.

Your papers, please

A final preparation that can be completed before actually applying for jobs is to gather as much of the necessary supporting documentation as possible. Some of the more common documentation requested in applications or follow-up interviews include transcripts[1], curriculum vitae, writing samples, course syllabi, a statement of your teaching philosophy, course proposals, and letters of recommendation. See *The MLA guide to the job search: A handbook for departments and for Ph.D.s and Ph.D. candidates in English and foreign languages* (Showalter, 1996) for a more complete discussion of style and conventions in preparing your dossier. Ordering business cards before attending any conferences where you might be networking or interviewing is also a good idea.

When gathering supporting documents, a good approach to consider is to create a generic set of documents catering to your different areas of specialty. Later, these documents can and should be tailored to specific job announcements within each field of specialty. For example, Melody Bowden (personal communication, July 15, 1998), a recent RCTE graduate from the University of Arizona who is now Assistant Professor at Central Florida University, created separate dossiers tailored to jobs requesting expertise in each of her areas of interests: technical writing, service-learning, and gender studies. Students in Second Language Acquisition and Teaching may be able to create one application package as a linguist, another as a language-teacher trainer, and a third as an English or foreign language instructor.

During your search, you will most likely encounter departments and faculty with strong preferences for hiring specialists in one area or another, and it is worth remembering that hiring committees that seek generalists may be looking for an eventual department chair. Students from interdisciplinary programs such as SLAT or with interests in various fields may emphasize such work to their advantage by noting familiarity or even expertise in different disciplinary discourse communities. As Katherine K. Gottschalk (1995), director of Cornell University's Freshman Writing Seminars, explains, "Our writing program's history has taught me that successful collaboration does not necessarily require unity—that differences and even separation may be positive forces" (p. 1). Likewise, Martin Mueller (1989), professor of English and Comparative Literature at Northwestern University, comments: "Interdisciplinary work is most difficult but also most productive when it involves the collision of strongly articulated disciplinary ethnicities. Work of this kind is quite rare, because it requires a hands-on experience of, and deep respect for, the otherness of the other" (p. 8). Thus, RCTE and SLAT candidates applying for these positions might effectively note their familiarity

with different discourse conventions, and how this working knowledge allows them to respect and more effectively tap the talents each discipline has to offer.

FROM APPLICATION TO CONTRACT: INSIGHTS ON THE HIRING PROCESS

Analyzing job descriptions — What's in a name?

> Hiring is a moment when a department may be seen, whether rightly or wrongly, as defining what it values. Hiring decisions make implicit statements about the careers and commitments of those who make them. (Dubrow, 1997, p. 51)

The above quote by Heather Dubrow, professor of English at the University of Wisconsin at Madison, hints at the deeply political nature of hiring decisions within departments. As a prospective worker in the department, you want to know as much as possible about the department and faculty's values and background before applying. Department or program names can provide some insights on this. Compare, for example, the philosophy and alliances suggested by the following department and program titles at the University of Arizona (UA) and the University of Minnesota (UMN): Rhetoric, Composition, and the Teaching of English (UA); English, Language, and Literature (UA); Composition Research & Theory (U MN, Twin Cities); Rhetoric & Technical Writing (UMN, Twin Cities); Rhetoric Studies Department (UMN). The UA's RCTE program title not only recognizes Composition as a separate but related field of Rhetoric, but also emphasizes teaching in its title. This suggests a more progressive philosophy than the University of Minnesota's Rhetoric Studies Department, whose sole focus is on classical rhetoric. The difference between rhetoric and composition often seems to be a distinction between research and teaching, with the associated values these endeavors often hold in academia today.

Either before you apply or before you interview for an advertised position, you should also investigate the names, publications, and areas of specialty of the hiring department's faculty. Before applying, your interest might be to know more about prospective colleagues and whether they will help you grow intellectually. If after browsing the department's website you decide to submit an application, knowing something about department values and faculty interests can help you tailor your dossier to the specifics of the department. "Chairs expect applicants to have looked at the institution's web site and catalog before writing the first letter. Candidates, by describing how they might provide an appropriate fit with the campus or new service for its undergraduates, can give evidence of dedication to undergraduate teaching" (Papp, 1998, p. 48). Later, if you're asked to an interview, knowledge of the department and faculty publications will again come in handy since you will be

able to demonstrate familiarity with the names and works of the search committee. A widely published author at my alma matter recently confessed to being put out by candidates who didn't acknowledge some awareness of his more widely read books. Extending a little flattery while showing awareness of the field outside your own area of specialization can go a long way at times.

Professional Sandtraps

Also in the job announcement will be a detailed description of the courses and administrative duties the successful applicant will be asked to assume. Your familiarity with the range of duties and responsibilities listed in advertisements will give you some basis for comparing the relative strengths or weaknesses of a particular job announcement. But reviewing guidelines and policy statements issued by professional organizations such as the American Association for University Professors (see for example, "On Full-Time, Non-Tenure-Track Appointments," 1978), Modern Language Association (e.g., "Advice to Search Committee Members and Job Seekers on Faculty Recruitment and Hiring," 1996), National Council of Teachers of English, The Council of Writing Program Administrators (WPA; see for example, "The Portland Resolution," 1992) and the Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC) can also provide you with a basis for comparing a particular job to recommended industry standards.

The CCCC has issued several important documents relating to professional ethics and working conditions over the last decade. The "Statement of Principles and Standards for Postsecondary Teaching of Writing" (CCCC, 1989) outlines professional standards on issues such as tenure-line, part-time, and graduate student workers, as well as guidelines for acceptable teaching conditions. It states, for example, that writing classes should be kept to a maximum of 20 students per section, and more ideally limited to 15 (p. 4). Furthermore, the document states, "No English faculty member should teach more than 60 writing students a term. In developmental writing classes, the maximum should be 45" (p. 4). Additionally, the CCCC Committee on Professional Guidance to Departments and Faculty has issued the "Draft Statement of Professional Guidance to Junior Faculty and Department Chairs" (CCCC, 1987) that outlines standards for promotion and tenure of composition faculty. Although these guidelines are often ignored, knowing which departments come closer to recommended professional standards can help inform your decision of whether to apply to the department for a job or not. Furthermore, if other factors convince you to apply, demonstrating familiarity with these professional organizations and standards can be seen as evidence of professional involvement, and should you be offered a job, mentioning the guidelines when negotiating your contract might be a strong bargaining chip.

Another job to be wary of is that of WPA (Writing Program Administrator). Many English departments and composition programs

advertise for recent graduates or even ABDs to serve as the director of Composition. Some might offer a course release in exchange for the time-consuming administrative duties of designing and scheduling courses, training and supervising TAs, administering entrance and exit exams, and serving as mediator to grade disputes. Only occasionally, however, is such work recognized as "scholarship" and counted in tenure and promotion decisions. The CCCC Committee on Professional Guidance to Department and Faculty describes the situation this way:

> In some institutions, beginning composition teachers have been required to shoulder inappropriate or excessive administrative responsibility. Administrative responsibility is "inappropriate or excessive" when it interferes with the young faculty member's ability to fulfill other requirements for reappointment, raises, promotion, or tenure, or when it places the candidate in conflicting relationships with senior faculty who will participate in decisions about such matters. For example, a junior faculty member in composition may be required to supervise the work of other, more senior faculty members who will participate directly in decisions about his/her reappointment, promotion, or tenure. The administrative and teaching burden of the position may be so heavy as to prevent the candidate from fulfilling requirements for scholarly work.
> (qtd. in Olson & Moxley, 1989, p. 57)

The tale of one young WPA recently hired by the Composition program at the University of Arizona can serve to illustrate the sort of "conflicting relationships" in which untenured WPAs are placed, and demonstrates that the dilemma runs deeper than surface workload issues.

> It was the summer before my pre-tenure sabbatical. My chair was on the phone, asking if I would attend a meeting of the Faculty Senate Curriculum Committee. The Committee wanted to abolish the writing assessment test. Would I defend it? Reluctantly putting my writing away, as I had had to do in all previous summers on the job, I moved into attack mode, firing off reports to the Committee in advance of my scheduled appearance. I wanted to use the opportunity to expose the lack of support for writing in the university. When the day came for my appearance, I found that I was supported by everyone around the table--except for the dean of my academic college. … [He] suggested to the Committee that the writing program be dissolved and replaced by a

> writing intensive program that would spread the precious funds for GTA's then concentrated in my department to other departments. There was no one at the table who could find fault with this proposition. I remember taking a deep breath, and saying to myself, "You have two choices. You can defer to your own dean, and save yourself. Or you can save the writing program." I chose the writing program. … But I went on the job market the following fall, having seen the writing on the wall. (Mountford, n.d., pp. 8-9)

Having now moved to a new school and job, Mountford analyses her experience and the experiences of other untenured writing program administrators (WPAs) as follows:

> The position of Writing Program Administrator carries with it institutional power and authority--where writing instruction is valued. But where it is not, the best way to keep the program from growing or from keeping the director from making politically unpopular demands on upper administration (e.g., more pay and better job security for part-time faculty) is to assign an untenured member to lead. Better yet, assign those duties to a woman, under the assumption that women will demand less and sacrifice more in the job (p. 3).

As the quote by Heather Dubrow at the beginning of this section makes clear, hiring decisions are a study in departmental values, and given the sad stories of untold numbers of young WPAs such as Mountford's, the wise will avoid working for departments that do not value and reward the work they ask you to undertake. For composition specialists, this translates into seeking or negotiating positions where WPA duties follow tenure, and where the position rotates among tenured faculty periodically, so as to avoid the burden and likely job burnout from remaining in the position for life.

Interviews: Preparing to Ask and Answer Questions[2]

While temporary positions may be filled with only a telephone interview preceding a job offer, most full-time permanent positions involve at least two rounds of interviews. The first often occurs at conferences such as the MLA in December, where 10 or 15 of the strongest applicants will be invited to meet with the hiring committee for a brief interview. The committee's goal here is to determine which of the finalists should be invited to an on-campus interview. Your job is to make yourself stand out from the competition by presenting yourself as a knowledgeable, responsible, and above all, friendly person (Müller & LeMaster, 1984; Timmerman, 1988).

With these points in mind, the following list of questions is offered as a means of encouraging some forethought on commonly asked questions and possible answers. But keeping in mind the importance of personal charisma in the interview, try to avoid memorizing and reciting formulaic responses.

Questions to Prepare For

About Your Teaching: What courses have you taught? What sorts of programs have you taught in? What composition theorists have had the most influence on you? What are the advantages and disadvantages of the process approach, sentence combining, and peer editing? What is your philosophy of language teaching? Do you have experience in teaching with computers? Can you talk about some of your successes in the classroom? Failures? What textbooks have you used and why did you select them? What's your opinion of the program where you presently teach? (Try to avoid criticizing where you're at now). What upper-level courses would you like to teach? How would you design such courses? If you were training graduate students to teach, what textbook would you use? How would you set up the course? What are some sample assignments that you have used successfully? What is the relationship between reading and writing? What are your strengths and weaknesses as a teacher? What would you like to change about your teaching? What is your most memorable teaching moment?

About Your Research: What were the conclusions of your dissertation? (Prepare a brief and slightly more detailed response). What was your methodology? What scholars and works influenced your work? How does your research make a contribution to your field? What are the next projects you plan to pursue? Do you have a research plan? Where do you see yourself ten years from now? Using names of particular scholars may help the interviewers place you.

About Other Skills: Have you worked in a writing center? Do you have any experience as an administrator? Have you taken part in holistic rating sessions (or other assessment programs)? Have you been involved with Writing Across the Curriculum? Service-Learning? Computers in Composition? Have you trained or supervised other teachers? What's not included in your application materials or CV that you believe will help us make our decision?

About Yourself: Tell us about yourself. What is your greatest strength? Weakness? How would you have a positive and unique influence on our campus? Explain how you are qualified to understand and be sensitive to the diverse student population on our campus. Do you prefer to work individually or as part of a team? Can you work well under stress? What personal, non-job-related goals have you set for yourself? What are your primary activities

outside of work? What type of books and magazines do you read? What bumper stickers do you have on your car? What are things that really motivate you? What qualities do you admire most in other people? Does your spouse have a job? Are you planning on having (more) children? Why should we hire you?

Ultimately, there are several key personal characteristics that can help you distinguish yourself from the competition as you are interviewed: Demonstrate enthusiasm and potential, tell vivid stories, exude confidence, be prepared, sell yourself, listen intently, show you can solve problems, know things about the institution, know yourself, build credibility, and come across as a real and genuine person. While these may sound like self-help guidelines, the evidence (Müller & LeMaster, 1984) suggests they are worth taking seriously. See Richard Bolles' *What Color is Your Parachute?* (Ten Speed Press, 1991) for more suggestions on how to increase your odds of getting hired.

Questions to Ask

At the same time, you want to take the opportunity to ask prospective employers questions that will give you a better sense of your likely working conditions should you be hired. However, two caveats should be kept in mind when posing questions to prospective employers. First, recall that American universities are traditionally very hierarchical, organized from the president to vice-presidents, provosts, assistant provosts, deans, department chairs, program directors, assistants to the director, all the way down to committee leaders and members. So you may want to direct questions to the person or persons responsible (e.g., questions about salary and benefits should be directed to the chair or dean since they are primarily responsible for budgetary decisions). On the other hand, seeking the opinions of various people on the history of the program, faculty hires, and curriculum development can provide you with important insights on department values, political alliances, and the ease or difficulty you may have in implementing new ideas. As John Loftis (1995) notes, "New, young faculty members revitalize a department even as they disturb it. Some older faculty members resist new ideas that might lead to change in their professional lives: new courses, new programs, and new challenges to their scholarship" (p. 21). So a combination of common sense, tact, and political savvy should guide your judgment in when and how to ask the following questions. But if the information you have gathered prior to your interview or campus visit leaves any doubts in your mind, you owe it to yourself and your hosts to ask any lingering questions you may have in order to make the best decision possible.

About the Job: How did the position become available? (If retirement replacement, ask what courses that faculty member taught. Ask to meet with

him or her, too, if possible). What will be my main responsibility? What expectations are there for curricular development? What support and flexibility will I have to meet these expectations? How many other faculty members are at this rank? What is expected of a faculty member who wants to earn promotion and tenure in regards to teaching, research, and service? How will I be evaluated in these categories? How often are promotion and tenure reviews? Of junior faculty members that have come up for tenure in the past five years, what percentage of them have gotten tenure? What is my starting salary likely to be? What is it likely to be in five years? What assistance will the university provide in finding my spouse a job, too?

About the Writing Program: What writing programs are there on campus? Is there a writing center? Freshman composition? Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC)? Technical writing? What are the goals of these programs? What is the relationship between these programs and the larger university? What is the size and make-up of each of the departments or administrative units in which these programs are housed? What is the governing structure of each? What percentage of writing courses are taught by full-time faculty? By adjuncts? By graduate students? What is the attitude of other faculty towards writing courses? How is the teaching of writing funded? Who controls these funds? Who determines class size, curriculum, and teaching load? What administrative and clerical support is there? What support can I count on if enrollment figures change? How is the WPA chosen? What are the terms and conditions of appointment of the WPA? How is the WPA's work (administrative, teaching, research) evaluated? By whom? (Ask this person privately, Do you support writing? Have you ever taught composition or been WPA?) For a more complete list of questions regarding staffing and writing program administration, see the CCCC's "Statement of Principles and Standards for Postsecondary Teaching of Writing" (CCCC, 40.3, 1989) and Edward M. White's *Developing Successful College Writing Programs* (Calendar Island Publishers, 1998, pp. 209-219).

About the Department and University: Tell me about your students. How many English majors do you have? What English courses are required of non-majors? What are the needs of these different student populations? Are there opportunities for interdisciplinary research or teaching? What sort of support money is available for research in the form of travel, conferences, books, computers, release time, summer appointments, etc.? Does the department or institution offer leaves of absences for further education? Publishing journals? Developing software or other media? Outreach to the community? What libraries and research facilities are there on campus? Is there a day-care center on campus? A recreation center?

About the Local Community: How expensive is housing in the area? How far am I likely to have to commute? Is there adequate public transit? How good are the local public schools? How safe are the local parks and neighborhoods? What museums and concert halls are in the area? Are there many ethnic restaurants and grocery stores in the area? Used bookstores? What are some of the more pressing social or political issues facing the area? What church and social service agencies are active in the area? For more information on the community prior to visiting, see the *Places Rated Almanac* (Savageau & D'Agostino, 2000).

Campus Visits: What You Need to Know to Survive & Thrive

If you have made it this far in the hiring process, congratulations! You are most likely one of no more than two or three other finalists being considered for the job. During your one- to two-day campus visit, you can expect to meet with all the major players in the department and college in various forums, from one-on-one discussions to department presentations. You may be invited out to one or more meals during your stay, and thus should plan on being on-call morning, noon, and night. Such marathon campus visits can be as exciting as they are exhausting. Try to be in the best physical, mental, and emotional health possible under the circumstances. Take Mom's advice and eat right, get plenty of sleep, and exercise regularly prior to your trip. The night before your campus visit, a tip from my soccer coach might help build your stamina even more: Eat lots of carbohydrates such as potatoes and pasta since these foods release energy-converting sugars into the bloodstream slowly over time.

When contacted for a campus visit, be proactive and request several arrangements be included in your itinerary to allow you to get a complete picture of the department and campus. Also keep in mind your natural biorhythms: If you're a morning person, request important meetings and presentations be scheduled earlier in the day if possible. Night owls might want to decline breakfast invitations in favor of meetings over dinner.

Whatever the case may be, be sure to request some scheduled time to meet with graduate students and/or adjunct faculty alone and in a casual atmosphere, perhaps at a restaurant for lunch. Breaking bread with the often marginalized and exploited work force of American academia today can quickly and effectively provide you with information those in power would rather leave unsaid. Edward M. White (1998) recalls one visit he made to an English department as a WPA consultant. During scheduled time with graduate students in which they despaired over recent increases in first-year composition class sizes and lack of adequate health care, a faculty member suddenly joined the group and effectively ended the conversation. Hence, the importance of meeting with student and adjunct faculty groups alone and in a comfortable environment.

You should also request some free time to stroll about campus, observe student life first-hand, and collect your thoughts. You can learn a lot

about the atmosphere of a campus by observing students at rest, play, and study. A visiting faculty member once commented to me as we walked around the University of Arizona how taken he was by the level of activity on campus, of people eating, working, and playing all within well defined campus boundaries. At Temple University where he worked, campus facilities were dispersed within the local community, and so for better or worse, there was a reduced sense of being "on campus."

Finally, if someone at the school has not already offered to do so, you may want to request background information on the program be sent to you, such as program goals and mission statement, college catalog, recently published journals, or a copy of the campus newspaper. If you have been asked to make a presentation to students, ask for the course syllabus in order to make your lesson as useful and authentic as possible. Contacting the local chamber of commerce or a local real estate agent for their input on the local economy, schools, housing, recreation, and general quality of life can also be informative.

Being There: Making the most of your campus visit

Those familiar with field research know the importance of being an attentive observer when visiting the target community. Start taking notes upon arrival at the airport. Are there many airlines with regular service to the airport? Is there international service? What is the commute like into town? Be sure to pick up a local newspaper, city map, and restaurant and housing guide on your way out of the airport. At opportune times, ask the waiter, bellhop, bus driver, faculty, and students for their impressions of the community and school. Input from a wide variety of sources will help you make a more informed decision on whether or not you would be happy living and working in the area.

On campus, note the location of the program or department offices. Programs central[3] to the university will be positioned accordingly while those on the margins are most likely there both literally and figuratively (Gere, 1996, p. 125). Take the time to visit the library, writing center, student union, and faculty offices. Note the conditions of these facilities, and the attitude of those occupying them. Does the institution and program appear financially healthy and well run?

Most campus visits will include your making a presentation to the faculty and/or students, depending on the type of institution you are visiting. Thomas (1989) notes that student presentations have two distinct audiences—the students and faculty—and recommends picking "a lesson that you are very comfortable with, one that suggests originality and is easy to carry off with students you do not know" (p. 323). Rather than making this lesson *a priori* as Thomas suggests, Larry Berlin (personal communication, March 25, 2000) argues convincingly that a better approach is to ask the search committee to suggest a lesson that would fit most appropriately with the current content of the course you'll teach during your visit. In this way, you demonstrate concern

for students and effective teaching before even entering the classroom. In the end, though, the approach you take to designing this lesson may be decided by the amount of time and energy you have to devote to the task. So here, as in most cases regarding the job search, early preparations can make a big difference in the long run.

A presentation to the faculty is a different affair altogether. Here you will probably want to focus on the aspect of your dissertation or research that most directly relates to the areas of study mentioned in the job announcement. Again, depending on the type of institution you are at, you will want to consider the relative amount of time spent discussing your research design, methodology, and conclusions versus the implications of your research on teaching and learning. But with the possible exception of those specializing in theoretical linguistics, you will be expected to link research to praxis as much as possible no matter what type of institution you visit, so give the issue careful thought beforehand.

Negotiating the Terms of Your Contract

Business acumenship is not often included in most Humanities majors' course of study. But many would do well to remind themselves of a few basic points before agreeing to a job offer. For starters, take a step back and recall that "a job is something someone else wants done" (Papp, 1998, p. 47). The institution offering you a job wants you to work for them. As a veteran English department chair who had presided over twenty faculty hires in his department over the last decade noted, "Nothing can be more frustrating than failing to hire someone after investing much time and energy in a search, and nothing can more demoralize a faculty and create ill will toward the administration than a canceled search" (Emmerson, 1995, p. 27). The institution has invested an extraordinary amount of time, money, and effort to find you—from the dean's announcement of a vacancy (often itself the result of a long and difficult job persuading a senior faculty member to retire), to the creating of an advisory committee within the department to assess its current needs and likely future directions, to drafting, circulating, and revising the position announcement, seeking university authorization to conduct a job search, sending mailings to advertisers and potential candidates, reviewing and narrowing the pool of applications submitted, interviewing candidates at conferences, wining and dining finalists on campus, to securing your commitment to join the faculty, and doing everything possible to make your move to the area and transition into the department an easy one (Emmerson, 1995). They want you! So use this power to negotiate a contract that you can not only live with, but prosper under.

In a sense, deciding whether or not to accept a job offer is really an exercise in deciding what one really needs to be happy. You need to weigh the advantages and disadvantages of each job offer in relation to your own personal interests and values. It may help to list these points in order of most

important to least important so that you know how hard to bargain for certain issues. For example, in "Negotiating a job offer," Philip Smith (1997) offers a list of more than twenty-five negotiable contract items, grouped under the categories "Compensation," "Perquisites," "Fringe Benefits," and "Other Conditions." As he points out, the terms of some items in a contract can be improved through artful negotiation while points not mentioned may be included if a strong case is made for the change (p. 34).

With regards to being WPA, performing community outreach, or undertaking some other scholarly project not typically recognized in tenure reviews, it might help to refer to the four categories of scholarship Ernest Boyer (1990) offers in *Scholarship Reconsidered: Priorities of the Professorate*. The first category Boyer identifies is "The Scholarship of Discovery," which he describes as being closest to the traditional definition of scholarship, the creation of new knowledge through research. "The Scholarship of Integration" category applies to interdisciplinary work that attempts to connect research in one area to knowledge and situations in another. Since RCTE and SLAT typically draw from fields as diverse as linguistics, gender studies, anthropology, psychology, and education, much of our work could be usefully described as "The Scholarship of Integration." When one applies theories and knowledge to actual problems on campus or in the community, and in so doing generates new knowledge, then Boyer describes this work as "The Scholarship of Application." Service-learning and other community-based writing programs would fit well within this category. Finally, Boyer recognizes informed, reflective teaching such as that conducted by teacher-researchers as "The Scholarship of Teaching." Teacher-research has developed into a recognized field of its own since, as Teresa McCarty (1997) notes, "Atwell, Goodman (1978), Graves (1978), Clay (1982), Goswami & Stillman (1987) and others all directed attention to teachers' roles as participant observers, 'kid watchers,' and language and literacy theorists in the classroom" (p. 228). Recognizing that there are as many different types of teaching and learning situations as there are types of learners, candidates can persuasively argue that classroom research is necessary in order to adapt materials to the local context, and that such efforts should count towards tenure and promotion as "The Scholarship of Teaching." While the rubrics Smith (1997) and Boyer (1990) offer for describing and valuing what we do as teachers can be important tools in contract negotiations, the bottom line is that you need to consider how important specific job duties and working conditions are to you so that you can focus your energies in contract negotiations on matters of importance.

Make sure to ask for any offer to be confirmed in writing before accepting or rejecting it, as there is always the potential for misunderstandings between those making the offer and those writing the contract (Mountford, 2000; Thomas, 1989; Smith, 1997). If an official contract is not immediately available, ask the chair to email or fax you a letter detailing the more salient points. This not only provides you with some legal recourse if the terms in the

final contract differ at all, but it also provides you with support for negotiating a better offer from a competing institution. I know of at least one case in which a candidate was sought by three institutions, and he sent each successive competing offer from one campus to the others, until he was certain that the institution he most wanted to work for had in fact made him the best offer they could afford. In any event, take the time to review and consider any offer you receive carefully. By discussing and resolving any concerns you have with the department before you accept or reject the offer, you will establish a profitable rapport with your future colleagues that will serve you well in the long run.

CONCLUSION

The original impetus for writing this paper was the feeling of despair voiced by some of my colleagues in SLAT on their job prospects. Their pessimistic assessment of the job market led them to conclude that they initially have to settle for temporary and part time teaching positions far below for which they are qualified. While I hope that some of the evidence offered in this article will convince them and other doctoral candidates in the Humanities about to enter the job market that their prospects might be better than they believe them to be, I nevertheless acknowledge that even in the best of times, the job search can be a formidable challenge. For this reason, I suggest that adequate preparation and a positive, can-do attitude are necessary prerequisites to securing the appointment of your choice.

ENDNOTES

[1] Official copies are preferred, but unofficial copies may be accepted for initial screening purposes.

[2] In addition to several published sources of information used in this section (Thomas, 1989; Jolly, Sherwood, & Wark, 1992; White, 1989), I am indebted to the following colleagues and faculty mentors who have recently been involved in the hiring process, either as interviewer or interviewee, for sharing their insights on the interview experience with me: Meena Singhal, John Liontas, Larry Berlin, Daphne Desser, Patricia Porter, H. D. Brown, Barry Taylor, Jun Lui, Roxanne Mountford, Theresa Enos, and Edward M. White.

[3] In most cases, the president's office can be considered the center of campus.

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