



Jack A. Puleo, Professor, jpuleo@udel.edu

Some information that may help when interviewing for a faculty position in person or via skype

Some questions may also arise during an interview for an industry or government position

Be prepared! Think about potential questions that may come up and already have some notes written to help you out. DO NOT read answers verbatim. You will sound like a robot.

Here are some typical questions you may be asked (**institution given as UD in these questions**)

- 1) What one or two aspects of this specific position are of most interest to you?
- 2) What do you consider your most significant individual research achievement?
- 3) This is a two-part question related to your research vision and potential execution of that vision. (1) What research topic are you most excited to pursue next and how do you envision pursuing it while at UD? (2) When you arrive at UD what is the first proposal you will write and where will you submit it?
- 4) Briefly describe in what ways do you envision collaborating with the existing faculty at UD.
- 5) Briefly describe your teaching experience/style and tell us what courses you would most want to teach at UD (both UG and grad)?.
- 6) Briefly describe a few personal traits that you believe are most responsible for your success.
- 7) In what ways, if any, do you envision contributing towards the university, college, and department's diversity goals? (**This is becoming more common to ask**)
- 8) Please give us your elevator speech? In just one to two minutes tell us what your research is about in a way that a less technical audience can understand.
- 9) What are the most important qualities you see in a successful faculty member?
- 10) Do you have any questions for us? (**You must have a few questions to ask or it looks bad**)
- 11) Where do you envision publishing your work in the future? (**have specific journals in mind**)
- 12) At which conferences do you present your work?

Here are some other questions/pointers

- A) How many students do you envision having? Paint in a positive light. I want to set myself up for success so my goal is to initially have xx students and get publications out the door. Then a few years into my time at the university I plan to expand the group to XX and
- B) Go look at who does what in the dept of the institution you are applying to and come up with ways for potential collaboration with a few of them. It looks a lot better if you can say something like. Example: Well I know professor XX works on YY. I can see a synergy there

where prof XX collects data on YY and I work with him/her by modeling the ZZ. Know them by name, it looks better in the interview.

- C) Act positive (optimism) rather than pessimistic. Act energetic/excited about your research. If you are not excited, then why should anyone else be. Interviewers will be looking for someone that appears creative, has good ideas, lots of energy (**but not over the top**).
- D) Question #10 above is one I think is important but others may not. To me it always looks better if you have 1 - 3 short questions to ask them. You need to think about what would be good questions. Things like what is the pay or when will I expect to hear from you are not good. Well maybe the 2nd is ok. Things like ... What do you see as your department's main strength? Or is there a long-term growth plan for the dept? Or what type of computational resources/support exist? What type of young faculty mentoring is offered by your department/university? Are there opportunities for undergraduate research? Does the university/department assist in funding them? You get the idea.
- E) They may ask you what type of infrastructure you would need to be successful. Think in advance about what you would need. Saying something like a fast computer or computer array is easy and fairly cheap. But if you need a lab or sensors, the price goes up really quick. Which types of widgets/sensors would you need to be successful as a young faculty member. Has anyone talked to you about what a startup package is? If not you better figure it out (**really at the negotiation stage, but it may come up earlier**).
- F) From #3 above. Where will you submit your first proposal? It is not really enough to just say NSF. You better know the directorates where you might submit. You better know what type of work they fund. You should have thought about what the focus of that proposal might be. It shows you have thought about the future.
- G) Usually when you interview in person you give a seminar and also have a separate hour or more for research and teaching discussion. The seminar is easy but you have to make sure you show the bigger picture to your research and it is always good to end with a few slides on where you are heading → future.
- H) The teaching discussion: For teaching, you better know which classes are already offered where you are applying and then suggest some that you would comfortable teaching if needed. This goes for grad and undergrad classes. Then you should also have at least one course that you would like to develop ideally related somehow to your research. Better if you have one class at UG and one as grad.

- I) The research discussion: it looks good if you have several thrusts you want to pursue (likely interrelated). It helps show you are not a one-trick pony and that you have thought about diversifying a bit.

- J) For both of these discussions, I am a big fan of having slides. Others may not agree. Why do I say this? Because without slides (like has happened at a few of the on-campus interviews I have been involved with)... The candidate sits at a table and the other faculty sit around and they sometimes struggle with what to talk about. If you had say a single slide for courses you could teach that are already offered and then maybe a second slide with a course or two courses indicating classes you would like to develop → talking points. Maybe having a course name and the short synopsis that would go into a catalog. Admittedly this may be too much, but I like a candidate who is prepared.

You do not want to give another seminar on the research. But having 2-3 slides to show what your thrusts/interests are is good (few words and good pictures). You can then have the ideas and potential funding agencies identified in a bulleted list. Some may disagree with this. However, I prefer a candidate who looks prepared. If you put these slides up then it will naturally foster conversation and make it easy to engage with the people evaluating you.