

The FORUM

The Newsletter of the SPSP Graduate Student Committee

Fall 2008

Although it sometimes feels like graduate school will never end, the light at the end of the tunnel is close for many of you. This installment of the FORUM contains interesting and informative articles regarding your future career as a social or personality psychologist. Two articles focus on making yourself marketable to prospective employers by creating your own professional website and developing a research statement that defines your programmatic line of research. In addition, you will also find ideas regarding research resources to request or inquire about in job interviews. This issue also contains an article that provides innovative suggestions on how to spice up your course with instructional technology. If you are considering pursuing a postdoctoral fellowship, you will find some valuable tips in this edition on finding the post-doc opportunity that is right for you. We hope that you will get plenty of ideas from this issue on how to begin preparing for the job market and life after graduate school. Although it may seem hard to believe at times, we are the next generation of social and personality psychologists!

Considering a Postdoctoral Fellowship? Things You Need to Know

The summer is nearing its end, and many of you will begin your final year of graduate school this fall. You will have a busy year, but by next summer you will have your PhD. Long before you stand in front of your committee to defend years of hard work, you must start considering your career options. One option to keep in mind is a postdoctoral fellowship.

When considering post-doc there are a few things to consider. First, what kind of post-doc do you want? Many universities and research organizations have established post-doc positions, and openings are typically announced along with professorships. These positions are typically posted later than professorships, beginning in late winter and continuing through spring.

Another post-doc option is individual funding. One popular option is an NIH NRSA (or F32). This fellowship has April, August, and December deadlines, and it

Your Research Story: Developing a Program of Research

Although the day-to-day tasks of graduate student life often create a narrow view of what we do as researchers, it is important to step back and take in the bigger picture. Your “program of research” is a written manifestation of this big picture - the story of your research life. Building a coherent narrative of your research life is important not only for your own sense of direction but is also a major component of academic job applications. Hiring committees are attracted to candidates with clear, cohesive, and directive programs of research, and it is never too early to starting thinking about developing your own. A program of research can be developed in two ways: a priori or, more commonly, post hoc.

Developing a program of research a priori requires a keen insight into your enduring interests. The first step is to identify an area of research or, even better, a specific research question that interests and inspires you. Once you have identified your research area or question, begin exploring the area in depth. Read a wide assortment of literature ranging from research articles very closely related to your topic to editorials in magazines or newspapers that may be only loosely related. This will give you a strong, broad foundation of understanding upon which to build your program of research. Start by designing a set of two linked studies. Do this by thinking about what would logically come next if your first study worked

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Spicing Up Your Course with Technology

Looking for ways to make your class more interactive? You can use different technologies in and out of the classroom to illustrate concepts and to get your students thinking independently.

Technology #1: Course Technology Programs

Course technology programs (e.g., WebCT) can be used for real-time interaction. You can create and moderate instant messages and chat rooms for course discussion or hold “online office hours”. This can establish you as approachable and create community while having high levels of interaction with students. You can also create discussions that do not require students to be online at the same time in order to promote reasoning and problem solving. These discussions can be a) threaded discussions that you or a student starts, b) student blogs for others to read and reflect on, or c) student journals you can read and respond to. For more information, check with the computer support department at your institution; many provide training on using course technology.

Technology #2: Classroom Personal Response Systems

Do you want to know how well you got your point across, take attendance, give a quiz, take a vote, or ask if you need to slow down your lecture? Classroom personal response systems (e.g., iClicker) enable students to use handheld remotes or “clickers” to answer questions that you pose (typically in multiple choice formats). These

systems can help you to gauge student comprehension and keep students actively involved in class, even in larger classes. Clickers are especially helpful in getting less outgoing students involved. You can require students to purchase a clicker for your class (run about \$25-40). For a live demonstration see: <http://www.iclicker.com/demonstrations/demonstrations.html>

Technology #3: Multi-Media

In addition to video clips, you can use audio clips and websites to illustrate concepts. Excellent resources for media examples are the Social Psychology Network (<http://www.socialpsychology.org/teaching.htm>) and Resources for Teaching Social Psychology (<http://jonathan.mueller.faculty.noctrl.edu/crow/>).

Technology #4: Web Streaming, Video Conferencing, and Podcasts

New technologies can bring guest speakers into your classroom. For example, Mediasite.com is a search engine that has free webcasts on a variety of topics. While not many psychology topics are currently available, it is an up and coming resource. Your institution may also have video conferencing hardware so that you can have a guest speaker in real time from anywhere in the world. Finally, you can summarize lectures with weekly podcasts using a webcam or a flip video recorder to record yourself and upload to sites like YouTube or Facebook for your students to view.

By Megan O’Grady

Post-doc, cont.

would be best to apply in December to ensure you know the outcome before you have to accept or decline other offers. An F32 also requires you to have a sponsoring institution and a mentor at that institution, so you will need to know who you want as a mentor well before the December deadline. This fellowship favors health-related research, so be sure to read the eligibility requirements before applying.

You must also consider what you want out of your post-doc. While it is wise to accept a position that will allow you to continue your primary lines of research, it is advisable to consider what new skills you will learn during your position. Spending between one and five years in a position that provides the same training you received during graduate school is not generally viewed favorably. However, you must balance this with the need to publish as much as possible, so you do want a position that will allow you to follow up on previously productive lines of research.

Finally, realize that not all post-docs are created equally. Some institutions will expect you to manage a laboratory conducting the PI’s research, with little time for your own research. Others will give you resources to conduct your own lines of research. Some have teaching expectations, while others do not even offer you the opportunity to gain further teaching experience. Your decision about a post-doc position should be influenced largely by what your ideal position is once you have completed the post-doc. Good luck!

By Jennifer Pattershall

Research Program, cont.

perfectly. For example, you can try out your first study with a different population or add another independent or dependent variable. A set of two or more linked studies constitutes a line of research and an accomplished researcher's program of research should eventually include many connected lines of research. As a graduate student, your program of research will likely only consist of one or two lines of research, but will show that you have started to develop your own scientific identity.

The more common approach to building a program of research is the post hoc method. Graduate students attempting to use this method should be prepared to evaluate their existing body of work with a critical eye toward weaving a narrative. Start by making a list of all of the projects in which you have been involved. Then, identify a broad theme (e.g., stigma) that links the majority of these studies. Next, try to make this theme more and more specific until you have distilled out the essence of who you are and what you do as a researcher. Finally, start writing your narrative by telling a story about what you have done, why you did it, and what you found.

Whichever method you use, developing a program of research will hopefully be a positive and self-reflective process.

by Sonia Kang

Establishing Your Professional Web Presence

If you've ever wanted to get in touch with Jane and Bob Gradd-Stoodent but only have a name to go on, you know how frustrating it can be to search fruitlessly online. This person might have a common name, no web presence at all, or may have changed schools, leaving behind outdated contact information. Thanks to their elusiveness, not only have you suffered needless irritation, but also, Jane and Bob have missed an opportunity to network, collaborate, or gain exposure for their research. With a little effort on their part, they could have provided you with what you needed (e.g., citation, measure, recent paper) just by creating a simple webpage.

For those with their Ph.D.s, this can be as easy as setting up an account on SocialPsychology.org. For graduate students, however, the options are different. Other professional networking sites can be limiting. LinkedIn.com, for example, allows a resume-type listing on one's profile but lacks the capability to link files, such as downloadable CVs or recent publications. Also, to contact a person or merely view a full profile, one must also have a LinkedIn account. Graduate students seeking to create their own professional profiles online should investigate their school's resources (e.g., department webmaster, university web accounts for students/staff) or find webhosts online (if they are willing to invest a little hands-on time themselves).

Webhosts offering free space often compensate by sprinkling ads throughout users' sites, but the resourceful grad student might secure web-space and design help from friends who own webspace. Another great free option is Google Sites, which has a WYSIWYG (What You See Is What You Get) design interface, allowing one to insert photos and files or format text in the same way as if using Microsoft Word. Though this Google feature still has its limitations, it was the best option I found for beginners. A simple one-page profile takes approximately 30 minutes to set up.

What to include:

- Name and current contact information
- Research interests, short biography of professional career
- Current CV (downloadable or statement that it can be requested)
- Citations (downloadable, if possible) of presentations and publications
- Professional-looking snapshot of yourself (optional)
- Personal tidbits (optional, erring on the side of caution)

Check out our sample profile for "Ima G. Student" at <http://sites.google.com/site/igstudent> for more useful tips, exemplary profiles of real grad students and faculty, and other features of Google Sites.

By Helen Lee Lin

President's Corner

It's back to the daily grind as those summer days slip away, and for your '08-'09 GSC, it's time to finalize our plans for the remaining six months of our term.

In August I met with the SPSP Executive Committee in historic Boston, Massachusetts, to report on our accomplished goals and the future programming we have planned for you. Aside from developing our events for the 2009 meeting in Tampa, we have reconfigured the FORUM page on the

SPSP website, proposed that the SPSP conference be organized by topic keywords in the future, and surveyed those entering the job market and recently off the job market about their professional experiences. In fact, results from the latter will be presented as a poster in Tampa – keep an eye out for more details on this and our other events in the Winter 2008 FORUM!

The Executive Committee stressed their commitment to serving graduate students. On their

advice, we'll offer more valuable opportunities for you to interact with faculty and other professionals who are advanced in their careers.

Finally, it's just a few short months before we call for students like you to fill the positions of President and Members-at-Large on next year's GSC. Keep an eye on the listserve for our announcement, and feel free to ask any of us if you have questions about our roles.

By Helen Lee Lin

What Kind of Start-Up Package Should I request?

Imagine that you are close to landing your first academic position. During your interview with the department head, he or she asks you what kind of start-up package you would like. Do you know what your answer to this question would be? When the SPSP Graduate Student Committee asked this question in a recent online survey, we discovered that many graduate student respondents did not know what type of requests were appropriate in academic job interviews. Fortunately, respondents who have recently been hired for their first academic position let us know about the resources they asked for in their interviews. In this article, I will share some of their responses with you so that you can be better prepared for negotiations with the department head in your job interviews.

As you read the suggestions in this article, be sure to keep in mind that more generous start-up

packages tend to be available for research-focused positions than for teaching-focused positions. Nevertheless, many small liberal arts colleges that focus on teaching still provide at least some research start-up funds for new faculty.

Responses from faculty revealed a plethora of ideas that many of us might not have even considered. Aside from requesting resources regarding lab space, computers, software licenses, audio/visual equipment, and access to a participant pool or funds to compensate participants, some faculty respondents asked for the following: funding to present their research at conferences, laptops for conference presentations, summer salary for the first two or three years, funding for graduate students, undergraduate research assistants (paid or for academic credit), furniture for labs, and reimbursement for the costs of professional memberships and journal subscriptions.

A number of faculty respondents also mentioned requesting a teaching waiver or reduced course load for the first semester or academic year so that they could get their research labs up and running. Some faculty respondents also asked for guarantees on the maximum number of new teaching preparations per academic year.

Whether you are interviewing at a liberal arts college or a research-focused institution, it is certainly reasonable to inquire about an allowance for relocation expenses, especially for tenure-track positions. In some cases, money for relocation expenses is even available for visiting positions.

Hopefully, this article has given you some ideas about appropriate inquiries in your job interviews. If you would like any more information about the survey results on this topic, feel free to contact me at gregpreuss@gmail.com/

Announcements

* It is the Graduate Student Committee's pleasure to announce the official winners of the GSC's second annual Outstanding Research Award competition. Please join us in congratulating these up-and-coming social/personality psychologists (and their co-authors!) on their achievement!

M. Janelle Cambron of University of Houston
 Michael W. Kraus of University of California, Berkeley
 Steven J. Stanton of Duke University
 Adam Waytz of University of Chicago

Our winners will present their outstanding research in a special symposium at the 2009 SPSP conference in Tampa. Everyone is welcome to attend!

* The SPSP Graduate Student Committee is re-opening our short 20-minute assessment survey on the characteristics of SPSP job applicants (as well as of those who are not quite on the job market and those who have been on the job market recently). We are interested in both U.S. and international respondents.

The link for the survey has changed: <http://gscsurvey.notlong.com>

In order to participate, you must be at least 18 years of age. You must also be a member of the Society for Personality and Social Psychology (SPSP). Finally, because of the topic of this study, you must be one of the following:

- a master's or Ph.D. graduate student within 2 years of entering the job market
- currently on the job market (even if it is not your first time)
- in the first 0 to 5 years of your post-PhD job (including anyone who has just secured a job recently)

* The GSC would like to congratulate the winner of the contest from the most recent issue of the FORUM. Gloria Luong of the University of California - Irvine won \$15 for her guess that the GSC student listserve had 1,158 subscribers (at the time the contest started, we had 1,124 subscribers).

The 2008-2009 Graduate Student Committee

President
Helen Lee Lin
 University of Houston
 hlin@uh.edu

Members-at-Large
Sonia Kang
 University of Toronto
 sonia.kang@utoronto.ca

Megan O'Grady
 Colorado State University
 mogrady@lamar.colostate.edu

Jennifer Pattershall
 University of Arkansas
 jmpatter@uark.edu

Greg Preuss
 Ohio University
 Gp311205@ohio.edu

Past President
Elizabeth Lee
 Pennsylvania State Univ
 eal178@psu.edu

Greg Preuss served as the Editor of this edition of The Forum.
 Camille Johnson created the layout and format.

More at www.spasp.org/student.