

The FORUM

The Newsletter of the SPSP Graduate Student Committee

Summer 2008

Welcome to the Summer 2008 issue of the FORUM! This edition of the FORUM contains articles on some of the most important issues in graduate student life: collaborations, conferences, building a teaching portfolio, and, perhaps most important, getting a job. Interested in collaborating but not sure where to start? Check out our tips on forming successful collaborations. Feel lost at big conferences? Look no further than our article on regional conferences. Are you about to go on the job market or thinking ahead to when you will be? Our articles on building an effective teaching portfolio and getting an academic job were created with you in mind. We hope that you will find this issue of the FORUM interesting and relevant. Have a great summer!

The Where, When, and How of Finding an Academic Job

As your tenure as a graduate student nears its end, it's time to start looking for a job. I sat down with my fellow graduate student, Jeffrey Goodman, who had great success on the job market. He shared the key factors that helped him secure four job offers.

First, know where to look for openings. The SPSP and SPN listservs are excellent sources. Other sources include the Chronicle of Higher Education (<http://chronicle.com>) and Academic360 (<http://www.academic360.com>), both of which allow you to set search parameters so you only receive notices about jobs that interest you.

Next, know when to start looking. Some listings appear in late summer, with fall deadlines. However, the majority of tenure-track positions appear in the fall, with December deadlines. Post-docs and visiting professorships gener-

ally appear in late winter and spring.

After narrowing down potential jobs based on your qualifications and interests, you must know how to snag that interview. The key here is customization of application materials. Read mission statements and incorporate them into cover letters. Tailor your vita based on the needs of the department. Highlight your ability to teach courses mentioned in the job announcement. Demonstrating your familiarity with the department will increase your chances of being asked to interview.

The customization should continue with your job talk. Find out the size and composition of the audience, and tailor the talk accordingly. Don't be too technical or dense, as most of the audience will not be familiar with your field. Also, recognize that your teaching abili-

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The Benefits of Attending Regional Conferences

Do you feel like it is hard to stand out at large conferences? Regional conferences may have benefits that larger conferences don't always offer. Annual meetings for regional psychological associations in the U.S. are typically held between March and May. Have you ever considered attending one of these conferences?

Regional conferences can be a great opportunity to present your

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READER CONTEST!!

Guess how many subscribers we currently have on the SPSP GSC listserv and win \$15! The closest guess wins, and if your guess is within 10 of the correct answer, the prize is \$25! E-mail your guess to spspgsc@yahoo.com (use subject line "FORUM contest") by July 15, 2008. Winner will be notified by e-mail within one week. In the event of a tie, the earliest qualifying submission wins. Good luck and happy guessing!

Steps to a Successful Collaboration

During your time in graduate school, you may have the opportunity to work with classmates, labmates, or someone from another institution. Here is a brief guide to why, who, and how.

The act of choosing a collaborator should not be taken lightly. Think about skills or resources this potential co-author might possess as well as your working compatibility. Dr. K. Michele Kacmar of University of Alabama highlights 3 types of collaborators: clone, consultant, and complementary. A clone collaboration may proceed smoothly because both share similar training or specialize in the same field; however, this may mean less breadth of knowledge and being weak in the same areas. Alternatively, a less-experienced student might seek out a consultant collaborator who is more knowledgeable about methodology or getting published. Finally, complementary collaborators usually contribute skills or personality characteristics that the other does not have (e.g., an able writer teaming up with a stats guru, or a self-motivated individual working with someone who needs deadlines).

I corresponded with Drs. Richard M. Ryan and Edward L. Deci at the University of Rochester about their three decades of prolific work on self-determination theory, which has yielded them over 60 co-authored publications. A long-time partnership such as theirs is unusual, and though the average graduate student is probably not looking for a thirty-year co-authorship, I asked Deci and Ryan

to divulge what makes their collaboration function so well. Going contrary to the notion that working with one's friends leads to distraction, irresponsibility, or "goofing off," they jointly expressed that their friendship with each other is a vital foundation for their working relationship. They add, "When we have the inevitable conflicts and ego-involvements that come with academic life, it helps to have a foundation of caring that allows you to give voice to issues and work out differences." (From my personal experience, feeling comfortable with your collaborator is also helpful in that you can avoid agreeing just to be polite or feeling offended when critiquing each other's ideas.)

Drs. Deci and Ryan also point out the necessity for a unified voice in their publications, especially as the originators of self-determination theory: "We only add to the body of theory when we both fully agree and assent to the changes...it means there is no splitting off, and it makes the ultimate work more integrated and tighter." When authoring manuscripts, one person serves as the main voice in establishing the narrative, promoting texts that are better organized and more readable. Naturally, they take turns in this role! Naïve graduate students who are new to co-authorship will note that the division of labor is rarely perfectly equal, as they might have believed.

Though it would be difficult to offer a comprehensive list of strategies for maintaining a successful collaboration, here are a few tips to avoiding some of the more com-

mon collaboration pitfalls (adjust according to your own situation):

- Agree on your long-term goals – "Let's aim for two published papers; each of us can be first author on one."
- Borrow from each other's knowledge – "You can teach me about clinical outcomes and I can teach you about hierarchical linear modeling."
- Clarify terms and phrases – "We seem to mean different things when we say 'authenticity.' I meant to say..."
- Designate a leader – "You (or I) will get us motivated when the project has stalled."
- Express frustrations instead of building resentment – "I feel like I always pick up your slack."
- Follow through – "If we want to finish within a year, both of us should make this project a priority."
- Get out if needed – "We tried unsuccessfully to work together. Let's cut our losses and move on instead of wasting time."
- Have a confidante on the outside – "I can vent about my collaborator without being unprofessional in front of our colleagues."
- Inform each other of weaknesses – "Sometimes I'll need you to nag me to get tasks done."

Not surprisingly, working toward a thriving collaboration can resemble many of the qualities of a successful romantic relationship. My recommendation is that all parties involved should strive for good communication, common goals, making a few sacrifices, and the willingness to work through conflicts.

Happy collaborating!

by Helen Lee Lin

A Creative Approach to Providing Evidence of Your Teaching Effectiveness

All of the academic positions for which you apply will expect you to provide evidence of your teaching effectiveness. The purpose of this article is to offer some concrete, yet creative, suggestions on how to convincingly present evidence of your teaching effectiveness to faculty search committees.

Faculty search committees will be interested in seeing not only the summary statistics for the multiple-choice items of your teaching evaluations, but also the hand-written comments from students. Do not despair if your evaluations are not as uniformly positive as you had hoped. Other items can also be sent to faculty search committees. For example, your course syllabi can help convey to faculty search committees both your teaching philosophy and the creativity of your approach to student learning. Also, whenever students send you emails to tell you how much they have enjoyed your course, be sure to print the emails and save them. These spontaneous testimonials from former students are actually quite compelling evidence of your teaching effectiveness.

The points that you emphasize in the statement of your teaching philosophy may vary according to whether you are applying to small private colleges or large public universities. Given the high cost of small private colleges, it is vitally important that your students and their parents feel like they are getting their money's worth. Be sure to emphasize how you will provide lots of one-on-one attention to students and the ways in which you create a challenging, interactive classroom environment that promotes critical thinking. For large public universities, your teaching philosophy should emphasize the ways in which your teaching style will capture the attention of larger classes. The use of PowerPoint, video clips, and other media engage students in large lecture halls and get them excited about our discipline.

In closing, there are many ways to provide evidence of your teaching effectiveness to faculty search committees. Hopefully, this article has provided you with additional insight on how to make yourself marketable for academic positions. Best of luck!

by Greg Preuss

Getting a Job,cont.

ties may be assessed during your talk, so try to incorporate some of your best classroom strategies.

There are a number of other things you can do to make yourself stand out from the other applicants. Read up on the research of faculty members and express interest in possible collaborations. Ask about special programs, centers, or grants that you could be involved with. Remember, you are not just trying to sell your ideas, but also yourself. Good luck!

by Jennifer Pattershall

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President's Corner

By Helen Lee Lin

Sixty undergrad papers waiting to be graded, two more proposals to write, a cumulative exam to study for...does the grad student to-do list ever end?! Oh, wait, then there are the five articles to read by next Wednesday, 30 more participants to run before the semester is over, and dealing with life's curveballs in general. It's no wonder we stumble through the motions some days, our sleep-deprived minds foggy with tasks to complete, people to talk to, and meetings to attend. As spring semesters are drawing to a close, some of us may be yearning for that long-awaited trip home (or if you're lucky, to an exotic locale), while others just want any respite

from daily life that we can get before the madness begins again.

With all that on your mind, one of the last things you're thinking about is finding time to read the FORUM. After all, one of the benefits of the printed word is that it sticks around like a loyal friend, waiting until you need it. You know you could look back at this issue in the winter or even two years from now. But just like one rarely benefits from having a back-burner friend who is never consulted, the timeliness and relevance of some of our articles may wane if kept too long. So think of the FORUM and the SPSP student website as a great go-to resource for grad

student needs. We want to be the friend you go to all the time for advice, through good times or bad.

Though you may have never met us, we're here for you. Don't find our topics useful to your situation? Let us know! We're interested in unearthing tips and tricks that will help you, but we need to hear from you. Like what you're reading? Great, tell us you want more! As always, we can be reached at spspgsc@yahoo.com and at our individual e-mail addresses.

Keep an eye on us this year -- we'll be changing things up! Let's dive into summer and make it a good one!

Regional Conferences continued

work as a "talk" instead of a poster. Amanda Johnston (Miami University) suggests that "one of the main benefits for me as a graduate student is the opportunity to give a research talk; I've been giving research talks at MPA every year I've been in graduate school." Another grad student, Ioana Latu (Georgia State University), said a benefit is that "regional conferences are especially good when you are starting up --- it's a good way to practice conference skills without the stress of being at a large conference."

Also, networking may be less intimidating. Johnston said that "networking also seems to be easier at MPA due to the smaller size, so at the social events I find it easy to talk with graduate students and

faculty from other programs." Additionally, you may have more time to set up meetings. Latu said, "At a regional conference there aren't as many talks I am interested in attending, so I have more time to informally meet with other researchers."

Both Latu and Johnston also suggest that it is less expensive to attend these conferences. Registration and membership fees are typically more economical as compared to larger psychology organizations and travel is typically cheaper as well.

Deadlines for regional conference submissions are typically in late fall or winter. Submission deadlines start with Southeastern (SEPA) in October. Western (WPA), Southwestern (SWPA), Midwestern (MPA) and Eastern

are in November. Finally, Rocky Mountain (RMPA) is in January. Northeastern (NEPA), the only regional conference held in the fall, has a June deadline.

by Megan O'Grady