

Job Market Advice
Questions you can ask when you are on an interview!

Most campus interviews involve lots of meetings with individual faculty members or groups of faculty members, and often with Deans, etc. Very often, the people you meet with will ask what questions you have about the university or department. In addition, you will want to gather information on the interview to determine if this is the kind of place you would like to work. This list of possible questions to ask was originally compiled by Wendy Martinek (Binghamton University). Each year, those who gain interview experience add new questions that we hadn't heard before. We ask those who benefit from the list to pay forward by sending us new questions.

Most faculty advise, however, that you do your own research ahead of time so that you are already informed before you arrive on campus. Most departments have websites that give lots of information about their course offerings, programs, faculty, etc. The more informed you are about these things before you arrive, the more interested and impressive you will seem.

Most faculty also advise that you plan to familiarize yourself with the research of the faculty you will meet (in broad strokes—look at CVs and some recent work-- you don't have to hunt down 20 year old dissertations, etc.), so that you can talk to them about what they do, also. One recent interviewee said the following: "I highly recommend making up a 'cheat sheet' with information on members of the department to keep in your briefcase when you are interviewing on campus. It is easy to make one up (with pictures even) from the department's website and it can be invaluable to have something to jog your memory before going in to interview with an individual faculty member, a panel of faculty, or attending a faculty lunch/dinner."

Also keep in mind that it is fine to ask the same question of multiple people. The extent to which different faculty members have similar or different perceptions will tell you something about the department.

1. What is the mission of the Department?
2. What is the mission of the University?
3. How does the Department's mission mesh with that of the University?
4. Where does the position being filled fit into the Department's mission? The University's mission?
5. Is the department growing? Shrinking?
6. How is the Department viewed by University administration?
7. How does the department fare in terms of the distribution of resources within the University?
8. How often do faculty meet?
9. How are decisions made in your department? How is the Chair chosen?
10. What is the role of junior faculty in the Department?
11. What role do junior faculty play in departmental governance? What role do they play in graduate education?
12. What are the Department's goals for the graduate program? How does the Department go about pursuing those goals?
13. What sort of professional development is offered to junior faculty by the Department? By

the University? (e.g., internal grants, travel support, support for continuing education such as ICPSR, formal mentoring)

14. What sort of professional development is offered to graduate students by the Department? By the university?

15. How successful have members of the Department been in securing external funding?

16. How useful is the University's sponsored funds office in helping faculty secure external funding?

17. How important is securing external funding for junior faculty?

18. What are the most important considerations about candidates for this position to you?

19. What do you think are the most important considerations about candidates for this position to others in the Department? In the University?

20. How would you characterize relations among faculty in the Department?

21. How would you characterize relations among junior faculty? Between junior and senior faculty?

22. What are the Department's strengths and weaknesses in terms of: (1) research, (2) graduate teaching, and (3) undergraduate teaching?

23. How would you characterize the Department's intellectual identity (or identities) in the profession?

24. In your view, what's the single most important thing junior faculty should do as they make their way towards the tenure process? What's the second most important thing?

25. What's the appropriate mix of research, teaching, and service for a junior faculty member?

26. How would you characterize the intellectual environment in the Department and/or the University?

27. What sort of workshops, brown bags, and other forums are there in the Department and/or the University for the exchange of ideas and fostering of research?

28. How is collaborative work between students and faculty viewed in the Department?

29. How is collaborative work among faculty in the Department viewed?

30. How is collaborative work in general viewed?

31. What is your undergraduate student population like? What do they tend to do after graduation?

32. What's the city like? What kind of cultural or other activities are available in the city or in the area around the city?

33. Do faculty members spend time with each other away from the office?

34. What's the best thing about working here? What's the worst thing about working here?