Working at a Teaching-focused University

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Outline

• Tenure-track vs. lecturer positions
• How would you compare working at Stanford vs SJSU?
• How do you divide your time between teaching and research?
• What kinds of classes do you teach?
• Why did you choose SJSU?
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Tenure-track vs. Lecturer Positions

• Focus on tenure-track positions at 4-year schools
  – After 6 years, apply for tenure and promotion from Assistant Professor to Associate professor with tenure.
  – Usually require research/scholarship

• Also positions as lecturers at 4-year schools
  – Usually temporary positions
  – Do not usually require research/scholarship

• Community colleges offer tenure-track positions without research expectations
Qualifications

• Tenure-track position:
  – PhD and postdoc
• Lecturer:
  – Masters or PhD
• Community College:
  – Masters or PhD
Teaching Experience

• Teach a class
  – Lecturer at a 4-year university or community college
  – Different than TAing
  – Help you decide if you really like teaching
  – (Also looks great on your CV)
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Stanford vs. SJSU

Stanford
Research-focused

SJSU
Teaching-focused
Research-focused vs. Teaching-focused Universities

• **Similarities**
  – Similar tenure process
    • 6 years from Assistant to Associate/Tenure
  – Research
    • Publications are usually required for tenure
    • Grants are usually required for tenure
Research-focused vs. Teaching-focused Universities

• **Differences**
  
  – **Greater focus on teaching**
    • Teach 1-4 classes per semester
    • Support and rewards for teaching well
    • Teaching counts in the tenure process
  
  – **Less focus on research**
    • Fewer publications for tenure
    • Different level of funding (grants)
      – Instead of NIH R01 or HHMI, tend to get NIH R15/AREA or NSF RUI
    • Smaller start-up
    • Undergrads and M.S. students, not PhDs and Postdocs
PhDs and Postdocs vs. Undergrads and M.S. students

- Research needs to be understandable
  - Doesn’t mean it can’t be interesting and important

- Techniques need to be reasonable
  - You don’t want a technique that takes years to perfect

- Students usually stay in the lab about two years
  - Projects need to be in smaller chunks
  - Students frequently work in teams/small groups

- Should be able to accomplish on a smaller budget
  - You probably shouldn’t plan to work with monkeys

- Expect to be more involved
  - Younger students aren’t as independent
Benefits of Working with Undergrads and M.S. students

- **Excitement**
  - Everything’s new to them - even pouring plates!

- **Shaping the type of scientist they will become**
  - Usually their first research experience

- **They are frequently paid through independent programs**
  - During the semester they get class credit
  - Over the summer (and sometimes during the year) students can be paid through programs such as:
    - RISE, MARC, HHMI, REU for undergrads
CSU-type University vs. Small Liberal Arts School

- **CSU** = California State University (Public)
  - 23 campuses, 433,000 students, 44,000 faculty and staff
    - SJSU has ~31,000 students
  - Largest, most diverse, and one of the most affordable university systems in the country
  - Undergraduates and Masters students

- **Liberal Arts Schools** (Private)
  - ~1500 students/school
  - Usually expensive, but can offer scholarships
  - Only undergraduates
CSU-type University vs. Small Liberal Arts School

**CSU**
- More students means more applicants to the lab
  - ~150 in the last 1.5 years
- More teaching
- Research expectations and start-up packages are similar

**Liberal Arts School**
- Fewer students, but GPA higher
- Less teaching
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Dividing time between research and teaching

• First year:
  – Spend a lot of time writing your classes
  – Spend a lot of time setting up your lab

• Second year is better:
  – Classes are written
  – Usually start committee work
  – Keep your lab going
  – Balance is flexible
How is running my lab similar and different?

• Similar: We have lab meetings every week, which are much the same.

• Different: In addition, we have project meetings once a week with each group in my office
  – Discuss weekly goals, results, and troubleshooting

• Similar: Students do the experiments and lab jobs

• Different: Summer and Winter are the most productive times

• Similar: New students are trained by more experienced students
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Types of Classes Teach

- Large undergraduate lecture classes
- Small undergraduate elective / graduate classes
- Lab courses
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Why did I choose SJSU?

• My favorite time in lab was training students
• I like working with undergrads and M.S.-level students
• I wanted to stay closer to the bench
• I like teaching
• I like the challenge
• I like the work-life balance
• I believe in public education
Questions?

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