

Beyond Boulder 2/10/14

Careers in Academia

Martin Black – CU Undergrad advisor

Dave Brain – APS Prof

Emily Leveque – CU APS Post-doc

Q: Career Path

E: I went from MIT to Hawaii – I didn't teach in grad school, Einstein Fellowship, Hubble Fellowship

M: I went from MIT to Maryland – had a couple of post doc assignments, -> 2 body problem -> NOAA, and then I taught at Front Range CC

D: I wanted to be an Astronaut, I needed a PhD but wanted to go to a NASA lab, not stay and teach at a university – that is not where the action is..., So I stayed away from teaching/TAing at all costs, I ended up covering some classes for my advisor, had a 2 body problem. I was a grad student here at CU, got a post-doc assignment and taught 1 class, and that one class changed my perspective on everything. I went to Berkeley for 8 yrs where I need to get grants for salary

M: I did TA – teaching experience is good for a lot – in research you will need to present to large crowds

E: The 2 body problem is a popular problem...

E: I get a lot of emails and it seems people are always asking about careers in academia, because it is all around you right now, one common question is: Is it really competitive? I have seen 1 position and 300-400 applicants

D: There are a lot of paths in – when a position is posted, what does the dept really want? – you shouldn't look at competition as all gloom and doom

Q: What can make you stand out?

E: Being a good fit to what the dept is looking for... they may post something very specific, but you should still apply because they might create a position for you... But be a strong applicant across the board (publications, personable...)

D: Be excellent, once you apply there is a short list to get on that to get to an interview, you need publications, presentations, you need to be known to the wider community, and you need letters of recommendation (sometimes places will ask for letters on your behalf without you even knowing), and you need to be personable when you go to an interview, it is like rushing for a frat, they are trying to see if you would be a good fit in their little club. You really need to nail the interview

M: Sometimes just knowing people helps, from where you are applying to, to having a reputation...

Q: Different titles for prof, positions?

E: Usually you would be hired as a tenure track: Assistant -> Associate -> Tenure, time requirements vary by university but is somewhere around 6 years, Once you have tenure you have a permanent position

D: At CU: Assistant-> Tenure Associate -> Full tenure, Typical prof position is 40% teaching, 40% research and 10% service (committee member...) Once you have tenure there are more service commitments, head of committees and head of dept...

E: SLAC -> Small liberal arts college: the number of classes you teach or level of classes may change but it also varies by university.

D: Right now I am required to teach 1 and 1 (during a school year, 1 class in the fall, one class in the spring), but the humanities might have to teach 2 and 3 or something like that

Q: As an undergrad how to I get on track for getting into academia?

D: Try both teaching and research now! LA program... and do research (REU). Don't apply for professorship because of just research or just teaching, you will need to do both

E: Get into a good grad school. It might not be pc but it really does help, life is easier if you do

M: You have to really want it, don't do it for the money, you have to be self-motivated, research and teaching looks good on grad school apps

D: If you have your heart set on teaching at an R1 (Tier 1) school, go to a good grad school

E: Get ready for the phys GRE, life is easier if you do well on it

D: The job is really fun

E: I should be terribly frustrated by applying and not hearing back from my professorship applications, but I really love my job

Q: How much of the time do you write grant proposals?

D: I have 9 months of funding from the university, but I have to write grants for the other 3 months and any grad/undergrad students that I want to take on, but I submit 2 per year right now

E: research -> you have to be good at writing, don't think because you are a science major that you don't have to write anything, grant writing doesn't take up all of your time, and it is a good way to organize your thoughts

M: In academia you are surrounded by intellectuals

D: and not just in your dept

E: Tenure grants you some academic freedom, you can actually do science, (risky, new fields...)

Q: Salary levels

D: Annual raise somewhere between 1-3%, and 20% between different titles

E: At public universities, all of that information is online

D: MY DAY

830-10-15 prep lecture

1030-1130 service -> committee, grad student presentation work

Lunch

12-1250 grad class

30 mins of OHs

Admissions committee

330 Kindergarten teacher called to see if I could present to the class

400 colloquium

500 Here at BB

615 fly to Berkeley