



California College Personnel Association

STARTING OFF ON THE RIGHT FOOT: LANDING YOUR FIRST JOB WITH GRACE

This guide was put together to help prepare CCPA members, specifically graduate students, for the conference part of their job search. This packet includes information presented in our online web presentation, *Starting Off on the Right Foot: Landing Your First Job with Grace* and will be a useful guide for you as you embark on your job search and interview process.

THINGS TO CONSIDER WHEN LOOKING FOR A JOB:

1. Residential or commuter school
2. Number of students who live on campus
3. Size of residence halls
4. Culture of residence halls (same or different per building)
5. Background and characteristics of students
6. Student participation rate
7. University culture and climate
8. Job responsibilities
9. Location of campus
10. Organizational chart
11. View of Student Affairs and specific department by the senior administrator
12. Mission statement of the department
13. Number of staff to supervise
14. Educational benefits
15. Professional development opportunities
16. Committee opportunities (member vs. chair)
17. Conservative or liberal campus
18. Behavior issues (concern vs. not)
19. How you are treated by those who are interviewing you
20. Where does department derive their funding?
21. Is Housing and Facilities part of Residence Life—if not, what type of relationship exists (collegial vs. adversarial)?
22. Salary and benefits
23. If there is tuition remission, do you need to pay tax?
24. Is the institution in a solid financial state, or have there been significant budget cuts within the past few years?
25. University environment—interaction with faculty and other divisional or university units?
26. Evaluation process
27. Is there a working time limit (one year, two years, three years or none)?
28. Campus concerns- Enrollment? Relationship with community? Crime? Harassment? Alcohol? Drugs?

QUESTIONS TO BE PREPARED TO ANSWER:

1. What are my professional goals?
2. What is my philosophy of Residence Life or Student Affairs?
3. Strengths and areas to work on?
4. What are my needs/requirements (supervisor, subordinates, departmental & university)?
5. What are my personal and professional values?
6. What are my stress limits?
7. What do I do to relax and separate from the "live-in" part of the Residence Life job?

JOB SEARCH CONSIDERATIONS (WHAT ARE MY PRIORITIES?)

- Job responsibilities (size of hall or buildings or operation, number and type of staff, budget, programming, training, collateral assignment)
- Supervision
- Specialist vs. Generalist
- Size of Institution
- Public vs. Private
- Location (near/in city vs. rural)
- Salary, benefits, apartment, parking, professional development opportunities
- Doctoral program (tuition remission)
- Relationship/significant others
- Other:

RATIONAL FOR PRIORITIES:

QUESTIONS:

CONFERENCE TIPS:

1. Don't pre-schedule interviews until after 1pm on the first day. Go to a placement orientation session and checkout the placement center to become familiar with:
 - Placement Center layout
 - Interview scheduling area
 - Candidate mailbox area
 - Employer mailbox system location
 - Candidate resource room
 - Candidate writing area
2. Don't send your resumes to random employers—respond to only those positions for which you meet the minimum requirements and if you find the position interesting.
3. Do not be too choosy the first day and then panic on the last day and begin putting out more resumes. By this point, most employers have already selected the people they want to interview and won't have open spots.
4. Bring about 50-75 resumes and employer notes (pre-staple these to your resume to save time).
5. Develop a system for looking through placement listings and supplements such as a code for each listing:
 - 1= highly interested and qualified
 - 2= qualified but only mildly interested
 - 3= qualified but not interested
 - 4= over qualified
 - 5= under qualified—don't apply
6. In terms of qualifications, 2 years graduate experience can be considered up to 1 year of professional experience.
7. Remember to pick up the supplements and respond quickly.
8. Do not expect an immediate offer for an interview with everyone with whom you've given your resume. Depending on the type of position, you may only get one interview for every 10-15 resumes you send. Keep in mind that some employers will respond with their interest or disinterest and some will not.
9. If at all possible, DO NOT schedule interview back-to-back—sometimes interviews will run over, or you will need time to: write a thank you card, review notes for next interview, need a restroom or caffeine break.
10. Attend presentations at the conference, especially ones where the presenters are from a school that you are interested in.

CONFERENCE TIPS (CONTINUED):

11. Use the resource room in the placement center to review the materials that each school supplies—preparation shows (bonus points!).
12. Dress professionally at all times while interviewing or while in the placement center.

13. Be polite but cautious in the waiting area. It is not appropriate, or good manners, to bash other schools or their interview process anywhere during conference. YOU NEVER KNOW WHO IS LISTENING—this includes elevators, bathrooms, and restaurants within a 50 mile radius.
14. If other candidates ask you how many interviews you've had or how you are doing, be polite but not too verbose. Don't brag about how well you are doing or about which school is "about to make an offer."
15. Try to leave placement and all that it entails in the placement center—if you are sharing a room with friends or other candidates, separate the conversation. Set ground rules with friends and roommates in advance to avoid resentment and stress.
16. Having more than a couple alcoholic beverages in one sitting is not recommended while at conference. Watch your alcohol intake carefully. Socializing is fine and a healthy part of the conference, but don't let it get out of hand. You never know who is around.

ETHICS IN THE JOB SEARCH:

1. Don't schedule too many interviews with too many schools—you will be noticed and considered unfocused!
2. Do not accept invitations for on-campus interviews when you don't think that you would accept a position if offered.
3. Do not apply for positions for jobs or schools that hold no interest for you. Use a mentor to practice your interviewing skills—don't waste the employer's or your time.
4. Do not count interviews as notches on your professional belt.
5. Be honest with prospective employers regarding status of your candidacy for other positions.
6. Respond within appropriate time frames when requested to make a decision regarding on-campus interviews or acceptance/rejection of job offers.
7. Withdraw your candidacy (immediately) from all active processes once you've accepted a position.
8. Never speak badly of other institutions either on a resume or a campus interview.
9. Clearly delineate the difference between full and part-time and graduate and undergraduate experiences on your resume.
10. Keep in mind that your behavior in all public settings is viewed as an extension of your general job search...and potential employers' behavior as indicative of view of professionalism.
11. Be considerate of your friends and classmates as they go through their search process—this is not a competition!
12. Inform your references in advance of using their name, provide them with a brief description of the positions you are applying for and a copy of your resume. Let them know they might expect to receive a phone call, and follow up with them once you've accepted an offer and closed your search.
13. Check the list distributed at placement regarding ethical questions by both employer and candidate.

INTERVIEWING TIPS:

1. The person on the other side of the table has seen many candidates—leave him/her with something to remember you by.
2. Try not to develop pat and boring responses to “standard” questions. Practice your responses with a friend until they sound conversational and have passion. Use examples—stories are great tools in getting people to remember you.
3. Stay fresh with each interview—try to space them out—let each be as unique as possible.
4. Be honest about what you are thinking and saying when interviewing. Don’t give the answer you think they want to hear—this is not a campaign. Truth in advertising is an important practice by both parties.
5. Ask questions! It is expected that you will have some and they should be interesting.
6. Investigate the school—use the web and use the resource room.
7. Preparations, communication, enthusiasm and assertiveness are key areas in the evaluation of you by the interviewer.
8. Interviews typically last between 20-25 minutes with a few minutes for you to ask questions. Use your time wisely.
9. Be concise when giving answers, but not too brief. You need to make a good impression quickly.
10. Feel free to attend the reception of a school for which you are a candidate—if invited. Don’t show up and “work the room.” For some schools receptions are part of their interview process while others use them as reunions.
11. Despite the distractions that are all around you, try to concentrate on your interview.
12. Keep good records of your interviews, including the name of the person(s) interviewing you, so you can send a thank you note—ask if you didn’t catch their name and for the spelling.
13. All communication to employers should be appropriate. Know the difference between appropriate communication and hounding.
14. Be yourself, smile, have fun, relax, get sleep, attend a session just for fun and EAT with friends.

QUESTIONS TO ASK FUTURE EMPLOYERS:

1. What are the prevalent issues on your campus?
2. What opportunities are there for me to work or collaborate with other departments?
3. Where does your department derive its funding?
4. Are Residence Life, Housing and Facilities all under the same department—if not, what is the relationship?
5. Does the department sponsor professional development opportunities on and off campus (how regularly)?
6. How much contact will I have with my supervisor?
7. Is the department collaborative or is there a great deal of autonomy?
8. How much autonomy do they encourage among their staff?
9. What is the department's definition of autonomy?
10. What are some goals that the department is setting for the coming year?
11. How many positions are open or are anticipated?
12. Is there anything unusually demanding about the job that I should know? What would be the most demanding/challenging aspects of the job?
13. What are the primary results you would expect of me in this position?
14. What is the largest single problem facing your department or staff at this time? What is being done to address this issue?
15. Is there anything else I can share with you about my qualifications that might enhance my candidacy with your school?
16. What type of evaluation is done—how often?
17. How do you see your success as a department?

AFTER THE CONFERENCE:

1. Unpack, send your suits immediately to the dry-cleaners to be ready for the on-campus interviews to follow, complete your tracking system, get a good night's sleep.
2. Revisit priorities—has anything changed, watch out for the panic/ego/big paycheck/gremlins.
3. Practice for your on-campus interviews.
4. Follow up on all post-conference correspondence.
5. Don't call employers if you haven't heard from them within the first two weeks of returning to campus. Many of them are also going to ACPA and won't reconvene their search committees until their entire conference interview process has been complete. Also, keep in mind that these folks have been away from campus for at least one, if not two, weeks and need to do some catching up.
6. If you are feeling some pressure from a few schools, and wish to contact a school you haven't heard from, check in with a mentor on the best way to approach this.
7. Expect that all calls will be filtered through a member of the department's support staff—be courteous and professional at all times.
8. If your voice-mail incoming message has a song, or laughing, or a joke on it—CHANGE IT—it should be professional sounding: "hello, this is...and I'm sorry I'm not here to take your call. Please, leave your name and phone number and be assured I will return your call shortly. Thank you for calling and have a good day."
9. Time lines vary from school to school. You may get an on-campus interview offer at conference, or you may receive one after a few weeks—this is because some schools have confirmed openings and others are waiting for confirmation.

Almost Everything You Always Wanted To Know
About Taking a New Position,
But Were Afraid (or Didn't Know) To Ask

The Following information is designed to help you transition into a new Student Affairs positions. It is a list of things we wish we knew before (or as) we accepted professional positions.

Details to Consider

Each institution is unique. It is very difficult to find out about all of these items; during a campus visit ask about the items that are most important to your professional well being. The level of your position may dictate the benefits offered to you. Don't take anything for granted; systems and areas of the same campus can be drastically different!

DETAILS TO CONSIDER

- Discipline System- Student code of conduct. Rights vs. Responsibility. Sanctioning decisions made at which level? Confidentiality- parents notified, access to files.
- Evaluation/Feedback- Formal/informal? Frequency? By whom?
- Historical documents- Annual reports on other past records? Is predecessor around to assist/impede?
- Hours- 9am-5pm and/or 5pm- 9 am? Comp. Time for evening and weekend hours? Vacations-length/restricted dates? Office hours? Flex time? Status during holidays, academic breaks and summers? 10 mo. Vs. 12 mo. Contract?
- Housing Accommodations- Size? Cost? Distance from office? Laundry? Storage? AC/Heat control? Pets?
- Mission Statement- Does one exist? If so, does it match department behavior? Does it match your personal/ professional values?
- Office dress- What is the dress code, official and unofficial? Is casual okay?
- Office workspace- Size? Location? Shared? Reception Area? Meeting Areas?
- Organization of system- Recent changes? Increasing/Decreasing #'s? Flexibility? Decision-making at which levels?
- Orientations/Training- Procedures? History? "Traditions"? Department-wide and/or college wide?
- Parking/Transportation- Cost? Who pays? Location in relation to office/housing? Lighting, access, protection from weather? Public Transportation—quality, accessibility? Proximity of airport, train station, bus station.
- Professional development – Professional memberships paid? Subscriptions? Conference support- time, travel, meals, fees.
- Relationships with other offices- Especially those with which you will be working—both formal and informal.
- Secretarial support- Full time? Part-time? Student? Professional? Shared? None?
- Social Outlets- Night life for professional staff/spouse/family? Does staff currently socialize outside the office?
- Supervisor- style, expectations, personality, commitment, to your professional growth. Degree of involvement with day to day operations. What are the best things/worst things?
- Budget- Amount. What types of items are included: supplies, printing, programs, food, staff gifts?
- Computers-PC? Mac? E-mail? Internet? Training available?

WHILE NEGOTIATING

- Arrival date- If you can, arrange to arrive one or two weeks before the rush of staff training. It can take more time than you think to change driver's license, license plates, bank, long distance phone services, etc.
- Benefits- Life insurance, homeowners, vision, dental, medical, visual psychological. Choice? Cost? TIAA/CREF transferable? Payroll deduction for purchased items and or service? Exact dates that new benefits begin.
- Moving expenses- Covered by you or institution? Percentage? Flat amount?
- Salary- Range? Starting date vs. 1st paycheck? Frequency-weekly, bi-weekly, monthly? Union des? Retirement?

RELOCATION CONSIDERATIONS

- Automobile- Costs for transfer of license plates, driver license, insurance...
- Hair/clothes- Where do the locals shop/go for services?
- Shopping- Find someone who is familiar with your former state to translate store names..." ___ there, is the same as ___ here"
- Tax forms – Arrange to get state forms before leaving the area. City tax? State tax?

AS YOU BEGIN

- Personal budget- Take this opportunity to establish/improve your budget research bank savings/checking accounts, area taxes. Etc. Cost to transfer auto/license. Live-in- Put aside an amount that is close to what you would be paying in rent; when you do move off campus, will you have money for rent/utilities?
- Formal/Informal procedures- Watch and listen. Read files, policies, publications, mission statements, department goals, etc. Trust carefully. Maintain a social/ professional balance. Learn the politics. Think carefully before choosing a "side" or one is chosen for you.
- Information screening- Avoid listening to rumors and prejudging co-workers. Do not burn bridges before you know where they lead!
- Mail- New mailing address (home or office). New phone number(s); can you arrange service prior to your arrival. Live-in –If all mail goes to office, consider , consider and off-campus P.O. box for privacy and assured forwarding of mail after you leave.
- Negotiating new system - learn from the institution's past and adapt your past experiences. Keep the best and discard the rest. Observe and listen carefully!
- Personal wellness- Schedule personal time from day 1, don't wait for a break in the routine, it may never come! Plan at least one weekend per month to relax, get away if possible (especially if you live-in).

GENERAL SURVIVAL

- Ask questions
- Listen, listen, listen!
- Do what you think is best-give 110% vs. the minimum required.
- Offer suggestions- after you are aware of how the system works. Avoid "We always did it this way when I was at ___."
- Take risks – as a new person, mistakes are allowed.

TAKE FULL ADVANTAGE

- Before/during a campus visit- contact the Chamber of Commerce to get information about nearby cities; other courses of information include automobile clubs and local papers. During an interview on campus, stop by one of the local hotels to see what tourist/entertainment type attractions are available in the area.
- Academic opportunities- free course- even if you do not plan to use them to obtain a future degree, consider courses that will expose you to other areas (art, literature, athletic-related courses.)
- Area resources- check area services- free tapes, tax forms from local libraries. Free maps from state police.
- Benefits – health plans –read the materials! Many offer classes, examinations, etc. That should be taken advantage of. Also not change/removal dates. Retirement- what is the best plan? How long do you plan to stay? Tax forms.
- Campus services- discount purchasing of computers, bookstore items, travel services, etc.
- Conference travel- take advantage of conference travel, by incorporating “mini-vacation” side trips. A good break from campus to rejuvenate.
- Credit Union/ local banks- direct deposit, free services for employees, loans credit cars, financial services, etc. Consider a bankcard that can be accessed in other states.
- Entertainment- campus performances, speakers, etc. Area discounts with an ID or campus affiliation- museums, galleries. Reduced price movie passes, etc.

CAMPUS INTERVIEWS

1. Do not accept an offer to visit campus if you would not consider accepting a job offer.
2. There are several questions to ask before making a final offer to visit a campus:
 - How many openings do you anticipate?
 - How many candidates with you be bringing to campus for each position?
 - Ask for them to send you materials that help you get a better feel for the school (school paper, housing information, job description, organizational chart.)
 - Ensure that communication about meals, lodging and transportation are clear- who is paying?
 - If you are unclear about salary range, ask.
3. Appreciate the time the school will be devoting to you once you arrive on campus – try to accommodate their schedule if possible and avoid schedule changes.
4. Alert your professor that you will need to take some time off from class since most schools interview during the work week. Find out in advance if there will be penalty for this, or if there is something you can do in advance to make up a missed class.
5. Expect A LONG DAY while you are on campus!
6. You will more than likely meet with students (RAs or HDs) at some point, so have some pertinent questions prepared.
7. Expect more in-depth questions, multiple interviewers (sometimes up to 10 or 12 at a time), questions often focus on a topic or subject area, often professionals within the Student Affairs division join interview teams.
8. Be prepared to eat either in a dining hall or a restaurant on or off campus.

9. Wear comfortable, but professional clothes (suit or dress) and shoes as you will be given a walking tour of the campus.
10. Bring an umbrella and know the climate of the location you are visiting- don't wear a heavy wool suit to interview in the deep south!
11. If you have free time between interviews, relax, walk around campus and talk with students.
12. Be prepared for some of the student staff to ask inappropriate questions (are you married or age) or to vent about their issues with the department.

THE JOB OFFER CALL...

1. Be ready, be excited, be cautious, but don't be sidetracked from asking about information you will need in order to make your decision.
2. Remember that they want you, so let them do the talking- you've sold them on you, now let them sell you on them.
3. You'll need to know about salary, apartment, benefits, building/complex assignment, contract term/start date, training period and expectations.
4. If the salary seems too low, and the school is high on your priority list, ask if the salary is negotiable- work with a mentor in advance on the best method to do this.
5. Ask for a deadline date for when they need an answer. If you are waiting to hear from another school to see if they will make an offer- call them to ask- work with a mentor on the best way to handle this.

Remember...

There is a second wave of jobs. If it doesn't happen from a conference interview, talk to a mentor about your strategies, be kind to yourself, and apply to postings you see in The Chronicle of Higher Education. Don't let embarrassment or other emotions get in the way of asking for help. Professionals may know of jobs before they are posted to use your mentors and professionals back at home. You can anticipate that in the place of a conference interview, you may be asked to give a phone interview prior to receiving an invitation to campus. Even with the current economic climate, it is still a very good job market for new professionals. The more flexibility you have with location, the greater your opportunities are for employment.

Campus