

Faculty Innovator Grant Final Report:

Preparing Future Faculty Academic Job Resource Modules

October 1, 2011

The goal of this proposal was to provide graduate students nearing the completion of their degree program with information and support related to their search for an academic position at a college or university. The proposed solution to this need was to utilize web-based technologies to provide asynchronous access to relevant information, faculty support, and peer interaction as they negotiate the process from identifying appropriate jobs, preparing applications, interviewing, and negotiating an employment contract. Five modules were developed related to critical aspects of the job search process. Each module includes the following components: 1) a presentation given by a faculty expert in the area, 2) an FAQ page related to each aspect of the job search covered by the videos, 3) a list of web resources related to academic job searches, 4) a faculty mentor who would serve as a source of information and support, and 5) a discussion forum for students who are currently on the job market. Access to these resources is through the PFF website. A Blackboard Organization was set up to facilitate peer and mentor interactions. The following provides details of each aspect of the project.

Video Presentations: Five video presentations were produced and edited with the assistance of CLT. For each topic a faculty member with expertise in the area provided suggestions and guidance on an aspect of the job search process as follows:

Getting Your Academic Job: Dr. Nina Brown, Professor and Eminent Scholar in the Department of Counseling and Human Services, provides a description of the steps in the process of obtaining your first academic position.

Identifying Positions That Fit Your Interests and Goals: Dr. Robert Wojtowicz, Associate Dean of the College of Arts and Letters, provides a guide for reading and interpreting job ads. Using his advice will help you zero in on positions that fit your academic career goals.

Selling Yourself on the Job Market: Dr. John B. Ford, Eminent Scholar and Professor of Marketing and International Business, describes seven critical steps in the process of selling yourself to obtain your first academic position.

Preparing Your Application: Dr. Sheri Reynolds, Professor of English, has important advice on preparing your application packet. Her strategies and tips will help you make the best written impression and increase your chances of being selected for a telephone or campus interview.

The Job Talk: Dr. Bryan E. Porter, Associate Professor of Psychology, discusses the critical importance of the job talk in interviewing for academic positions. He provides strategies for making sure that your job talk is memorable and strengthens your chance of being offered the job.

Frequently Asked Questions: For each aspect of the search process identified in the videos a list of FAQs was generated and appropriate answers developed. Video presenters and the faculty and students on the PFF Steering Committee contributed to this development.

Web Resources: A list of both general (e.g. the Chronicle of Higher Education) and discipline specific websites was developed that students can refer to for additional guidance during their job search. Although currently limited in the number of disciplines represented, we hope to add to this resource in the future.

Academic Job Search Mentors: Two faculty members will serve as PFF Mentors during each semester of the 2011/2012 academic year. Funding for these mentors was included in the FIG grant. During Fall 2011 Dr. Gail Dodge, Professor of Physics, and Dr. Deanne Shuman, Professor of Dental Hygiene, will serve as mentors. In Spring 2011 Dr. John Ritz, Professor of STEM Education and Professional Studies, and Dr. David Earnest, Professor of Political Science and International Studies, will serve in the mentor role. As mentors these faculty will be available by email to answer questions and provide support to student currently seeking an academic job. They will also monitor and take part in the discussion on the PFF Organization site.

Academic Job Search Student Discussion Group: A Blackboard Organization was set up to allow students and mentors to discuss the job search in an asynchronous format. Students use their Midas ID to self-register into the organization. Once approved, they can enter the site and begin their own thread or respond to those of others on the site.

Current Status: All materials proposed have been developed and are available on the PFF Website: <http://odu.edu/ao/gradstudies/development/pff/mentors.shtml>

The site is currently available to all ODU students on this site, however the availability of the Resources has not yet been officially “announced” to the PFF mailing list. Prior to doing this the site is being “beta tested” by graduate students on the PFF Steering Committee and selected students who have previously been active in PFF. Feedback from these students will be used to fine-tune the materials to make them as user-friendly as possible before disseminating them widely. The site will be announced to the full mailing list approximately October 1, 2011.

Assessment: Data to assess the usefulness of the Academic Job Search Resources will be collected. First, the number of students who 1) contact the PFF mentors and 2) enroll in and use the PFF Organization Discussion Forum will serve as measures of interest in and usefulness of the program.

Further, a survey will be sent to the entire PFF mailing list in Spring 2012 to assess the number of individuals who used any aspect of the site. A follow-up survey will be sent to individuals who had accessed the site asking for 1) overall judgments about the usefulness of the information, and 2) the usefulness of each aspect of the site (videos, FAQ, etc.). A follow-up survey will also be sent to these students in Fall 2012 to assess whether they were successful in obtaining an academic position and their later perceptions of the usefulness of the resource materials.