

COMMUNITY COLLEGE JOB SEARCH

Graduate
Students



A division of student affairs

(650) 725-1789

www.stanford.edu/dept/CDC

Doctoral Students Year of Candidacy Guidelines for the Community College Job Search

As you enter your final year of doctoral work many of you may be struggling with the demands of defending your dissertation or final research studies, continuing your work as a research assistant, as well as beginning the process of obtaining a community college job. The following timeline and suggestions may serve as a guide to help you manage your community college job search process.

SUMMER QUARTER

Update your resume, general letter of application, materials for a Teaching Portfolio.

Pick up a copy of the **RESUMES & COVER LETTERS** guide from the CDC. Obtain feedback from faculty and fellow students on creating a resume that contains the information for your field of study.

Visit CDC and obtain handouts or meet with a counselor to learn about resources that may help you in this process.

Obtain letters of reference.

This is a good time to contact past references and update letters. Consider using the Reference File Service at the CDC to store letters of reference for students – <http://cdc-records.stanford.edu/references>

FALL QUARTER

Finalize one version of your resume as a template – meet with a CDC counselor if needed

You may have various versions of your resume depending on the type of community college for which you are applying.

Apply for positions

Find these through your dissertation chair/ advisor, departmental listings, the CDC resources, professional conferences and organizations and various internet web sites.

Continue to solicit letters of recommendation and update previous letters.

Attend departmental and CDC presentations related to the academic job search and/or community college options.

WINTER QUARTER

Continue applying for positions.

Practice interviews with peers, faculty, CDC counselors, and other campus departments and resources.

SPRING QUARTER

Continue applying for positions.

Many positions continue to be announced during this period

Evaluate job offers, and be sure to negotiate for time to carefully consider each offer.

Discuss negotiation strategies with advisor, CDC counselors, and other personal resources.

For a counseling appointment, please call (650) 725-1789. Also, come by the CDC and pick up additional guides: **THE ACADEMIC JOB SEARCH, CVS & COVER LETTERS, PH.D. PATHWAYS: ALTERNATIVES TO ACADEMIC CAREERS,** and **INTERNET RESOURCES.**

PREPARING FOR A COMMUNITY COLLEGE CAREER

There are many reasons to pursue a community college career. For some graduate students, the idea of pursuing a tenure track position at a research university is daunting because they have not published as much as their peers or they simply prefer teaching to research. The community college option offers a milieu for those with a teaching focus and for those interested in a smaller institution. Research can still be a part of community college faculty life, yet the “publish or perish” mentality that some report at larger institutions is not as prevalent. Course loads, for example, tend to be much larger, averaging around 4-5 courses (for full-time positions), even for those who are just getting started. This guide will help you further explore and prepare for faculty positions within community colleges.

THE CURRENT JOB MARKET FOR COMMUNITY COLLEGES

Although making predictions about the job market in the field of education is a tenuous task at best, current projections indicate that because of early retirement incentives, a high percentage of current community college faculty will be retiring sooner than expected. In addition, the Occupational Outlook Handbook indicates that college and university faculty is expected to increase faster than usual through 2008 due to higher student enrollments. Job prospects at community colleges, therefore, appear to be promising. Community colleges traditionally seek applicants from the local area, so you will not often compete with people from outside of the state. Part-time positions may start at about \$32K and full-time positions may range from \$39K to \$70K. Rankings at these colleges are similar to larger institutions: instructor through full professor, meaning that room for advancement is still possible.

THE APPLICATION PROCESS

Different community colleges and community college districts handle the hiring process in a variety of ways. In order to be considered for either a part-time or a full-time position, you will need to either contact the community college district/community college or explore their web site to: (1) find out how current openings are announced; (2) receive an application; (3) have your name added to an “interested potential candidate mailing list.” Most community colleges process applications through their district office, while a few process applications and other supplemental materials themselves. When you request an application, return it to the community college or district with a copy of your resume and a cover letter. If on the other hand, your name and address are added to their interested candidate mailing list, you will receive job announcements in your field as they become available. In addition, some community colleges will not send you an announcement, but instead have a job hotline or post job openings on their web sites.

When you receive or find a job listing that interests you, you would then request and complete an application, and mail it along with your resume and a cover letter to the search committee at the specific community college with the job opening. Since July 1990, each community college district has its own individual degree requirements depending on the academic subject area. Some community college faculty hold Bachelor’s degrees, others hold Ph.D.s, while the majority hold Master’s level degrees. If a selection committee chooses you as a finalist for a position, the community college district office will grant you a community college credential at that time to teach in your subject area.

There is obviously no guarantee that you will be granted an interview. There may be unique circumstances at an institution that will affect the situation. For example, you may be competing with a part-time faculty member who is extremely popular with other faculty. Many times applicants make it easy for a committee to exclude them from the selection process. You may have the strongest qualifications for a job, but a sloppily completed application will eliminate you. It is very important that you take an active role in your job search. Contacting the department chair is highly recommended so that you can learn about the department’s needs and how you can help fill those needs. It may also be useful to “network” with and talk to other community college professors and instructors. This allows you to learn about issues unique to teaching at and applying to community colleges.

LEARNING ABOUT JOB OPENINGS

It is highly recommended that you contact the community college or district office that interests you to learn about openings. In addition to this strategy, you may want to access a newsletter that lists current vacancies for California community colleges: **California Community Colleges Registry**. The newsletter is available on reserve in the CDC Library or online at - <http://registry.yosemite.cc.ca.us>. In addition, the CDC receives weekly editions of the **Chronicle of Higher Education** and **Community College Week**, which list available jobs at community colleges. All of these resources are available in the CDC Library. For more information and job listings, visit - <http://chronicle.com/jobs> & <http://www.ccweek.com>.

JOB SEARCH STRATEGIES

When you send your completed application, resume, and cover letter to the community college district office, your name is added to an unranked listing (pool) of eligible candidates. This list is forwarded by the district's personnel office to the search committee at the community college seeking to fill a position. The following is a list of "Do's" and "Don'ts" for the community college job seeker.

- *Do establish a list of schools that fit your skills and background.*
For example, come up with a list of 35 possible schools and explore their web sites. Then identify your top 10 and request school catalogues. Then visit the top five on your list. This information may provide you with a sense of what they may currently be lacking (a new course, resources, etc.) and therefore you will be able to better determine their needs as well as your own.
- *Do submit complete and organize application materials.*
The first people to review your application will be staff at the district personnel office. They will quickly reject an incomplete application or one that is poorly written. In addition, personnel office staff only looks to see if you meet the minimum requirements. Your application, resume, and cover letter must emphasize teaching experience, including volunteer teaching. Do not over-emphasize outside experience that does not directly support your instructor role.
- *Do research the institution and faculty ahead of time.*
It is very important to acknowledge the faculty at each school by indicating that you know something about the institution where they work and why you are prepared to work there. Try to explore the web site and/or visit the institution and request a school catalogue in order to determine the courses offered and the backgrounds of the faculty members. Your cover letter should emphasize the fact that you have an awareness of the needs of the particular population of students at that community college (urban vs. suburban; adult/experienced student vs. younger/non-experienced student; etc.) In your letter, do not go overboard in showing your knowledge of the place/person. Rather, mention why you are interested in that college specifically.
- *Do come prepared to your interview.*
It is important that you practice your interview and/or any job talks ahead of time. The CDC has many resources on interviewing techniques and career counselors are available to practice with you. If you have an informational interview, it is also important that you come prepared with questions and topics of discussion.
- *Don't send any materials that are not requested.*
Have letters of reference available from your faculty advisors who have seen you teach. However, do not send letters of reference until they are requested. Teaching portfolios and related items can be presented at or after the interview. This differs significantly from the process of applying for other faculty jobs.

- *Don't go over two pages on your resume or cover letter.*
Resume format is not as important as resume content, but it is very important. Too fancy is not recommended, but eye catching is helpful. Create a resume that is aesthetically pleasing, well organized, and concise. The most important areas (teaching background, ability to interact with a diverse student body, etc.) should always be included on the first page. Include information on your resume that emphasizes special skills and skills that are specific to the particular position for which you are applying.
- *Don't simply repeat your resume in your cover letter.*
The purpose of the cover letter is to demonstrate fit, not just skill sets. Search committee members are looking for relevant information that can help them envision the applicant working alongside of them. Your cover letter should highlight relevant experiences and focus on the special skills and characteristics that make you a good candidate for the position.
- *Don't send a generic letter.*
A generic letter may not work very well because of the great diversity among community colleges in California (urban, suburban, rural, etc.) Your letter should be tailored to each position at each institution to which you apply.

COMMUNITY COLLEGE INTERVIEWS

- The job interview is a shared discussion and exchange of information with potential colleagues. If it comes down to the best qualified person vs. the person they would like to share an office/department with, they will always choose the latter. Don't be surprised if you encounter quiet faculty who want to work with quiet colleagues, flamboyant faculty who want to work with flamboyant colleagues, and conservative faculty who want to work with conservative colleagues. Many departments tend to "clone" themselves.
- When you are selected to be interviewed for a position, the interview committee is currently required to have a minimum of five people as members. This committee includes the department chair; two faculty members from the department; an academic administrator such as the VP of academic affairs; and a non-voting human resources or affirmative action officer. Some committees may be larger.
- Job interviews usually last about 25-40 minutes. There are usually about 8 - 10 questions. It is important to manage your time carefully.
- Although many instructors dress casually when they teach, the interviewee should wear suitable business attire. For example, men who wear suits or a sport coat and slacks should wear dress shoes (polished loafers, etc.), a white shirt, and a subtle tie. If you wear a suit you should not wear bright colors or excessive accessories. Refer to the "Interview Attire" handout at the CDC for more details.
- If you are asked to prepare a presentation, take it seriously and rehearse. It may be a 10-minute presentation on your teaching philosophy or an actual class presentation in front of real students. Develop interesting handouts and consider making your presentation unique, not generic.
- Interview questions are often open-ended ("*Could you tell us about yourself?*") and should be used as a platform to speak about your background, skills, and ability to do the job.
- Successful candidates are able to discuss how they have or will be able to meet the expectations of a diverse student population.

- During your research before the actual interview, attempt to identify courses that appear to be missing from the curriculum and other ways to revitalize the department. An awareness of different teaching methods or learning styles may also be very helpful (“learning across the curriculum,” writing assignments in physics/math courses, etc.).
- Never ask about compensation/salary in an interview because it gives an impression that you are looking only for a job, not a career. Full-time community college faculty usually view their positions in terms of a career and there will be time to negotiate salary once you have been offered the job.
- A sense of humor is always appreciated in an interview, especially as a way to diffuse an unforeseen situation.
- You will frequently interview one-on-one with the VP of Academic Affairs. It is important to provide examples of how you have been and will be able to serve the larger college community. It is important to understand the community and to prove you are not a minimalist and are willing to serve on committees and advisory/planning boards.

COMMONLY ASKED COMMUNITY COLLEGE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Could you tell us about your educational and work experience as they have prepared you for this position? (For example: Teaching Political Science 101)

This question assesses fit and is a common introductory question. Keep your answer to this question fairly brief (3-5 minutes) and summarize your background as it relates to the position for which you are applying. It is okay to repeat the information on your resume to some degree, but attempt to emphasize teaching related experiences.

Please describe your last teaching experience in detail for us.

This question also assesses fit: does your teaching experience fit here? What will you need to learn before you begin? It may also be a method for learning your teaching philosophy. You may want to begin with a brief overview of the situation in which you taught (institution and department), before describing the specifics of what you did in the classroom. When describing your teaching, be as specific as possible. Finally, you may want to briefly mention what you accomplished or the results of your teaching (i.e. positive student evaluations, master teacher’s comments, awards, etc.)

What is your grading policy?

It is important to prepare for this question by discussing possible answers with faculty whom you feel have experience in this area. You may want to discuss different policies as they apply to various courses and evaluation methods.

What would you do if you caught one of your students cheating?

This question is asked to determine two things, namely: whether you would be willing to fail a student if you had no other choice; and whether or not you would have ideas about organizing your class assignments and examinations so as to minimize cheating (i.e. using different types of exams, organizing test questions in different order, etc.).

Why are you interested in working at a community college?

If you have a Ph.D., some community college faculty who do not may want to determine if you really want to focus on teaching and working with a diverse and potentially non-traditional college age student population.

What would you do to improve our retention rates?

Retention is one of the most important concerns of community colleges today. Search committee faculty are seeking colleagues with creative ideas for reaching a diverse student population that are often commuter students.

What attracts you to our school?

This is a very important question because of the great diversity in community colleges in California (i.e. suburban, urban, rural, four-year college prep, vocational training, etc.) You will need to show that you have researched this school well and be able to again discuss why you feel it is a good fit.

In what ways have you been involved with departmental activities?

This question is often asked by the department chair or academic dean to determine whether or not you will be able to contribute to the college and department at large. Involvement in such activities shows an interest in the career field and the success of the institution.

Could you tell us about your experience working or volunteering in a “multicultural” context?

Search committee members are looking for specific activities from your past concerning your sensitivity to student needs and concerns, whether it was volunteer or with individual students. They are not looking for your personal views on affirmative action or a discourse about whether or not discrimination exists in our society.

RESUMES AND COVER LETTERS

The following are examples of resume and cover letter formats. For more information, see the “Resumes and Cover Letters” handout and/or the resumes and cover letters binder at the CDC.

Resume Example

Linda H. Hughes
1214 Higgins Court
Mountain View, CA 94040
650.945.1745

EDUCATION

	Institution	Degree	Major
19XX-XX	Stanford University	Ph.D.	Sociology
19XX-XX	University of California, Berkeley	MA	Sociology
19XX-XX	University of California, Berkeley	BA	History
19XX-XX	Los Angeles City College	AA	History

EMPLOYMENT HISTORY

20XX-XX	Teaching Assistant , Sociology Department, Stanford University
20XX	Teaching Assistant , Sociology Department, UC Berkeley
19XX-XX	Part-Time Instructor , Sociology, Los Angeles City College

SUMMER JOBS INCLUDING

19XX-20XX	Camp Counselor, Retail Sales Clerk, Office Assistant
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COURSES QUALIFIED TO TEACH

Introduction to Sociology
Introduction to Psychology
Social Problems and Deviance

GRADUATE STUDY

Subject Field	Instructor	Institution	Quarter Units
Sociology	Ames, Willis	Stanford	40
Psychology	Hughes, George	UCB	16
	Smith, Jay	UCB	36

Examination Fields for the Doctorate

Social Power
Social and Cultural Change
Social Processes

Title of Doctoral Dissertation

“Social Power in Organizations”
Advisor: Agnes Thuesen, Professor of Sociology

PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIP

Phi Beta Kappa - Undergraduate Honorary
Phi Sigma Iota - Sociology Honorary

SUMMARY OF PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Teaching

Taught courses in Sociology, Psychology and Social Problems at undergraduate and graduate levels. Developed interdisciplinary course material. Evaluated course performance. Held regular office hours to address student questions and concerns.

Professional Relations

Delivered papers at American Sociological Association meetings.

Research

Conducted bibliographical analyses of contemporary sociologists. Collected opinions of Social Psychologists on Deviancy.

COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES AND MEMBERSHIPS

Graduate Student Association at Stanford
Rotary Club
YWCA

HONORS RECEIVED

Haines Fellowship - Stanford University
Listed in Who's Who in California

TRAVEL ABROAD

Germany, France, England, Spain - Summers 19XX, 20XX

LANGUAGE COMPETENCIES

Fluent in French, Proficient in Spanish

REFERENCES

Available from the Career Development Center, Stanford University, Stanford, CA 94305-3081
(650) 723-1548

Cover Letter Format

Your Name
Street Address
City, State, Zip
(Area Code) Phone Number

Department Chair's Name/Search Committee Chair's Name
Department
Community College Name
Street Address
City, State, Zip

Dear Mr./Ms./Dr. _____:

Your opening paragraph should briefly introduce you and your interest in the community college, department or position. This paragraph could also mention the faculty member that you may have met with about the department or school. It is important to indicate why you are interested in their community college and department.

The middle paragraph(s) should consist of a selection of highlights from your background that would be of greatest interest to the selection committee members and consequently create the "notion of fit." Focus on your skills and accomplishments and how they could contribute to the department and community college. A summary of your teaching experience is critical in this paragraph. Be as specific as possible when discussing your past experience.

A second middle paragraph could touch on a particular topic that seems important in the job description developed by the department faculty. In addition, this paragraph may enable you to explain how you really are a team player and would be a good colleague.

Your closing paragraph indicates any enclosures (resume, etc.) as well as a willingness to be contacted to answer any specific questions. Thank the committee members for their interest and indicate that you are looking forward to a future interview.

Sincerely,

(Your Signature)

Your Typed Name

enclosure(s) *(If you send a resume and/or other materials)*

Sample Cover Letter

1444 Colorado Place
Palo Alto, CA 94302
November 6, 20XX

John E. Bois, Chair
Department of English
Menlo College
Menlo Park, CA 94310

Dear Professor Bois:

I am writing to apply for the position of assistant professor of English announced in the October 5 issue of the Chronicle of Higher Education. My experience in the teaching of both composition and literature, my academic preparation in literacy issues, theory, and instruction, and my research experience in the areas of comprehension of literature and writing in the disciplines have provided me with the background necessary to successfully assume the position that you have described.

Though trained as a researcher, I define myself primarily as a teacher and am eager to return to the classroom. I am prepared to teach writing at many levels. At San Francisco State University, I taught composition and writing about literature (essentially a class in the short story) to both regular and remedial populations; at Stanford I have taught thesis and dissertation writing to masters and doctoral students. My courses have generally combined extensive writing experience with the work on skills necessary to that particular class and with group time spent on exercises, inductive assignments, and peer editing. I am enclosing representative evaluations of my teaching from composition classes at San Francisco State.

My scholastic training is broad and encompasses a number of the various areas that fall under the heading of English. My masters work focused on creative writing with special study of Flaubert, Faulkner, and T.S. Eliot and also included courses in the teaching of composition and composition theory. This combination of interests in composition and literature led me to doctoral work at Stanford in the unique Language, Literacy, and Culture program. This program allows a focus on the acquisition and uses of literacy skills and on the roles that motivation, situation, and culture play in literacy development. I focused on composition and reading theory, the acquisition and development of higher-level literacy skills, and reading and writing about literature.

A growing interest in the ways that readers understand literary works led to my dissertation research, a descriptive study in which I investigated the processes through which eight college freshmen and eight masters students in literature read and interpreted two short stories and two poems. By using methods of analysis that created a bridge between cognitive psychology and literary theory, I was able to paint a rich and detailed portrait of the ways in which these readers interacted with the two genres.

Although my dissertation focused on the reading of literature, I am equally interested in investigating the ways in which students write about literature and intend to pursue that in my next project. I would like to carry out intensive case studies of students in a literature class, following them from their first encounters with a literary text through the essays they ultimately produce, with the intention of tracking their understanding of the work. Since my research interests lie generally in the area of higher-level literacy skills and in reading-writing connections, over the long term I hope to use the study of literature as a framework to investigate students' abilities to analyze, to synthesize, and to read and write critically.

I would bring to this position both preparation and experience, not only in writing but also in reading, not only in literacy skills but also in literature, not only in my own skills as a writer or interpreter of literature but also in the teaching of those subjects. Having begun my teaching career in the California State Community College system, I am most interested in working in a community college environment, for I enjoy the mix of student backgrounds and varying levels of experience and ability that are found there.

I have enclosed a copy of my curriculum vitae, the abstract of my dissertation, and several teaching evaluations; the Career Center at Stanford will send my letters of reference. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Erma M. Gutierrez