

CAREERS IN ACADEMIA

organized by

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Workshop Summary

The workshop succeeded in accomplishing its goal of better preparing post-docs in both pure and applied mathematics for their upcoming job searches for academic, tenure-track positions. This workshop had 26 participants and seven facilitators, three of whom were facilitating for the first time. Of the 26 participants, three received their Ph.D. in 2008; two in 2009; eight in 2010; twelve in 2011; and one in 2012. Logistical support was provided by the AIM Executive Director and the Director of Special Workshops.

The following notes contain comments reflecting the successful practices of this workshop as well as issues for consideration in preparing future workshops.

Workshop duration: The length of the workshop was three days. This was the second *Careers in Academia* workshop of this duration, and this seems to be an appropriate length to accomplish the workshop goals.

The 2012 schedule (attached) worked well in general. In 2011, the facilitators reported feeling that there was inadequate time for individual consultation within the 3-day time-frame. However, this was not observed in 2012, and largely attributable to the small number of post-docs assigned to each facilitators. The ratio of four post-docs to every facilitator was viewed as optimal.

Banquet timing: Holding the workshop banquet on the first night of the workshop was highly effective. Not only did it encourage participants to remain at AIM until 6:40 p.m., practicing cocktail speeches and talking with facilitators, it allowed time for individual work and revisions.

Workshop activities: The limited effectiveness of round-table discussions was noted from feedback in past *Careers in Academia* workshops. Consequently, this component was eliminated this year, and replaced by short panel discussions led by one of the facilitators and group activities. The critique of three common teaching statements, firstly in small groups, and then all together, was successful in engaging the participants. Their roles as 'reviewer' allowed them to develop their own perceptions of good characteristics in a statement—even though they did not necessarily agree as a whole.

Also, the impromptu panel on elements of the campus interview was well-received by the post-docs, and should become a permanent fixture for future workshops.

Panel sessions: Two separate panel discussions were scheduled:

1. The Hiring Process from the Department's Perspective
2. Junior Faculty Panel on the Early (pre-Tenure) Years

The first panel was very well-received, as it has been in previous years, and is a critical component in providing context to the post-docs as they prepare their application materials. Both its timing in the first morning, and the breadth of different types of departments that are represented are key to a successful workshop.

The junior faculty panel represented an improvement from the 2011 workshop. This was due to the choice of panelists, and also the fact that three perspectives were given from three different types of institution (a recommendation from the 2011 report). Two of the panelists were significantly beyond the tenure process, and it would be more desirable in future years to find more junior panelists who still represent a broad cross-section of institutions. Moreover, having three panelists created a clearly stronger panel, generating many more questions than the past year.

As in past years, it was difficult to secure panelists for the junior faculty panel and it was recommended that this process occur earlier in the workshop planning, if a similar panel is planned for future workshops.

The job talk: Individual practice of job talks was viewed positively by all post-docs and appropriate time should continue to be allocated to this activity in the schedule. Two sessions, one at the end of Day 2 and the other at the beginning of Day 3 were included this year. This arrangement allowed some groups to have each post-doc present twice (once on each day, with time for review between sessions) and this worked very well.

Ideally, each group should have access to a white-board area or a data projector. Presenting talks to a group from a lap-top did not re-create a realistic environment. There was some hope that access to at least three data projectors would alleviate this situation.

1. OTHER COMMENTS

Pre-workshop communication: Communication between the AIM staff and the workshop participants concerning expectations such as presenting the first 10 minutes of a job talk, were clearly conveyed this year. No reports of 'surprises' were noted amongst the participants, and hence represents a clear improvement from past workshops.

Facilitators meetings: Having more regularly scheduled meetings for facilitators would be desirable for future workshops. There seems to be a need to meet at the beginning of each morning and afternoon session, and scheduling this in advance of the workshop would enable facilitators to better plan their scheduled consultations and work times with individual groups.

Working space: The main, central space did not work well for meeting with individual groups. The same space was used by other post-docs revising their materials, and was not conducive for small-group discussions. It is suggested that another office or semi-separate space be identified in the future. The six other areas for individual and group consultation worked well.

Submission of complete, revised application packet: In each of the past *Careers in Academia* workshops, we have asked post-docs to submit a complete, revised version of their application material at the end of the workshop. In past years, it was rare to have this occur, and this year was no exception. I would like to propose that this expectation

be reviewed by the workshop organizers and the AIM staff prior to the next *Careers in Academia* workshop.

2. SUGGESTIONS FROM PARTICIPANT FEEDBACK

Quiet area for work: Some of the post-docs mentioned that it was difficult to find a quiet area in which to work. Using the main area as a group meeting space may have heightened this problem, since many post-docs (from all groups) retreated to the tables and chairs in this area when working on revisions.

Critique of research statements: It was suggested (more than once) that an exercise similar to the critique of the teaching statements be done for the research statements also.

In planning future workshops:

1. Keep Rob Easton, *Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo*, as a junior faculty panelist and identify two other panelists representing large state research schools and places like Stanford or Berkeley.
2. Keep the 4:1 post-doc:facilitator ratio as a working guide. Also, limit the number of workshop participants according to the number of smaller working spaces available at AIM. (In 2012, this was six areas.)
3. Review the expectation that all post-docs leave having a completely revised application packet.
4. Arrange for access to data projectors for use during the job talk sessions.

3. SUMMARY FROM EVALUATION FORMS:

A two-page evaluation form was administered in the morning of Day 3 of the workshop. The first page asked for more open-ended responses concerning aspects of the workshop that were particularly helpful or that could be improved. Of particular note was the response to Question 4: *Would you recommend this workshop to someone else in the future?* Every one of the 26 post-docs wrote that they would—or already had recommended the workshop to others.

The second page of the evaluation form asked for more specific and quantitative feedback on the various sessions during the workshop. Below is a summary of the responses received from the participants to the following tasks:

Please indicate the level of helpfulness for each of the following activities. Additional constructive comments are welcome.

- 1 = not-at-all-helpful
- 2 = not-so-helpful
- 3 = neutral
- 4 = some-what helpful
- 5 = very helpful

	1	2	3	4	5	Average	
A. Cover letter & C.V.	0	1	3	10	12	4.27	
B. Elevator speech	0	0	3	12	11	4.48	
C. Research st. presentation	0	0	0	9	17	4.65	
D. Teaching st. presentation	0	1	1	6	18	4.58	
E. Job Talk	0	0	2	9	15	4.50	
F. Hiring panel	0	1	0	1	8	1	4.48
G. Junior faculty panel	0	1	1	7	8	1	3.92
H. OVERALL	0	0	0	2	24	4.92	

4. WORKSHOP SCHEDULE

Monday, June 11

8:00 Meeting of AIM staff and facilitators
 9:00 AIM staff introductions Remarks of organizers about the goals of the workshop
 Introductions of participants The Cocktail/Elevator speech
 The Cover Letter & C.V.
 10:00 Break
 10:30 Panel I: The Hiring Process: perspective of hiring panel
 12:00 Lunch
 2:00 Round-table discussion: the research statement (general feedback on submitted statements)
 2:30 Individual work on research statement; one-on-one consultations with facilitators
 5:00 Happy Hour (practice cocktail speech)
 SUBMIT REVISED RESEARCH STATEMENT
 6:45 Banquet
 Homework: revise C.V. and/or cover letter

Tuesday, June 12

9:00 Discussion: the teaching statement (general feedback on submitted statements)
 10:00 Break
 10:30 Panel II: The Pre-Tenure Years: junior faculty perspective
 12:00 Lunch
 2:00 Plenary: a good job talk,
 2:30 Individual work on teaching statement; one-on-one consultations with facilitators
 4:30 Practice Talks I
 SUBMIT REVISED TEACHING STATEMENT
 5:30 Happy Hour
 Homework: revise research statement; review job talk

Wednesday, June 13

9:00 Practice Talks II
 10:30 Break

11:00 Individual work and consultation time; additional practice talks (feedback on teaching statements)

12:00 Lunch

1:45 Discussion: During the Campus Interview

- how to behave/dress during an interview
- the type of questions to expect; answers not to give
- inappropriate/illegal questions
- the dinner with department members
- the two-body problem
- identifying criteria for tenure success
- signs to look for

2:45 Final consultations and individual work on application materials teaching talks/additional practice talks

4:15 Discussion: After the Successful Campus Interview

- negotiating start-up packages/negotiation tactics
- maintaining research activity
- submitting proposals
- working with students
- committee work
- anything else

SUBMIT PACKET OF COMPLETE, REVISED APPLICATION MATERIALS

5:00 Happy Hour (which ended after 7 p.m.)

5. FACILITATORS

Ruth Haas, *Smith College (chair)*

Aloysius Helminck, *North Carolina State University (chair)*

Tony Nance, *Mathematical BioSciences Institute (Associate Director)*

Paul Sacks, *Iowa State University*

Estelle Basor, *American Institute of Mathematics (Deputy Director)*

David Farmer, *American Institute of Mathematics (Director of Programs)*

Sally Koutsoliotas, *American Institute of Mathematics/Bucknell University*