

Steps to Insure an Unsuccessful Personnel Search

This is the time of year when the number of advertisements in *Jobs in Geography* increases as academic departments secure permission to hire new faculty for the next school year. The recruitment of new faculty is one of the most important decisions academic departments make (along with tenure and promotion), and the decision-making is often contentious, even in the most collegial of units. Given the significance of hiring (it doesn't matter at what level), I have been amazed how clumsily we often handle the search process and how dumbfounded we are when our recruitment efforts fail.

I therefore offer my insights into the search process based on my experience as chair of numerous search committees and as recipient of the horror stories told by my graduate students as they return from interviews. If your goal is have a less than successful search, just follow the steps outlined below.

1. Request reference letters from all candidates as part of the application process. This tactic will not only bury you in paperwork, but will enable you to get the least informative letters possible. Referees will simply change the name and address of the generic word-processed letter, and not alter its content for your specific position. If you're lucky the letter will be current and not recycled from last year's job search.

2. Develop an advertisement for everything, so that no one person fits the description. If you don't want to hire in any given year describe a position for which very few people can qualify, using a number of specialties that don't really fit most candidate's profiles. A remote sensing human geographer with Latin American regional experience who can teach advanced climatology, social theory, and spatial statistics is one example. If you want a shallow pool of candidates from which to choose, write a shallow ad.

3. Make sure the search committee has a majority of soon-to-be retired faculty members. Those established tenured faculty who lament the direction of contemporary geography and who also have firm and vocal agendas about replacing their subfields (and thus themselves) are best. Keep in mind that these colleagues will not have to live with the hiring decision that is made.

4. Never send an acknowledgement letter and never let the candidate know where she stands in the hiring process. This is a surefire way to get e-mails and phone calls from anxious candidates who have no idea whether materials were received or the status of their applications. If you want to foster a couldn't care less culture and inhospitable work environment, this will help greatly.

5. Ask the candidate to stay over a Saturday night to reduce expenses and then fail to handle local arrangements. This entails having the candidate find his own way to the hotel, leaving him alone Saturday night and all day Sunday, and then leave the candidate to find his own way to the department for the first appointment on Monday. This will help insure a nice weekend free of obligations for members of the department, but it certainly doesn't impress your candidate, especially if you are trying to convince him that your university is the perfect place to start his career.

6. Put your most cantankerous faculty member in charge of hosting the candidate during an on campus visit. This is almost a given for any failed search. The faculty member will air all the department's dirty laundry, probably offend the candidate at some point during the visit, and inform the candidate that the senior faculty never promote or tenure anyone. What a way to build the image and reputation of the department.

7. Set the itinerary for the campus visit with meetings scheduled for each faculty at times when individual faculty are unavailable. This will ensure that the candidate knows how busy faculty are and how inconvenient it is for them to talk to anyone, including the candidate. When rescheduling the appointment, be sure that your colleagues intimidate the candidate during the one-on-one conversation with esoteric and off-the-wall questions. This helps render the interviewee speechless and dazed for the rest of the visit, and enables faculty to opine that the candidate knows nothing about the discipline or their specialties.

8. Make sure that the room for the talk has no audio-visual equipment, or if it does, make sure it isn't working properly. The idea here is to make the presenter as nervous as possible. Faulty overhead projectors, jammed slide projectors, or inoperable powerpoint presentations should assure this. There's no need to test the equipment before hand, since the audience really does like to see the candidate squirm.

9. Once the interview is over, take months to reimburse the candidate's expenses. Not only will this help the candidate to understand the bureaucracy of your university, it will keep your departmental budget in the black a little longer.

10. Last, but certainly not least, never let the unsuccessful candidates who visited your campus know they weren't hired. This will save you considerable correspondence. You won't have to send rejection letters to long-listed or short-listed candidates. It will also enable you to string a candidate along for as long as possible and feel a sense of power over someone's future.

If you follow this ten-step program, I assure you that your pool of candidates

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and the ultimate success of your search will be just what you wanted—incomplete, inadequate, and unacceptable. Unfortunately, all of these examples have a ring of truth and happened in some form to many of the brightest and most energetic colleagues in our field. Do your experiences fall into one of these categories? I would welcome additions to my collection of rules on how not to run a job search. Send them to Department of Geography, University of South Carolina, Columbia, SC 29208. Voice 803-777-5236. Fax 803-777-4972. Internet scutter@sc.edu

Susan L. Cutter
President

Matthew D. Aubuchon, Auburn University, won the 2000 student project competition co-sponsored by the British Cartographic Society and the National Geographic Society. Matt was awarded first place for his effort to incorporate GIS, GPS, and Aerial Photography into his research on Fire Ant control in the southeastern U.S. Matt now holds the distinction of being the first American student to win this prestigious award.

Thomas Harvey and **Martha Works**, Portland State University, have received a \$20,860 grant from the Lincoln Institute of Land Policy, Program on Land as Common Property, to study "The Rural Landscape as Urban Amenity: Land Use Change on the Rural-Urban Interface in the Portland Metropolitan Area."

Lin Liu, University of Cincinnati, received a National Science Foundation grant for \$489,621 through the Information Technology Research Initiative. The grant is entitled "Advanced Algorithms for Spatial-Temporal Interactions in Distributed GIS." The duration of the grant is three years starting 1 September 2000. The Co-PI of this grant is **Raj Bhatnagar** of University of Cincinnati.

Dawn Wright, Oregon State University, along with computer scientists Janice Cuny of the University of Oregon, Judith Cushing of Evergreen State College, and geophysicist Doug Toomey of the University of Oregon have been awarded \$487,555 by NSF's new Information Technology Research (ITR) initiative. Wright and colleagues will develop a computational infrastructure to support data sharing, tool composition, and model coupling for the use of large scale, interdisciplinary data archives.

Specialty Group News

"The Biogeographer" is Back

The newsletter of the Biogeography Specialty Group, "The Biogeographer" is now available in electronic format at: <http://www.facstaff.bucknell.edu/dgriffin/BSG.html>

The newsletter will not be distributed by mail. We encourage all BSG members and potential members to please check this exciting issue. For further information or to contribute to the next issue of the "The Biogeographer" please contact the Editor: Duane A. Griffin, Bucknell University, Geography Department, Lewisburg, PA 17837. Voice 570-577-3374. Internet dgriffin@bucknell.edu Website <http://www.facstaff.bucknell.edu/dgriffin/>

Finally we encourage all BSG Members, and those interested in the BSG to join our listserve. To join the listserve, please visit our web page: <http://www.geog.ucla.edu/bsghome.htm>

Books Received

Books received for review in the *Annals* and *The Professional Geographer*

- Allaby, Ailsa, & Allaby, Michael. *A Dictionary of the Earth Sciences*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2 rev. ed., 1999. 619 & 7 pp. \$16.95. ISBN 0-19-280079-5.
- Angel, David P. & Rock, Michael T. eds. *Asia's Clean Revolution: Industry, Growth and the Environment*. Sheffield, UK: Greenleaf, 2000. 277 pp. \$75.00. ISBN 1-874719-33-0.
- Beniston, Martin. *Environmental Change in Mountains and Uplands*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2000. 172 & 13 pp. \$72.00 cloth; \$29.95 paper. ISBN 0-340-70636-8.
- Black, Brian. *Petrolia: The Landscape of America's First Oil Boom*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000. 235 & 12 pp. \$42.50. ISBN 0-8018-6317-1.
- Blaut, J.M. *Eight Eurocentric Historians*. New York: Guilford, 2000. 227 & 9 pp. \$42.00 cloth; \$22.00 paper. ISBN 1-57230-590-8.
- Bluestein, Howard B. *Tornado Alley: Monster Storms of the Great Plains*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1999. 180 & 12 pp. \$35.00. ISBN 0-19-510552-4.
- Brown, Halina Szejnwald, Angel, David & Derr, Patrick G. *Effective Environmental Regulation: Learning from Poland's Experience*. Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 2000. 236 & 10 pp. \$75.00 ISBN 0-275-96971-1.
- Bunting, Trudi & Filion, Pierre. *Canadian Cities in Transition: The Twenty-First Century*. Second edition. New York: Oxford University Press, 2000. 576 & 8 pp. \$35.00 ISBN 0-19-541288-5.

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