

FACULTY TALK: PREPARE YOUR JOB MARKET

Pengkai Lin, Assistant Professor of Accounting

ABOUT ME

- ▶ Joined SMU in July 2021
- ▶ Graduated with a Ph.D. in Business from Tulane University
- ▶ Entered job market during summer 2020
- ▶ Received SMU offer in Dec. 2020

TIMELINE

Summer
(one year
before your
graduation)

- **Finalizing job market paper (usually after dissertation proposal)**

- **Preparing application package**

- CV

- Research, teaching, and diversity (for some schools) statements

- Research sample (working papers), teaching evaluation...

- Reference letters

- **Continuing to look for job openings**

- Professional association career center, school websites, SSRN announcements, people you know...

September

TIMELINE

September

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December

- **Submitting application package to schools or recruiting camps**

- An excel file to track job and application info (e.g., weblink, deadline, reference letter submission progress,...)

- **Preparing for interviews**

November

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February

- **First round:**

- Brief discussion of your JMP & research pipeline, and your teaching experience
- General interview questions: self introduction, why the school, and your questions for the interviewers

- **Second round:**

- JMP presentation and interactions with school faculty

TIPS

- ▶ Very likely, a long and stressful journey
 - Seek help from your committee members and school faculty
 - Stay in touch with your family and friends
 - Find a getaway (e.g., hobbies, or even research...)
- ▶ Very likely, “opportunities” come and go...
 - Accept that a sense of defeat is part of the process
 - Keep trying and learning from your past experience
 - Ultimately, it’s a matching process. Stay hopeful and you will find a right-fit job!

Faculty Talk: Prepare Your Job Market

Student placement and recruitment experience

Hwajin YANG

Associate Professor of Psychology

School of Social Sciences

About me

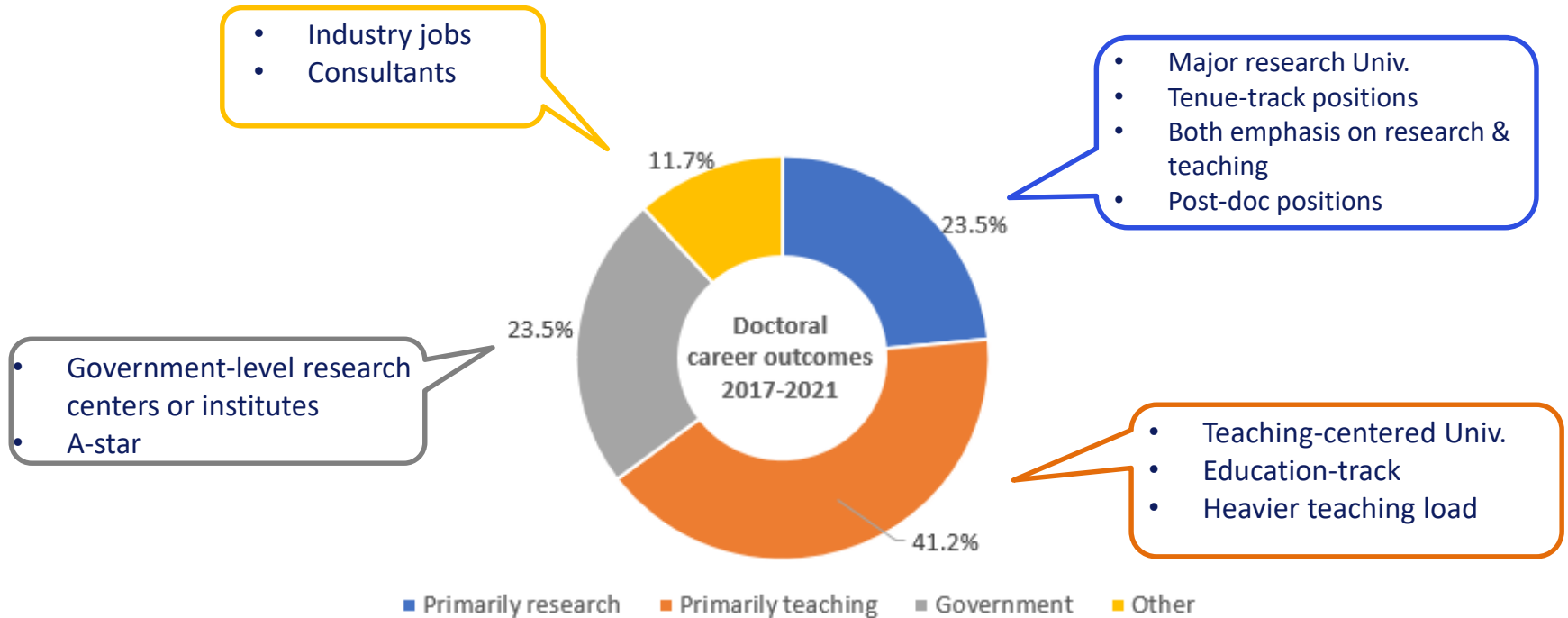
Ph.D. in Psychology at Cornell University in 2005

Joined SMU in 2006

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Tenured in 2017

Placements



Do you want a career in academia?

Are you passionate about researching & teaching?

- You are expected to publish! You should develop/extend your research program
- You may be required to teach multiple modules or sections (usually 3 per year) and develop a new module every now and then

Research vs. teaching

- 60% vs. 40% in research-oriented universities
- 30% vs. 70% in teaching-oriented universities

Academia is almost all about writing

- Writing/publishing papers is the core part of academic career
- Increasing demand for grant funding
- You write your teaching material/slides

Faculty job application process

- ✓ **Timing**
- ✓ **Key application materials**
- ✓ **1st round review**
- ✓ **Campus (zoom) interview**

Faculty job application process



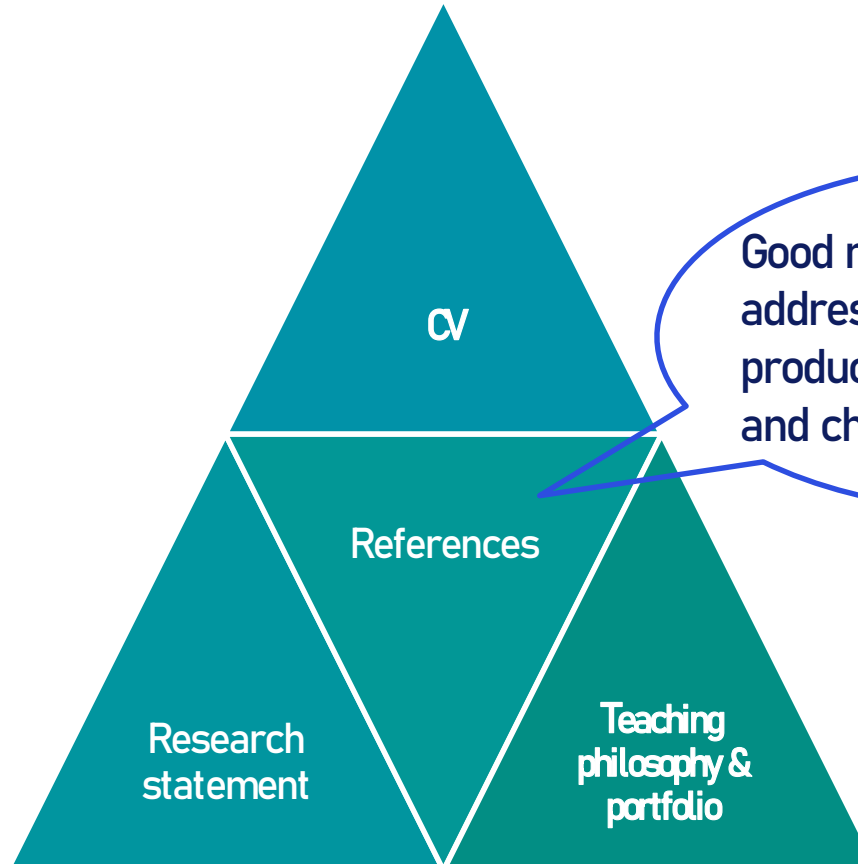
Types	Posting	deadlines
Tenure-track (US, Canada)	Late summer & early fall	Nov. & Dec.
Tenure-track (local)	Oct. & Nov.	Jan.
Shorter, fixed-contract (e.g., post-doc, visiting asst. prof. or lecturer)	Spring	-

Faculty job application process



Key application materials	Details
CV	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Education, publication, awards, grants, conference presentations, teaching experience
Recommendation letters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3-4 letters from recognized senior faculty are required A letter that demonstrates an intimate familiarity with the candidate's work increases credibility
Cover letter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Brief summary of research program & research contribution to the fields, teaching experience & specific interest in the dept.
Research statement (RS)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Research program, research grants & awards, future research
Statement of teaching philosophy & teaching portfolio	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teaching-oriented university weigh this more than RS

Key application materials



Good reference letter should address your research productivity, teaching potential, and characteristics!!

Faculty job application process



interview	
1 st round review & preliminary interview	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The search committee shortlist candidates• The whole faculty vote to decide who will be invited for an on-campus interview
2 nd round campus interview	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Job talk• Meetings with the search committee and private interview individual faculty• Social dinner/

1. Research publications & potential

- **Publications in CV**
 - Provide accurate publication information (vol. issue, pages) and doi (digital object identifier)
 - Should separate published peer-review papers from
 - pipeline papers such as under revision & under review manuscripts
 - chapters, conference proceedings, global multi-lab papers
 - papers in preparation
- **Awards, scholarships & grants**
 - Indicate local vs. international award/funding agencies
 - Indicate amount awarded, title of the project, roles (PI, co-PI)

2. Recommendation letters

- A letter from the primary advisor tends to be weighed more than those from others
- *Hbw to get a good letter from your advisor?*
 - Be genuine in building up a good relationship with your advisor
 - Try to help out your advisor whenever he/she needs your help
 - Collaborate actively on as many projects as possible
 - Be prompt in responding to your advisor, Keep the deadline!
 - Spend/interact more time if possible
 - Express your appreciation for his/her mentorship

3. Research statement

- Shouldn't be too long! (25 pages)
- Prioritize what you have done rather than what you hope to achieve in future
- Develop a strong and interesting narrative of the past, presence, and future of your research program
 - Do not simply copy and paste from the abstracts of your published papers

4. Teaching

- Teaching need
 - To check the department's teaching need
 - Teaching needs are indicated in advertisement
- Teaching preference based on research expertise
 - Teaching preference should be carefully curated
- Teaching statement & portfolio
 - Teaching experience (e.g., responsibilities, innovations, etc.)
 - Teaching portfolio (e.g., teaching evaluation scores, testimonies from both students and supervising faculty)

2nd round campus interview

Job talk

- Know your theory and know your data!
- Spend at least 1 slides that outlines your research program (past, present, & future)
- Know your audience!
 - Faculty only or open to post-graduate and UG students?
- Everything is up for questioning
 - Things that are not clear or ambiguous would invite more questions
 - Acknowledge if you do not know the answer
- Avoid too colorful/fancy slides; they can distract the audience
- Plan and manage your time wisely
- Rehearse as many times as you can!! Don't read your script

Preparing for the job market: Some personal experience

Yangfang (Helen) Zhou

Associate Professor of Operations Management

Lee Kong Chian School of Business

A bit about me

- Master's degree in Industrial Engineering from Tsinghua University in 2007
- PhD degree from Tepper School of Business, Carnegie Mellon University in 2012
- Joined SMU in 2013
- Tenured in 2022

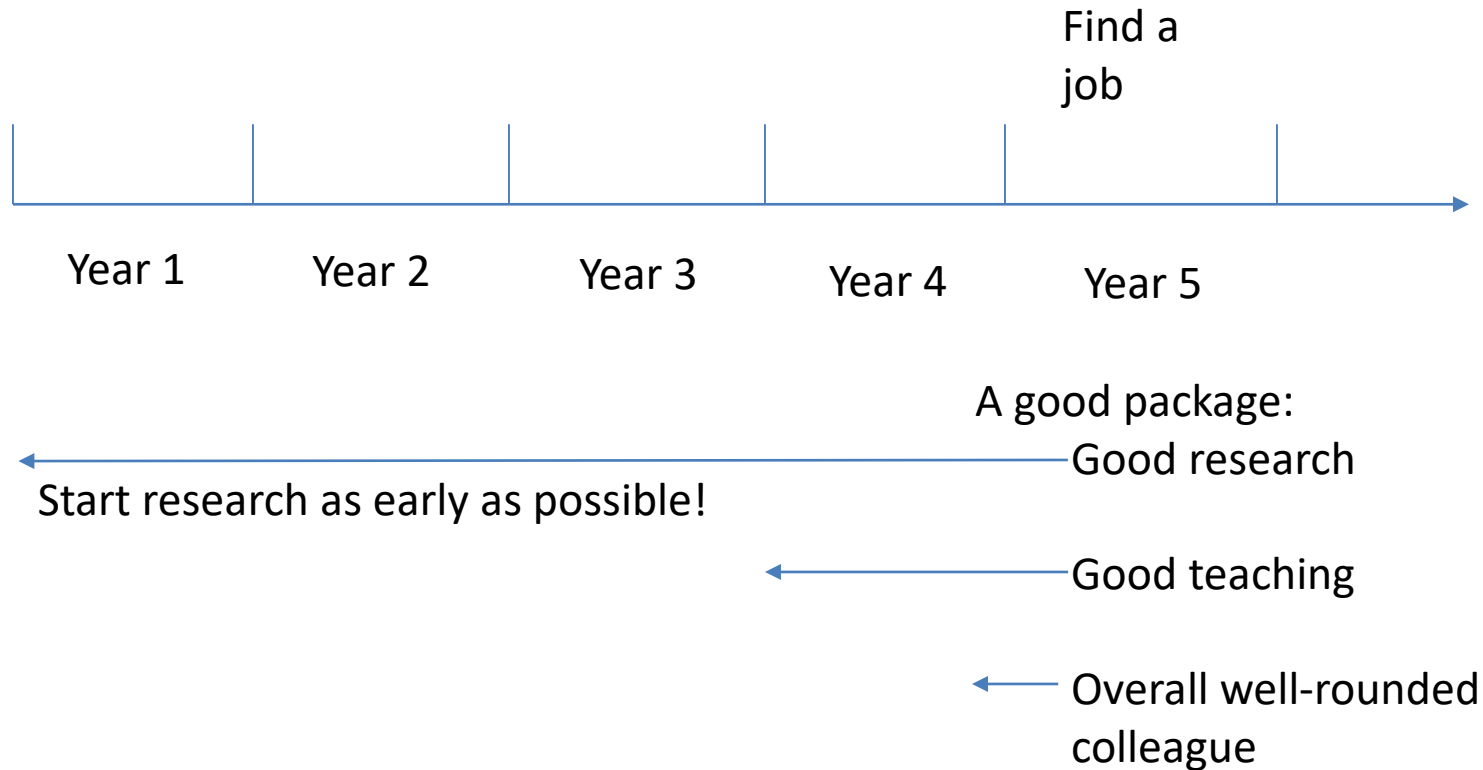
Note

- Not meant to be exhaustive
- Mostly my personal experience and observations and those of people that I know
 - Many lessons learned
- I hope *some* points are helpful for *some* people.

A good job package

- Good research (Cannot stress too much about it!)
 - Objective
 - Research papers take 3-5 years from starting to publish if lucky
- Good teaching
 - A constraint and a plus
 - A year or so
- Good soft skills on the job market:
 - Show that you are a good collaborator, colleague, potential friend
 - Some skills can be learned quickly.

Plan backward



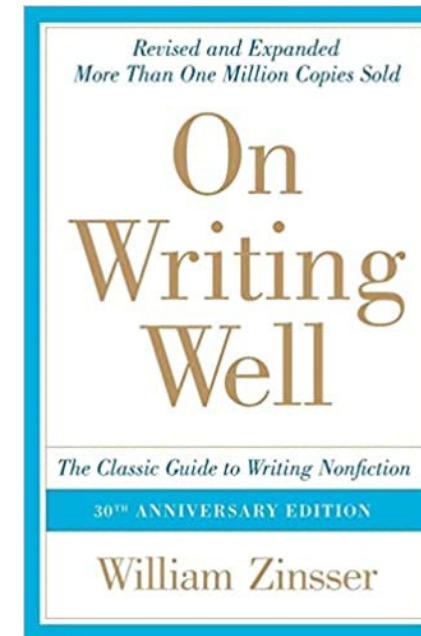
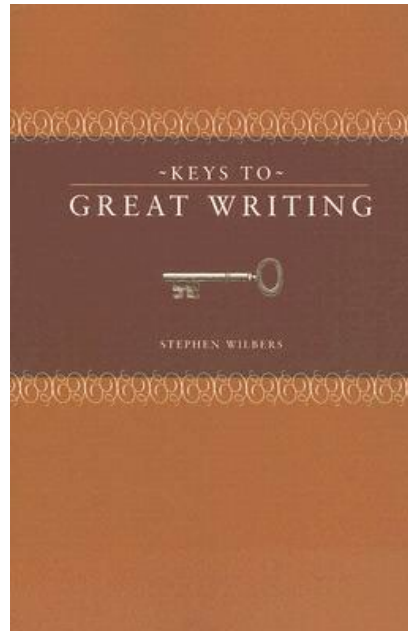
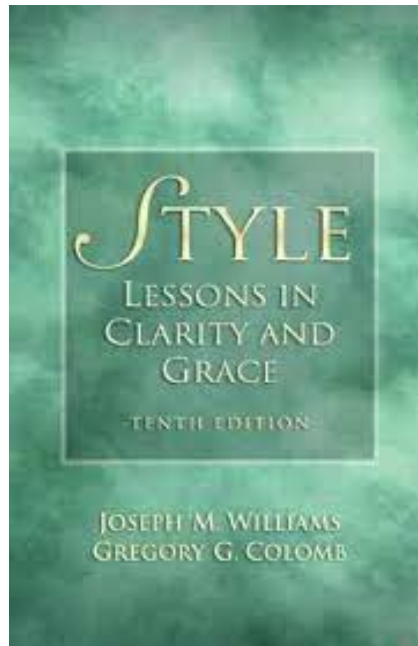
Once you land a job, you could use the same backward planning for your tenure.

Research

- Focus
- Strategic in topic choice: Build a body of knowledge around a broadly-defined *theme*, rather than a paper here and there.
 - At least early in the career
- A candidate's tag: How the candidate is compared to others in the same subfield.

Writing skills

- One of the most important skills in our profession!
- If you are a non-native speaker, consider taking a writing class.
 - I took three writing classes in CMU.
 - Here are the three most useful English writing books that I have read.



Presentation skills

- Take a professional speaking class to learn common tricks
 - Warm up lips before speaking
 - Take a few deep breaths before speaking to deliver a strong voice
 - How to stand: weight equally distributed on both feet; gradually scan the room from one side to another
 - How to look: eye color test
- Consider joining a speaking group
 - I joined a toastmasters group for about two years in CMU



Teaching

- How to speak
 - By Patrick Winston, formerly a computer science professor in MIT
- I watched this once every year before I taught in the first few years in SMU.



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Unzc731iCUY>

Soft skills

Such skills will not land you an offer, but the lack of them may make you lose an offer. Most items below are common sense, but are not necessarily commonly practiced

- Don't speak negatively about interviewers or interviewers' work.
 - The story of a candidate who was not offered a position in a school.
- Don't advise interviewers about how to do things better.
- Show that you are interested in discussing research with interviewers; do not dismiss their questions.
 - The story of a graduate student who did not convert any campus flyouts to offers
- A good rule of thumb: Pitch yourself at half a point below interviewers

Preparation for campus interview

- Search faculty profile and understand what each faculty does.
- Identify faculty who can work with in that department and be open to work with other faculty.
- Potentially use one slide to tailor your presentation to the local contexts
- Prepare questions that show you really know and are enthusiastic about the school
- Practice your interview with your advisors and potential people at the deanery level.

Job talk

- Practice as much as you can
 - Practice out loud with friends, faculty, and by yourself (at least 10 times)
- Script the job talk
 - You will be giving the same talk at least 20 times (including in conferences): the initial investment is frequently worthwhile.
 - Be willing to digress.
- Check out the room before your talk
 - Have a feel of the room and setup
- Enjoy
 - Feel as if there was no other place in this world that you would rather be at that moment.
 - Show your passion and your energy.

Answer questions

- The ability to be able to answer questions during the job talk is one key interviewers look for.
 - When candidates do not answer well, it shows that the candidate has not become independent from their advisors
- Maintain a list of questions for your paper and update it over time
 - For each question, provide a crisp and simple one-sentence answer followed by details.
 - You could draft this list as you write about the paper.
 - Update your list after practice talks, conference presentations, and etc.

Good luck!

Questions and Answers

Question: If the preliminary results are insignificant/inconsistent with what you expect after many trials, what to do next?

- If insignificant:
 - Spend a significant effort to verify it is indeed the case: If yes, exit!
 - Better to spend six months in writing a good paper than converting a not-so-OK paper to a good paper
 - Time invested was not wasted; learned many important skills.
 - A suggestion from a senior colleague from another university: He tries many ideas and gives one week for each idea.
- If inconsistent with what you expect:
 - Verify and have a good explanation.
 - Congratulations! You may have just found a paper!

Questions: How to choose the job market paper?

- If you have this question, congratulations!
- A paper to showcase
 - Attractiveness of the topic
 - Independence
 - The depth of your research capability
 - The readiness of the presentation of the paper
 - An example of a candidate: his papers were great, but his job market paper presentation was not polished enough.
 - Avoid fully published papers: a signal of no confidence in the pipeline
 - An example of a candidate

Question: How to prepare psychologically before job hunting?

(1/2)

- This may be one of your most significant opportunities that you interact with many schools, where your future letter writers get to know you
- Treat the job talk as a conversation with friendly reviewers or friendly senior people to give suggestions on your paper.
 - Focus on the process, not the outcome. If you focus on the outcome, you will be unnecessarily stressed out.
- Sometimes, certain audience may be overly critical.
 - Say “Happy to take the discussion offline” and follow up.
 - A caution: cannot do this too many times in a talk.
 - Take a deep breath. Smile. Move on.
- Be yourself: If you act like somebody that you are not, you will not be comfortable later on the job.

Question: How to prepare psychologically before job hunting? (2/2)

- Many job-seekers have insomnia during the job hunting process.
- If yes, try the following “what am I afraid of exercise” from the book “The end of stress”
 - It helps reveal our deepest fear, which you can
 - Audio guidance:
 - <https://theendofstressbook.com/downloads/>
 - “What am I afraid of?”
 - Worksheet on page 6. “What am I afraid of?”
 - <https://theendofstressbook.com/materials/The-End-of-Stress-Tools.pdf>

