APPENDIX C:

THE PROFESSION, CONFERENCES, AND ACADEMIC JOB PLACEMENT

The most common use for the Ph.D. in English is employment as a full- or part-time instructor at the four-year college or university level; significantly smaller percentages opt for careers in community colleges, private preparatory schools, public education, and non-academic employment. This appendix addresses some general questions about the profession at large, conferences, and the academic job search at the college and university level.

THE PROFESSION: SOME GENERAL OBSERVATIONS AND ADVICE

Although many thousands of professors and graduate students call departments of English their intellectual homes, the profession as a whole is surprisingly small. Nowhere is this more evident than in specific fields and subfields under the greater aegis of English and/or Literary Studies. Only a few degrees of separation—often your professors, common interests, shared institutional backgrounds, and the like—stand between you and most of the scholars in the rest of the discipline.

Well before entering the academic job market, it is quite possible to become professionally and personally acquainted with other specialists in the fields you have chosen, whether through attending lectures on campus, participation in academic conferences, publishing your work, or other means. Those acquaintances in turn may help open paths to additional publishing opportunities, prestigious fellowships, better employment, and promotion and tenure.

These paths typically open after you have demonstrated your ability and potential in your field. More senior faculty and journal or university press editors want to know that they may rely upon you to submit excellent work in a timely and professional manner. Once you establish a pattern of professional excellence, you are likely to discover that more opportunities come your way, sometimes without your actively seeking them. The converse is also true; faculty and editors are reluctant to support and vouch for those who consistently fail to uphold professional standards.

Put simply, even if we do not live in a panopticon in which all of our actions are observed at all hours of the day, you will discover that most of what you do in one part of the profession resonates elsewhere, from your graduate school experiences to your more advanced efforts in publication.

What you do in your home department matters; the faculty and fellow students with whom you work and study comprise your first network. Without their present and future advice and support, a sustained, fruitful career is exceedingly difficult, if not impossible to achieve.

CONFERENCES

Professional academic conferences are the first and most common ways in which we establish links between ourselves and other scholars in the fields we have chosen to make our specialties. They allow us opportunities to meet our peers at a given level (i.e., graduate student; Assistant Professor; tenured professor; editor; etc.) and discover what others are working on for articles, dissertations, books, digital

projects, and so on. They are professional networks that depend upon social contact. We accomplish a great deal not only in presenting papers, fielding questions about our work, and asking questions of others, but also in discussing future initiatives and projects over coffee and meals.

Conferences vary widely in size and purpose, from small, two-day colloquia to such massive gatherings as the annual Modern Language Association Convention (now held in early January). In between are local, state, and regional conferences or smaller national conferences for specific fields.

Which should you attend? This question depends greatly upon the areas in which you are attempting to establish yourself as a scholar, but a general rule of thumb is that you should try to attend and present your work most often at conferences where other specialists are likely to be present. If, for example, you are a Victorianist, you may obtain greater purchase from presenting a paper at a symposium or conference devoted to the period than you might at a large, general conference at the regional, national, or international conference.

General conferences, however, are also crucial to the field. Many are umbrella organizations where smaller societies arrange panels every year. Presenting a paper on such a panel may have just as great an impact on your future as a smaller symposium. This depends upon the quality of your work as well as the sort of crowd the conference and panel attract.

In each case, however, it is best to consult faculty in our department who work in specific fields to obtain their advice. They might be able to direct you to the most productive uses of your time and efforts.

CONFERENCE PROTOCOLS AND PROCEDURES

People interested in participating in a conference will normally answer a **call for papers (CFP)**. Calls for papers may be found in many places: bulletin boards (physical or electronic); e-mail lists; blogs; social network pages. The Call for Papers database at the University of Pennsylvania is one of the best single resources (see: http://call-for-papers.sas.upenn.edu/).

Deadlines for CFPs are several months to a year away from the posting date. Most ask interested persons to submit an **abstract** of 300-500 words outlining the proposed paper. A few ask for very short (less than 30 words) summaries as well; this is for program copy. Some may require that your paper be completed and submitted ahead of the conference. Check the CFP to be certain.

Your abstract should be clearly written and professional in its presentation. Individuals or societies may also propose entire panels comprising presenters that the proposer has already vetted.

If your proposal is accepted, you will be responsible for preparing your paper or panel ahead of time. The organizers will schedule your panel for a specific time of their choosing. It is possible to negotiate this time in special circumstances, but you should expect to present when asked as a rule.

A typical conference is divided into several components. The first day is often the registration period when attendees arrive and pick up their materials. Very little official business takes place on that day for the attendees, although the organizers may very well conduct business meetings or social events.

Once the conference is in full swing, each day is divided into sessions that may extend from as little as an hour to 90 minutes, with 15 minute breaks between sessions. Lunch hours and plenary sessions—in which all attendees are invited and encouraged to be present—are built into the schedule, as are workshops, roundtable discussions, society meetings, social hours, film showings, performances, and other activities.

Paper sessions usually comprise three to four presenters and a session chair, moderator, or respondent. The chair may be the person who organized the session or simply a neutral party. In either case, the chair or moderator is charged with introducing the panelists, keeping the session on time, and moderating a question-and-answer period. That period should be 10-20 minutes in length once all of the papers are read, which is why the chair's supervision is often required.

Respondents are typically individuals (again, possibly the organizer) who will offer a response to the papers at hand. The respondent might require you to submit your paper in advance of the conference so he or she can prepare a full response. Others will respond on the spot. In roundtable discussions, the participants may speak more extemporaneously on the topic at hand for short periods, with a chair or moderator keeping the discussion flowing.

REGARDLESS OF THE FORMAT OF YOUR PANEL, YOU HAVE SEVERAL TASKS BEFORE YOU:

- Keep your paper to the required length and on the topic you originally proposed. Paper presentations that exceed the allotted length, are clearly incomplete, or completely extemporaneous usually reveal a lack of respect for the audience and the occasion. They do not speak well of you.

  Rule of thumb: a 15-minute paper is about eight double-spaced pages; a 20-minute paper is about 9-10 pages.

- Write for an oral presentation and **practice** reading your paper several times before you deliver it. A paper that reads beautifully on the page often sounds rushed or flat in oral delivery. Eliminate long words or those difficult to pronounce. You will be speaking to an audience that wants to be interested and captivated. Make eye contact with them as you read. Try to gauge their reactions.

- Be courteous to other presenters and the members of the audience who ask questions of you. If you have carefully researched your work and supported your thesis well, most feedback from the audience should consist of helpful questions and comments. Even when questions are less helpful (even hostile!), you have an opportunity to learn and benefit.

- Remember that the goal of conference papers is to try out new or interesting ideas before your peers before you attempt publication. Listen to your fellow panelists and audience members with an ear for new ideas or approaches you might incorporate into a revised paper.

- ***If possible, talk with fellow panelists and audience members about their ideas after the session. This is where* networking *begins.***

FROM CONFERENCE PAPER TO PUBLICATION

As important as conferences are to the profession, the papers you present on such occasions should never be considered anything other than preludes to future publication opportunities. Attending many conferences at the expense of developing your ideas

How many conferences should you attend? This varies somewhat. As stated above, it is preferable to attend fewer conferences and make a greater impact upon your colleagues than to attend many conferences and make little impact at all. At most research-oriented universities today, faculty are usually expected to attend no more than two conferences per year when funding is available. If little or no funding is available, that number may drop.

Again, the number of conferences is less important than the issue. Conferences allow you to present early versions of your work for your peers' appreciation and response in advance of your submission of work for publication in article or book (chapter) form. They are not simple exercises in recitation.

If, for example, you attended four conferences in one year—an excessive number under any circumstances—and attempted to publish none of your presentations, then you squandered a great deal of time and effort that could have been best used revising your work for publication. While it is possible for you to meet an editor interested in publishing your work at a conference, it is much more likely that your work will be published the old-fashioned way: submitting it independently to a journal or press.

JOB PLACEMENT

Placement in teaching positions at the college or university level requires a great deal of work, time, and financial support. It also begins years ahead of a job search, as you work on seminar papers, attend and present at conferences, and work with your faculty. Our program's **Placement Officer** will be responsible for assisting job applicants, along with coordinating workshops that clarify the search process.

Our program has several resources in its library within the Conference Room that address directly and in fully practical ways how to find employment within the academy, from timelines, application materials, protocols, and both general and specific advice. These include:

Hume, Kathryn. *Surviving Your Academic Job Hunt: Advice for Humanities PhDs*.

Second Edition, Revised and Updated. Palgrave Macmillan, 2010. Print.

Toth, Emily. *Ms. Mentor's New and Ever More Impeccable Advice for Women and*

***Men in Academia*. 1st ed. University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008. Print.**

Vick, Julia Miller, and Jennifer S. Furlong. *The Academic Job Search Handbook*.

4th ed. University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008. Print.

In addition, Prof. Tim Cassedy has drafted a *Placement Handbook* that includes much more extensive detail about the job search process, from beginning to end. The program will periodically revise that document and make it available to all.

This section of the appendix, therefore, is a bit more abbreviated than it might otherwise warrant. The reason is that there is very little to add to these resources. Collectively, they comprise virtually all of the advice that a successful job applicant would need. Some general advice, however, bears repeating, and that will be the focus of the remainder of this appendix.

NOTE: The dearth of information about non-academic positions herein should not be misread as a dismissal of their importance, but merely the reality that most graduates of our program are apt to pursue appointments at four-year institutions. We strongly recommend flexibility in the face of a difficult job market.

If you would like to consider alternative careers other than the traditional tenure track, you may wish to investigate the following sites:

THE ACADEMIC JOBS WIKI:

http://academicjobs.wikia.com/wiki/Academic_Jobs_Wiki,

THE VERSATILE PHD:

http://versatilephd.com

The first of these allows you to keep up with current trends in academic offerings; the second offers resources for humanities and social science Ph.D.s considering alternative careers.

Please see the *Placement Handbook* for additional advice.

THE JOB SEARCH: THE LENGTH OF THE PROCESS

First, the academic job search is a process that is years in the making. It begins once you start developing your intellectual foci and defining your studies to prepare for examinations and the dissertation. It continues as you submit your work for presentation at conferences and publication in academic journals and collections. It takes a more intensive turn once you have passed your qualifying examinations and begun to write your dissertation.

When you begin applying for jobs in the fall term of the year (the beginning of the normal application cycle) that is the culmination of years of work. Our program will conduct each fall workshops that will help you to write the materials you need (cover letters, curricula vitae, teaching philosophies, etc.) to apply for positions and to prepare for interviews.

The presentations you give in our proseminars and seminars, Ph.D. examination rationales, examinations, and dissertations, however, provide some of the best preparation for the job market.

YOUR PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY

The academic job search requires that you know how to present yourself as an active, self-motivated, and enthusiastic scholar-teacher. By the time you enter the job market, hiring institutions will expect you to demonstrate your maturity as a pedagogue and intellectual force. *They will be looking for a new colleague, not a former graduate student.*

This means that well before you send your first applications, you have thought about where you stand as a member of the profession. You will need to think about and *write out* answers to the following questions, at a minimum:

- In which field(s) do I wish to teach and conduct my research? In which periods?
- If I had my choice, what would my dream courses look like? Which authors would I teach? Which approaches would I use? Which textbooks?
- How does my work intervene in ongoing critical conversations? What does my work *do*? Which communities, critical or otherwise, am I addressing through my research and teaching?
- Which critical approaches best summarize how I think and teach? Which theorists and critics? Are these approaches up to date? Do others in my chose fields still actively discuss them?
- How, when, and where will I publish/have I published my work?
- What defines me as a teacher? How would I summarize my views on teaching?

[This allows you to write your **teaching philosophy**; see below.]

Your potential future colleagues expect to see that you've thought about these questions. *Although your advisors can help you frame your answers, only you can address these questions honestl*y.

Your professional identity is linked to the faculty who advised you to some extent. Those faculty, after all, have guided and critiqued your work. Their reputations as scholars will have a significant influence upon your job prospects.

Your professional identity, however, is ultimately <u>your own</u>. When you interview, potential future colleagues will ask primarily or exclusively about you and your plans; they are hiring *you*, rather than a copy of your advisors. Interviewers will want to see that you have your own ideas about your teaching and research; ideally, you will have attempted to publish on your own, perhaps with few discernible links to your advisor. *You are your own person.*

A QUICK DIGRESSION ON "THEORY" (WITH A CAPITAL "T") AND YOUR PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY:

Not every Ph.D. in the humanities develops a strong affinity for critical theory in its many forms. You might find your work greatly indebted to or enthusiastic about a particular theory, theorist, or school of critical thought; you might also be disinclined to ally yourself with a single approach.

Either way, the profession and the academic job market demand that you be flexible in this regard. Put simply, critical theory is part of the *lingua franca* all of us speak. You will do yourself a disservice if you either a) do not refresh your understanding of the dominant theories of our time prior to entering the market or b) identify yourself so closely with ***one*** approach that you cannot entertain any alternative views and arguments.

You should expect interviewers to ask, in one form or another, whether you have consulted perspectives other than your own or those you prefer. If you rely upon a Foucauldian approach, have you also read criticism of Foucault? Have you read criticism published within the last few years, or are most of your secondary materials decades old?

A Ph.D. in English at this time implies that you can engage critical communities and current intellectual issues rather than ignore them. To do otherwise is to imperil any attempt at the academic job market. Consult faculty in your fields who can help keep you aware of current conversations or events.

THE MARKET

The academic job market is extremely competitive. Since 1970, Ph.D.-granting institutions have annually produced more doctorates than the market can accommodate with tenure-track or long-term, non-tenure-track positions. Over the same period, the ratio of permanent to short-term (i.e., Visiting Assistant Professor, adjunct, or lecturer) positions has shrunk in favor of short-term work. During economic downturns, the total number of positions decreases as well.

The result of these developments is that even a bright, well-prepared, newly minted Ph.D. in the humanities should expect to search for permanent employment over several years. The length of that time depends upon a number of factors that you control: additional excellent teaching; maintaining a program of continuous publication; involvement in the profession as a whole whenever possible. Simple luck does play a role, but nothing is more important than a candidate's strong record.

APPLICATIONS/DOSSIERS

Positions during the normal job search cycle are typically advertised in the Modern Language Association's (MLA) *Job Information List*, which is published quarterly in print form, but has an online version easily accessible to members of departments with MLA membership or to individual members. The October *JIL* is the most perused issue, but the online version is most up-to-date. Advertisements are searchable by type of position (i.e., tenure-track or not) area of interest, state, region, academic rank, and other criteria.

You should become a member of the MLA yourself at least by the year you plan to enter the job market, as you cannot attend the annual convention or enjoy other benefits of membership without joining.

Other positions are advertised in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, but many of these are more advanced.

Advertisements should be read carefully to determine whether you are indeed qualified for a position.

Deadlines for application materials may be as early as the beginning of October, but most applications are due between mid-October and mid-November, with the majority due the first week of November.

You will need to submit a **dossier** comprising your application materials. *Institutions will vary* in the materials they request in a dossier. You will need to pay close attention to what a particular institution wants. At times this will be unclear. In those cases, it may be wise to send fewer items, although it seldom hurts to send a dissertation abstract.

IF AN INSTITUTION DOES NOT EXPLICITLY ASK FOR INDIVIDUAL MATERIALS, THEN A TYPICAL DOSSIER MAY INCLUDE:

- a **cover letter** formally indicating your interest in the position and establishing your *bona fides*;
- a **curriculum vitae** summarizing your professional record and accomplishments;
- **three letters of recommendation**, including one from your dissertation director and two from other members of your committee or other faculty who can speak intelligently about your capabilities;
- a **teaching philosophy**;
- a **research statement or dissertation abstract**;
- a **writing sample** (often requested later);
- **student evaluations or other evidence of excellence in teaching**;
- **sample syllabi;**
- **transcripts** of your graduate record (sometimes requested later).

These materials take weeks, if not months of careful preparation. ***The first items you will need to submit in virtually every case are the cover letter and curriculum vitae***. Appropriate versions of each (see below) should be current and ready to send.

SMU does not currently have a campus-wide dossier service, nor is it likely to have one in the immediate future. You will need to purchase an account with a dossier service such as Interfolio (http://www.interfolio.com), which allows you and your referees to submit materials and control which items are mailed to institutions or foundations. The service is inexpensive, especially if you set up a long-term account. Given the fact that an academic job search is likely to take several years, you should seriously consider a multi-year plan. You will be charged additional fees for each mailing you send via the service, but this assures that your materials are delivered on time in a professional manner.

You should ask faculty to write **reference letters** for you many weeks in advance of your first deadline. They should have read your work and possess a strong sense of its potential. Referee letters that do not speak in detail about the applicant's work—especially the dissertation—are frequently dismissed. Your referees should be able to discuss your dissertation in detail to indicate that it is finished, or nearly so, and that it represents the work of a top-notch scholar. Whenever possible, they should also discuss your teaching ability and the kind of "citizen" you are in the department: how well or often you have participated in the department's life.

Reference letters that are ambivalent or vague, or that completely ignore a crucial aspect of your work may decrease your chances of obtaining an interview, while negative letters are almost guaranteed to eliminate them. When you ask for letters, be sure to discuss your plans at length with each of the authors so they can tailor their letters to be of greatest use to you.

Be aware, however, that you should expect each referee to write only one letter to be included in the dossier. Since

COVER LETTERS INTRODUCE YOUR WORK TO A SEARCH COMMITTEE.

They describe and position your most outstanding qualities in a compelling narrative. Cover letters should convince search committees that you are a dynamic, creative scholar-teacher with clear plans for your future. They have several sections:

1) An introductory paragraph. This should declare your interest in the position, identify where or how you learned of the position (i.e., where it was advertised or the name of the person who invited you to apply, if that is the case), and introduce you and your status. Two examples of the last element might read: "I am a doctoral candidate in English at Southern Methodist University, where I have specialized in Renaissance literature. I will defend my dissertation in March 2013"; "I earned my Ph.D. from Southern Methodist University with a specialty in Victorian literature. I am currently Visiting Assistant Professor of English at Tulane University, where I teach courses in 19th century British and American literature and drama."

2) A paragraph or two short paragraphs that briefly describe your dissertation, your publication record to date and your plans, including any materials that may be under consideration or in press. Portions of this may be based upon your dissertation prospectus, but should be revised heavily to be comprehensible to non-specialists.

3) A paragraph—or two short paragraphs—outlining your **teaching philosophy** and perhaps a representative pedagogical experience.

4) A short paragraph describing your service and other activities.

5) A concluding paragraph that reiterates the fact that you are qualified for the position and would have much to contribute in the desired areas. This paragraph also indicates whether and how you are willing to be contacted and interviewed. If, for example, you will attend the MLA convention, you would say so here.

You will need to prepare different versions of your cover letter to send to research- or teaching-oriented institutions. A letter for a small, liberal arts college with a heavy teaching load, for example, should go into greater detail about your teaching philosophy and background than one for a major research university.

You should also edit each letter to indicate that you have **researched the institution at hand**. Does the institution have a unique mission that you might support or a special research center that would be of mutual benefit? You might mention these details in your letter.

Under no circumstances should you send unaltered generic cover letters to institutions. Each search committee wants to know that applicants have an interest in their specific qualities. The cover letter should reflect your knowledge of that institution and the advertised position's specific demands.

A curriculum vitae (c.v.) is the academic world's analogue to a résumé. It organizes and clearly delineates your *bona fides*: your contact information; your education from your baccalaureate institution through the Ph.D.; awards and fellowships you have earned; publications; conference presentations; teaching assignments and responsibilities; research interests; teaching interests; other experience; your language competencies; your references.

Your **writing sample** will most likely come from a dissertation chapter. It should be your best and most polished effort, one that represents your typical writing style, critical approaches, research abilities, and analytical powers. The length may vary, but in all likelihood the minimum will be twenty pages. You should revise it several times over.

Statements on **teaching** and **research** will be expanded versions of paragraphs in your cover letter. They allow you to go into greater detail. Most are about one single-spaced page in length.

N.B.: Institutions vary widely on the type and number of documents they require from job candidates. At times, you may wonder why a search committee desires a particular document (e.g., a separate statement of research plans even though the cover letter already discusses this information). The reasons may be either simple or complex. Some committees wish to have documents to pass on easily to deans and colleagues who would like to know how best to attract top candidates. Others may have campus-wide requirements for job applicants. Still others—most, perhaps—may be trying to ensure that their candidates improve upon past hires and/or candidates for reappointment, promotion, and tenure. Put another way, search committees try to cover all bases and gather as much information as they can before making the momentous decision to hire their top choice. *Be sure to submit what a committee requests as early as possible.*

For additional advice, please see the texts above, the Placement Officer, or the DGS.

INTERVIEWING

Traditionally, the bulk of job interviews in English have been held at the Modern Language Association's annual convention, now occuring over four days in the first week of January from Thursday through Sunday. The city varies from year to year, but the convention is held most often in New York, Chicago, San Francisco, Washington, D.C., San Diego, New Orleans, and Los Angeles.

Many cash-strapped schools, however, may opt not to interview at MLA but instead choose to conduct phone or videoconference interviews (e.g., via Skype or similar technologies) that allow the interviewers and interviewee to see each other.

All of these are usually initial interviews that allow the search committee to winnow its list of top candidates to a short list of two or three (or on rare occasions, four) to visit the campus in succession. Those visits last a day or two and are filled with meetings and meals with faculty, students, administrators (including the dean who funded your position, or a representative thereof), and other interested parties.

Initial interviews vary widely in length, format, focus, and tenor. At MLA, the majority of interviews are held in hotel suites, but the Job Center at the convention also has a large interviewing room where dozens of interviews may take place at once, with virtually no privacy.

The shortest interviews are about 30 minutes; the longest seldom extend beyond one hour. Interviewing committees may identical to the search committee, or consist of only one or two search committee members and other members of the hiring department. In the latter cases, some faculty may be helping with interviews since they are also at MLA for other activities. It is perfectly acceptable to ask who will interview you when you schedule the meeting.

Interviews are highly ritualistic in innumerable ways. They are designed not only to allow your potential future colleagues and you to get to know each other, but also to determine how well you conduct yourself as a professional.

Interviewers are most apt to ask you about your dissertation and your plans for it early in the interview. You should be able to speak clearly, succinctly, enthusiastically, and convincingly about your dissertation and its significance. You will need to know your work extremely well, and to be able to describe it in a so-called “elevator speech” (i.e., a summary you could deliver in the time it takes to travel with someone in an elevator) of about 90 seconds. **This takes considerable preparation and practice**, and depends upon mastery of your own ideas. Allow interviewing committees to ask you to amplify your remarks, rather than continuing to talk at length. Draw upon the lessons learned during your prospectus and/or dissertation defenses to address any skepticism about your claims.

Most important of all, *take pride and confidence* in your work and its possibilities. Interviewing committees want to know that you already see yourself as an intellectually engaged scholar. Not only are you interviewing for a job, but you are also *teaching* interviewers about your work, intellectual interests, and pedagogy.

You will, quite naturally, be asked about your teaching. The emphasis placed upon teaching will vary according to the type of school and the interviewing committee’s specific interests and desires for the position, but you might be asked to describe some of your greatest successes or challenges in teaching or to describe how you might teach a specific course. These questions allow you to show how you apply your teaching philosophy to various situations, in addition to your knowledge of prominent or exciting works in your field.

In all likelihood, you will have time to ask questions of interviewing committees. *You must have questions to ask, or it will appear that you are not sincerely interested in the institution or the job.* It is customary to ask about research or teaching resources at the institution and how you might take advantage of them, or specific questions about the area, the students, and recent (non-controversial) activities on campus. If the interviewing committee does not automatically tell you what the next stage in its process will be and when you should expect to hear back from them, then you may ask. *It is generally inappropriate for you to ask about salary or to discuss your partner or spouse in any capacity at this stage.* Interviewing committees in turn should never ask about partners or spouses.

N.B.: In one way or another, interviews determine whether you would be a good "fit" for the institution or department. "Fit," as the term implies, is often ambiguous; individual departments may be looking for qualities that you cannot always detect. Although you might be able to determine through specific interview questions whether you are a potential "fit," it is also quite common for interviews that seemed to go well to produce no further interest, while supposedly poor interviews lead to campus visits or job offers.

As a rule, it is unproductive to second-guess your performance. After any and all interviews you may have, it would be more fruitful to sit down and *write some notes* about the experience. What seemed to interest your interviewers the most? Which questions seemed to generate the most interesting conversation? How might you amplify your answers the next time? If you can, talk with one of your mentors to see if they may lend you any insight about an interview, regardless of how it seemed to proceed.

Interviews are difficult work for both interviewers and the job candidate, even in a competitive market. The interviewing committee has to make a choice among many exceptional candidates. It has to sell the department and institution to the candidates just as the candidates have to present their best attributes. Interviews can be mentally and emotionally exhausting for all. While it is perfectly natural to be nervous and excited, candidates who are lively, enthusiastic, and fully engaged tend to fare better; committees generally dislike having to work hard to pull answers and necessary information from candidates.

Again, please consult the resources above for more detailed advice about interviewing.

PRACTICAL ADVICE

The academic job search is inherently a costly venture. You should plan to spend or charge considerable sums on dossier mailing fees, postage, clothes for job interviews (if you do not already have reasonably up-to-date professional or business attire), airline tickets, hotels, taxis/shuttles, rental cars, meals, conference fees, and other incidentals. These expenses can easily run into thousands of dollars, especially during your first foray into the academic job market. If you travel for on-campus interviews, most expenses will be reimbursed by the interviewing institution, but it might take months to see those funds. **Plan and budget ahead of time; leave yourself a reserve**.

The academic job search is also extremely time-consuming. Once you begin applying for jobs, even as part of an early or limited search, you will have time for little else. The commitment required for a full-fledged search is equal to the preparation time needed for a new course. This is true even if you are attempting a second, third, or fourth search during your career. Most of your time will be spent writing and revising the documents you need.

Preparations for a dedicated job search begin in the late spring and throughout the summer as you work on your application materials and ask your mentors and professors for recommendations and guidance. As soon as the fall semester begins, you should have completed solid drafts of your application materials. September, October, and November will be the busiest times as application deadlines approach. You will need to balance teaching, writing, and other obligations with the application process.

If you are offered an appointment that matches your qualifications, you will need to take into consideration a number of personal and professional factors, including those of your partner, spouse, or family. Are you willing and financially able, for example, to move to an entirely new city, state, or region? Will your partner or spouse be able to find work in that location? Is it the sort of area in which you would be able to accomplish the work needed to earn tenure? Will you have adequate research or teaching resources? Is the cost of living affordable, given your financial situation?

These and many other personal questions will arise before you begin your job search. Consult your advisors as well as any affected partner, spouse, or family members before you make final decisions.

If you do attend the MLA convention to interview, try to connect with other attendees you may know, whether your fellow SMU students or acquaintances at other schools or in the host city. The MLA convention can be overwhelming; take some time to connect with others. Attend panels in your field and engage them as a member of the audience.

Explore the MLA's book exhibit to shop for new texts (at a discount). Use that time as well to speak with presses' editors about your work. They attend in part to solicit submissions to their presses. Consider preparing a book proposal based upon your dissertation prospectus in advance. Your first books, book chapters, and articles might find their origins here.

Finally, remember that finding a compatible position may take several attempts at the job market over the course of your career, whether at the conclusion of your studies or after years of gainful employment. Although the outcome of a job search may be difficult to predict, this can work to your advantage. Opportunities for professional advancement do arise from unlikely places. A position that you initially thought would be less than ideal or out of your reach may be the most fruitful or well within your grasp, while a supposed dream position may fall well short of your expectations. The more flexible you are in your willingness to work and teach in a variety of environments and conditions, and the more consistent your efforts to sustain a definite research program, the greater your chance of success on the job market.

We **strongly recommend** that you consult Kathryn Hume's *Surviving Your Academic Job Hunt* for detailed, realistic advice on the job search and life as a new assistant professor.