Research Statements for Faculty Position Applications

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- Chaired faculty search committees hiring 8 faculty
- Served on faculty search committees hiring 6 faculty
- Several graduate students and postdocs who have become faculty
- Have mentored several other trainees as they apply for faculty positions
- Presented workshops on these topics at international conferences
Application materials

Specific requirements can vary but can include:

1) Cover letter
2) CV
3) Research accomplishments
4) Research statement
5) Teaching statement
6) References/Reprints
7) Letters of reference

All materials should complement each other to illustrate what makes you an ideal candidate for that specific position.
What is a Research Statement?

A key component of academic job applications that summarizes a candidate’s research accomplishments, ongoing projects, as well as the direction and potential of their future work. It can include:

- How your research contributes to your field
- Your funding history and potential for growth
- Potential academic and industry collaborations
- Your requirements for research resources
- The future direction of your research
What is the reason they ask for a Research Statement?

• Shows the review committee what you have accomplished in your research and your plans for the future
• Places your work in the context of your field and what you will bring into their department
• How you research will be independent, innovative and impactful within your field
• In some fields, they will want to know the potential you will get extramural funding
Understand your audience

- Remember that reviewers will only spend a few minutes on each application (there will be 100+ applications to all faculty jobs)
  - Make their jobs as easy as you can with summaries and formatting
  - You need to make sure your applications stand out
- Understand the composition of a faculty search committee
  - Don’t assume that everyone who will be reading your materials will be an expert in your specific discipline
  - Avoid using too much jargon or disciplines specific information
  - Make the impact and significance of your work clear
- Consider who in the department/institution would be a potential collaborator and include that in your Research Statement
- **Seek advice from current faculty (and especially recently hired faculty) about the conventions of your discipline and ask them to review your statement**
The type of institution you are applying to makes a difference

- Be aware of the different academic institutions and their expectations
  - Research intensive vs. Teaching focused
  - Public vs. Private
  - Large universities vs. small colleges
- Notice the type of job advertisements
  - broad = best candidate available
  - narrow = department has a specific need
- Research the department and the institutions
Follow the instructions

• Pay close attention to the job posting
• Prepare all of the requested documents
• Respect the page limitations provided
• Submit materials in the manner listed (email to the appropriate contact or submit to the indicated online portal)
• Be aware of any specific requirements for the research statements that can vary by discipline
  • Research statements are usually requested from researchers in engineering, social, physical, and life sciences.
  • Humanities disciplines may want this in the cover letter instead. Check with the job posting or your faculty advisor.
Goals of a Research Statement

• Guide the members of the search committee through your research from where you started until now
• Highlight your research accomplishments (publications, awards, grants, presentations, etc.) without fully replicating your CV
• Describe your plans for your research program over the next three to five years
• Explain how your research will benefit the department and/or institution where you are applying
  o Collaboration with current faculty
  o Obtaining extramural grant funding (if relevant to your field)
  o Providing research opportunities for students
  o Developing new courses related to your research topic(s)
Questions to consider when working on your Research Statement

• What got you interested in this research?
• What was the burning question that you set out to answer?
• What challenges did you encounter along the way, and how did you overcome these challenges?
• How can your research be applied?
• Why is your research important within your field?
• What direction will your research take you in next, and what new questions do you have?
Structure of a Research Statement

• First discuss the importance of your previous research
  o Include how you became involved in that research
  o Emphasize your most recent research projects and outputs
  o This can be research done with your mentor or collaborators
• Next provide the importance of your field of study
  o How is your research unique and significant to the field?
  o What is the impact of your research?
  o What are the specific results and outcomes of your work?
• What is the future of your research program?
  o Provide plans for first 3-5 of years of your faculty position
  o Show how your research will be independent of your current mentor
  o Address feasibility of your research at that institution
  o Indicate what will be your research outputs
  o How will this lead to funding? (if that is relevant to your discipline)
Tips for the Research Statement

• These are short (1-4 pages) so be concise!
  • If there isn’t guidance on the length, keep it as short as possible (2-3 pages or less unless specifically requested)
• **Provide a short summary at the beginning**
• Refer to your own work in the first person (I found…)
• Express your excitement about your research
• Use formatting that assists the reviewers:
  • Subheadings that highlight main points
  • Make use of bullets and selective ‘highlighting’ of text
  • Have at least a little white space, use 11-12 point consistent font
• Use figures if that is helpful to present your work
  • Summary figures are particularly helpful to include
• Include a timeline (Gantt chart) of your plans
Tailor your Research Statement for specific departments/institutions

• Customization will make the statement more effective
• Familiarize yourself with the faculty and research resources at your target institution
  • Explains why your future research will be possible at each institution
• How will your research be beneficial to that institution, or to the students at that institution
  • For a primarily undergraduate institution be sure to show how you research will include undergrad students
  • Make sure you know the details about any graduate programs
• If faculty at your target contributed to your field be sure to include mention of that in your statement
Research Statement Online Resources

1. **General guides to writing research statements:**
   - https://serc.carleton.edu/NAGTWorkshops/careerprep/jobsearch/research_statement.html
   - https://career.ucla.edu/grad/academic-job-search

2. **Blogs on writing research statements:**
   - https://chemistry-blog.com/2013/04/20/get-a-job-ken/
Research Statement Online Resources

3. Samples of faculty position application research statements:

- https://career.ucsf.edu/phds/academic-careers/academic-samples#Samples
Additional Resources for Application Materials

• Ask your advisor/mentor/others in your field for example research statements
• Talk to new faculty – may be willing to share their statement/experiences with you
• Ask about the search committee point of view concerning selection process, expectations and potential red flags!
• Consider forming a peer writing group and/or work with the Writing Center (https://cstw.osu.edu/)
Questions?

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