

Approaching the Market

Matt D'Urso

Ohio State University

July 21, 2025

About Me

First, I was asked to make these slides. I'm not *that* obnoxious to start handing out unsolicited life advice. Anyway...

Assistant Professor (TT) of Econ at Colgate University

Completed PhD this year

- Committee: Julia (advisor), Aubhik, Kyle

173 applications → 13 zoom interviews → 4 fly out offers

- Plus 1 second round fly out inquiry
- Job offer from every fly out offer that I accepted

What I Want to Do Today

1. Casually* run through some important job market points
2. More importantly, answer any questions you have

*I use sarcasm to get my points across. This is not a style you should use for your job talk

▷ Some of these slides have *way too many words* for a job talk, too

General Approach: Trust your advisor and committee

Think about how many:

- publications they have,
- referees they've dealt with,
- papers they've read,
- and how they understand how research is perceived

Further think about how many:

- markets they've been on (theirs + their students')
- search committees they've been a part of,
- and JMP's they've advised and read

You CANNOT compete with their experience

Years 2-4

You need more than 1 non-embarrassing paper

- Two top-30 U.S. schools + some European schools wanted 2 papers
- Show that your JMP wasn't a fluke; you have future value

I also recommend doing things to round out your application:

- Try to be an independent instructor for 2-3 classes
 - ▶ Evidence that teaching won't be a productivity shock for you
- Complete non-econ certification programs at OSU
 - ▶ Drake Institute has several endorsements; find something that speaks to teaching/diversity
 - ▶ May have time first semester of 5th year, but don't push it

Force yourself to present (your work, other papers) as much as possible

- Will probably never be comfortable, but practice can help you adjust to nerves over time

Year 5

You are writing your JMP

When you're not working on your JMP, use the time to work on your JMP

You can relax by presenting your JMP

In all seriousness, you can take a few hours each week to let your brain cool down

- Try to go to the happy hours; people there know what you're going through
- Learn to talk to speakers about your work in different settings!

Applications

Applications take longer than you think; allocate time accordingly

- Some schools want packets emailed to them. Make sure your committee knows!

What may be required:

- CV
- JMP
- 3 Reference letters (potentially 1 “teaching reference”)
- Cover letter
- Other papers
- Research statement
- Teaching statement (or teaching portfolio/dossier)
- Diversity statement

A Note on LAC Cover Letters

Treat your LAC cover letters differently from R1 cover letters

- May also apply to R2 and even R1 Lecturer positions

You want to *show, not tell* them that you care about teaching

- Include the school's mission statement
- List any classes you can teach from their catalog and job posting
- Briefly discuss teaching methods which you explain in your teaching statement
 - ▶ Here's where those certifications from the Drake Institute come in handy

I wish I realized this sooner

- My updated LAC cover letter was 2x the length of my other cover letter
- Only 14 LACs searching for Macro got my new cover letter; 7 interviews from them

Prepping Zoom Interviews & Fly Outs

Record your interview spiel and listen to it while taking a walk or doing housework

Have mock interviews with as many people as possible

- Never know with whom you'll be talking on the market; get as many opinions as you can
- Be ready to discuss teaching methods and textbooks
- Have some canned questions that still feel personal at the end

Then do the same for at least the intro and key moments of your job talk

What Do Search Committees Actually Want?

Tbh, I have no clue. They're probably looking to maximize expected future value

You/we have no present value. Future value is research promise. It must be communicated!!

- Personality matters for conveying potential future value, as well

The Importance of Communication

Communicating ideas is the biggest factor in your success (to me)

- You're training at Ohio State so your technical skills probably aren't an issue
- That said, if your JMP and letters aren't good, then this doesn't matter anyway

Schools want to assess your value to them if they hire you. They know that:

- How you communicate in writing influences what journals you'll be published in
- How you communicate verbally influences your impact at conferences

What is Communication?

Communication is NOT your English vocabulary, never mixing up words, or responding quickly

- An exuberance of recondite verbiage seldom suffices to see one published

Communication is telling a compelling story using economic tools

- This is what gets you published, bringing value to a university
- There are no excuses on the market, only your value as a researcher *and* colleague

This is a very trainable skill - Practice!

- Ask people for feedback on papers and talks
- Are you are talking too slowly or quickly?
- Are you monotone/robotic or constantly repeating things?

Your Communication vs Someone Else's

AI is everywhere and *present* user costs are low

- Future costs will show up quicker, and with greater magnitude, than you expect

You will **never** improve if something else is doing the work for you

- Easy to understand a proof when watching someone else do it
- Much harder to do it on your own when you're at home
- Painfully obvious when comparing written work with presentation

Applies to other people doing your work for you as well

Starting Questions for Better Communication

Does your **slide title** concisely tell me what you're going to do on this **slide**?

Does your **topic sentence** concisely tell me what you're going to do in this **paragraph**?

Is there one clear idea on this **slide** or multiple topics smashed together?

Is there one clear idea in this **paragraph** or multiple topics smashed together?

Does the content flow in a logical order (in the **slide/paragraph** and the work as a whole)?

You should iterate between paper, slides, and talk to keep refining your communication

- Imagine explaining to different groups: subfield, general econ, undergrad, gen pop
 - ▶ This will help with your clarity and exposition
- If you introduce something and think “I’ll just explain this later” - I hate you.
 - ▶ You get to the end of the slide to explain a new concept

Overhead from the Demand Side during a Seminar

Tenured Professor at Top 10:

“Very often [when reading papers] I start with the equations and then go back to the model description because what students write is completely different from what they’re actually doing.”

Write clearly and purposefully while trying to have an exciting intro

- You are not being hired by the poetry department

Yes, I'm serious, because some of you really write like this



How to Paragraph: How to Make a Peanut Butter & Jelly Sandwich Lesson



Bailey Whiteaker
43 subscribers

Subscribe

👍 55



➦ Share

🔖 Save



The Importance of an Introduction

Best advice I've heard:

"I am an economist studying what I think is interesting. If I thought what you were doing was interesting, I would be studying it. Now, instead of doing my work, I'm trapped here for 90 minutes with you. The least you can do is tell me why I'm here, what we're going to do, and why I shouldn't leave."

Remember, there is a time for research and a time for sales. Be a salesperson

- I always felt if I can get through the intro, the rest would go smoothly

Beyond the Intro

Confidently present the rest of your talk as if you succeeded in captivating your audience

- Don't worry if it's true or not; your strategy is the same either way
- 95% of people you ask are nervous before a talk or interview

Take as given that you will be nervous. Learn how to present while nervous

- Remember, they're talking to you because they see potential value
- You don't have to trust yourself, but you should trust the preparation efforts

You should know exactly what you want to say on each slide

- Very important in the intro
- Important for the rest of the talk but may have to adapt to the conversation
- If something goes wrong you'll know where to start up again
- Use "road-map" slides as cues if it helps

Answering Questions from Your Audience

Understand your paper!

- There's an ocean of difference between writing and understanding a paper

NEVER give the impression that someone asked a bad question

- Thank them for asking, tie it into your work, and suggest it's an interesting extension
- Just don't robotically call every question a good question

You can strategically buy yourself time to answer a question:

- Sip some water, ask to repeat, write something down, "so if I've understood..." etc
- Just don't overdo this

Other Tenured Professor at Other Top 10:

"If you happen to say something in an interview that you wish to correct, send a concise, polite, and accurate email to one or two people that you were speaking to correcting your error. It shows you care enough to think through others' concerns."

Personality as a Signal

Unfortunately for all of us, your personality matters on the market

- You're hired on uncertain future value
 - The dept is making an investment; they want a clear picture of return
 - If they hire you, they're stuck with you for the next 7 years!
- ▷ Signals matter

How you handle the room signals how you'll handle the job

- Defensive when questioned → how will you handle conferences/referee reports?
- Rudeness is insecurity. It's a bad signal about your future value!
- *Try not to sound annoyed by conversation*

Ultimately, you should be yourself, just not cold/dismissive

- Professional yet approachable, from the dinner before through the dinner after

Miscellaneous

- Be generally well groomed (extra strength *antiperspirant*, brush teeth, etc)
- Bring a USB slide clicker
- Slides ready in email and on USB (maybe website)
- No self-deprecating humor (big one for me)
- Marginally less formal clothes for dinner (maybe)

Questions?

I want this to be a conversation so ask away