

The Search For an Academic Job in Mathematics The Perspective of a UK Graduate Student

Christopher Frayer
University of kentucky

1 Introduction

Searching for an academic job can be an overwhelming experience. Many questions quickly arise: Where do I find job ads? When should I apply? What is a teaching philosophy statement? What happens during a campus interview? This article is based upon my experiences searching for an academic job. Specifically, I would like to tell the story of a graduate student at the University of Kentucky searching for a job at a 4 year college. There will be some differences when searching for postdoc positions, however, much of this information should apply. I hope that this article will share the experience and insights I obtained during my job search.

First of all, I claim that I had a successful job search. Not only do I have a job lined up for the Fall of 2008, I had 20 interviews at the Joint Mathematical Meetings as well as 14 invitations for on-campus interviews, 5 of which I accepted and 4 job offers. In the end, it was nice to have a choice. With a good deal of planning and effort on your part, any student receiving a PhD from UK should not have a hard time finding an academic job.

The search for an academic job starts well before your last year. There are two things that I highly recommend, participate in Math Excel, and teach as many different classes as possible. I had the privilege of being a workshop leader for Math Excel during my second year at UK. At the time, I had no idea that it would be an advantage when searching for a job. Almost every School I interviewed with wanted to know more about Math Excel. I'm not sure how many times I received the question, "Can you tell us more about this Math Excel program?" Needless to say, I developed a very nice 3 minute spiel. But why are schools so interested in Math Excel? For three main reasons: Its a position of leadership; It involves a diverse group of students; Its a great example of active participation in class through collaborative learning. Also, teach every class you can while you are at UK. I have seen people who become comfortable teaching the same class over and over. Schools do not want to see that you have taught math 109 six semesters, they want to see a wide variety of courses. After all, that is what you will be teaching at most small 4 year schools. Along the way, keep your class evaluations and make a document summing up your

overall ratings as well as selected student comments. This is something some colleges will request, and you may also include it in your application packet for other schools.

As well as participating in Math Excel and teaching a large variety of classes you should be actively involved within the mathematics department. Participate in seminars, go to conferences, give talks, etc. Also, if you can, get involved with the Graduate Student Council, or help organize the Graduate Student Colloquium. These are all things that you can add to your c.v., to make you more desirable to potential employers. Do not wait until your last year to get involved.

2 The Application Process

My application process began in August of 2007. During August and September I focused my attention on writing clear and concise teaching and research statements, updating my c.v. and putting together a summary of student evaluations. During this time you will want to lineup at least three people to write letters of recommendation. From September to early November I searched for job advertisements (Normally ten or fifteen minutes in the morning), and finalized my application material. I highly recommend the following three websites:

- <http://www.ams.org/eims/>
- <http://www.maa.org/pubs/employ.html>
- <http://chronicle.com/jobs/>

You will find that schools have deadlines starting the first of November through the end of January. It is very important to stay organized. I recommend creating a Microsoft Excel file containing the school name, deadline, application address (which may be an email), a link to the job ad (trust me, later on you will want to reread these) and any special notes. Next you will need to write your cover letters and make sure to get all the information out well before the application deadlines.

Do not underestimate the amount of time you will put into your c.v., teaching philosophy, research statement and cover letters. The time and effort you put into these tasks will pay off throughout your search.

2.1 Teaching Philosophy

Putting together your teaching statement is a serious task. First of all, what should one include in a teaching statement? You should discuss your interest in and enthusiasm for teaching at the college level making sure to include your goals and main priorities as a teacher. Remember that teaching is about students, so your philosophy should be as well. I highly recommend that you start by reading, *Writing a Teaching Philosophy Statement* appearing in the December

2006 Notices. It breaks the task down into several steps. Answer the following questions (as succinctly as possible):

- Why do you want to teach mathematics?
- When you go into an undergraduate classroom to teach, what are your goals?
- What are the Goals of undergraduate mathematics education?
- What are your top 4 teaching goals?
- What do you like to teach the most and why?
- What do you feel makes for great teaching?

Now that you have started thinking more deeply about your teaching, write a synthesis of the above questions. This should be a good start of a teaching statement (For me getting started with the hardest part). Take this and see what you can do.

You should be talking to other people, especially graduate students, about your teaching statement. This will help you solidify your philosophies as well as opening up a dialect with your peers. If you need additional help reflecting on teaching mathematics I recommend taking a look at [7] or [10]. Also, carefully proof read each draft, as well as having others do the same. I personally am very thankful for the help that I received from Dr. Perry (My thesis advisor), Gene Butcher (A fellow graduate student) and Jennifer Torma (A friend outside of the mathematics department).

Below is the first paragraph of my teaching philosophy statement.

Throughout my mathematical journey I have been influenced by four guiding principles of teaching: The classroom should be a positive, collaborative environment; students learn mathematics by doing mathematics; conceptual understanding leads to procedural development; the instructor should always be available to students. I base my teaching on these four principles.

2.2 Research Statement

I found the research statement easier to write than the teaching statement. I see a research statement as having three parts: Describe the problem, summarize your results emphasizing key contributions, list problems that you hope to explore in the future. While writing your statement remember that your audience is not composed of experts in your field. Chances are (at least 4 year colleges) they will be as interested in the quality of your exposition as they are with your results. Shoot for a clearly written, concise statement that is well organized.

Most 4 year colleges are very excited about the possibility of undergraduate research. If you are excited, you should indicate this in your research statement. If areas of your research can be engaging to undergraduates you should explain

how you can incorporate them into your research. Below is the last paragraph of my research statement.

Secondly, as an undergraduate student, my interests in mathematics were dramatically influenced through undergraduate research and learning projects. For this reason I am very interested in participating in undergraduate research. My research area has a numerical component which would serve well to engage undergraduates in exploration. Possible avenues of investigation include studying numerical solutions to the initial value problem for the KdV equation via the inverse scattering method, numerical investigation of the inverse scattering method for singular potentials (such as δ -type potentials) and other such numerical explorations.

2.3 Curriculum Vitae

Your Curriculum Vitae makes up a very important part of your application packet. A c.v. can be quickly read and easily used to compare you with other candidates. You should use this as an opportunity to openly brag about yourself. Make sure to include all information concerning teaching awards, publications, honors, etc. Your c.v. can be broken down into several parts: Professional objective, Education, Teaching Experience, Research, Publications, Talks, Honors and achievements, Departmental Services, References. (A personal pet peeve of mine, if you did a recitation for calculus 1, say so, don't try to make it look as though you 'taught' Calculus 1. I seem to see people doing this and it strikes me as being dishonest. List your accomplishments, feel free to brag about yourself, but don't embellish.)

2.4 Teaching Evaluations

A very nice addition to your application packet is a brief summary of your teaching evaluations. I recommend putting together a document summing up your overall ratings as well as selected student comments. If you have kept all of your evaluations, this will hopefully be a quick (and rewarding) task. This is your chance to show how much your students appreciated the hard work you put into teaching.

2.5 Letters of Recommendation

You will need at least three letters of recommendation. When applying to small 4 year colleges they will typically ask that at least two of these letters address teaching. I recommend that you recruit people to write your letters up to a year in advance. The reason being, if you want someone to comment on your teaching abilities, they should sit in on a few of your classes. (I did not do this, but hindsight is 20/20.)

You should attempt to make the process as easy as possible for your letter writers. Once they have agreed to write you a letter, you should bring them a

sample of your entire application packet, let them know what types of schools you are applying to and what you would like them to emphasize. This way, their letters will be consistent with your statements. The earliest application deadlines are between November 1st and November 15th. So it is reasonable to ask to have the letters finished by mid October. Along the way you should send your writers several polite emails asking if they need any more information or have any questions for you. This also serves as a gentle reminder that they should be working on your letter.

Typically when the letter writers are finished they will give the mathematics graduate secretary (currently Sheri Rhine) signed copies of their letters. Then with your assistance, the graduate secretary will help send out the letters. I put together a Microsoft Excel file containing all the addresses, from which Sheri was easily able to print off labels and send out the letters. I am very thankful for the help that Sheri gave me throughout my job search, as well as the time and effort put forth by my letter writers.

2.6 Cover Letters

The cover letter is one of the most important parts of the application packet. They can also be very challenging to write. Clearly, you would save a lot of time and effort by using only one cover letter, “Dear Search Committee, I am applying for a position at your College ... ” However, a cover letter starting off with,

Dear Dr. Majerus,

I am very interested in teaching at Westminster College. I am currently finishing a PhD in mathematics at the University of Kentucky where I work in the areas of analysis and mathematical physics. I believe that my teaching experience and my commitment to excellence in teaching makes me a strong candidate for the position described in your advertisement.

will probably be viewed more favorably. I recommend tailoring each cover letter to the specific school. I broke my cover letter into five paragraphs. The introduction (seen above), teaching, research (when appropriate), a paragraph tailored to the specific school, and a conclusion.

The paragraphs on teaching and research should be rather straight forward to write. Sum up the main points of your teaching and research statements. Make sure to mention what courses you have taught as the primary instructor, some of your goals as a teacher and list any teaching awards you have received. In the research paragraph, state the title of your thesis, your advisors name, the area of your dissertation as well as any recent publications. This is another good spot to add a sentence concerning undergraduate research.

The time consuming part is tailoring a paragraph to each school. For each school, I spent about 15-20 minutes searching the math department’s web site and rereading the job advertisement. This allowed me to determine why the

school was a good match for me. (This is where that Excel file can start to come in handy.) Then I wrote a paragraph emphasizing characteristics that I liked about the school. Although this takes a lot of time, it adds a very nice touch. Also, if the geographic area is of interest to you, add that as well.

If you will be attending the Joint Meetings make sure to let them know in your cover letter. Most schools perform their initial interviews at the Joint Meetings. Below is the conclusion of one of my cover letters.

⋮

I will be attending the Joint Meetings in San Diego and plan to participate in the employment center. I would enjoy the opportunity to speak with a representative from Westminster College.

I have included my curriculum vitae and my research and teaching statements. Moreover, I have requested that recommendation letters be sent directly to you. You can contact me via email or at (123) 456-7890. Thank you for your consideration. I look forward to hearing from you.

2.7 Sending out Applications

Now that all of the hard work is done (or is it done), its time to send out the applications. I ended up sending out just over 50 applications. About 40 of these were places I was interested in. In retrospect, I should have only sent out the applications to these 40 schools. This would have saved me at least several hours. When reading job ads, make sure that a school is what you are looking for, also make sure that you fit their criterion. If they have an open position in math education, you shouldn't apply if you are an algebraist not interested in math education.

I sent my applications out in several groups. I first sent out the applications with the earliest deadlines, and then worked from there. Throughout the process I was constantly searching for more places to apply. Several things to help with the process: There is no need to use fancy paper (save your money for more important things), print out address labels (The Excel file can be handy), and send out the applications through the university meter mail (I was told that this is acceptable).

Now is the hard part, you wait. With in a couple of weeks I started receiving letters letting me know that my application packet was complete, as well as receiving affirmative action cards. These are completely voluntary and in no way affect the application process; for this reason, I rarely filled them out. (I did not feel the need to let schools know that I was a Caucasian male.)

3 Joint Meetings

Every Year the Joint Mathematics Meetings take place in January. The employment center, which is a part of the Joint Meetings, serves as a meeting place

for employers and job seekers attending the meetings.

The Employment Center is an in-person interviewing program for positions in the mathematical sciences (mostly requiring a PhD). The Employment Center provides tables for employers and several options for the arrangement of the interviews: a formal, computer-scheduled setting; a less formal, employer-scheduled setting (called the Interview Center). Interviews are conducted over a period of three and one-half days, although the computer-scheduled interviews are only scheduled during two days. Employers sit for hours at a time conducting interviews at their tables, and applicants move from table to table, and (since they greatly outnumber the employers) may expect to be busy only part of the time. Many employers at the Employment Center are looking for well-rounded candidates for college and university teaching positions, although there are usually a few nonacademic employers participating.

The employment center is a great place to meet with a large number of schools over the course of a couple days.

The employment center conducts two types of interviews, self-scheduled and computer-scheduled. I do not recommend participating in the computer-scheduled interviews. Employers and employees choosing to participate in this program fill out bubble sheets picking their top choices. Then a computer schedules the interviews. This is the *cattle call*. The computer scheduled room is a smaller, separate room off to the side. In between interviews, people line up outside the room waiting to be herded in. The interviews are 20 minutes long, somewhat rushed, and not always mutually requested. A friend of mine had an interview start off with the remark, “We didn’t choose to interview with you, but why don’t you tell us a little bit about yourself.”

The self-scheduled interviews are scheduled by the employers. Before the meetings, applicants will receive invitations for interviews. (Hopefully you will be receiving lots of invitations, so stay organized.) The self-scheduled interviews take place in a larger more spacious room where the colleges display their names across the tables. It’s a much more personal and friendly environment. These interviews are preferable as they tend to last longer, are mutually requested and more relaxed.

Any one searching for an academic job should participate in the employment center. In 2008 there were 129 employers interviewing 612 potential employees. Advanced registration for the 2008 employment center had to be filled out by October 24th, so make sure to plan in advance.

3.1 Getting Prepared

In the beginning of December I started receiving interview requests. It was a great feeling to receive the first couple requests, however, after receiving fifteen requests I started feeling slightly overwhelmed. I recommend buying a small

spiral bound notebook. It will serve two purposes: Keep a schedule of interviews, which you will be constantly updating; Dedicate a page to researching each school. You can carry the notebook with you throughout the meetings and quickly flip through and remember key facts before each interview. On average, the interviews last about 30 minutes. I attempted to give myself a fifteen minute break between interviews and to schedule no more than seven or eight interviews a day.

Let me finish with some advice. If you don't hear from a school that you are interested in, contact them. There is nothing wrong with sending a polite email letting them know that you are interested in their position, will be at the Joint Meetings, and would enjoy the opportunity to speak with a representative from their school. While at the Joint Meetings, dress nicely. I was told to err on the side of over dressing. I suggest that males wear dress pants, a button up shirt and a sport jacket and females dress professionally. Many people were wearing suits, but I did not feel it was necessary. Also, please do not wear white sneakers with a suit; it really does look silly. My last bit of advice is to come prepared with bottled water and snacks to get you through the day.

3.2 The Interviews

Now for the exciting part, the interviews. I came into the interviews prepared to sell myself, but I quickly realized that I was interviewing the schools just as much as they were interviewing me. This realization allowed me to relax and enjoy the interview process. It is very important to stay upbeat and excited. The interviewers are meeting with up to 15 plus candidates a day, so they will be exhausted. Several interviewers remarked how exhausted they were and asked how I was holding up. I replied that I was holding up just fine and I was excited about the opportunity to meet with them. For you, the interviews are a chance to put a face with your name, make a good impression and show them that you can communicate effectively.

I viewed the interviews as more of a conversation. A chance for you to find out more about the schools, and to let them know exactly what you are about. Remember to be yourself. Hopefully you will be meeting with a large number of schools, so there will be no way to remember exactly what you tell each school. Here is a list of questions that were asked of me during the interviews:

- Tell us about your teaching experiences.
- How would you describe your teaching style?
- What courses are you interested in teaching?
- Why are you interested in our school?
- Why are you interested in a liberal arts school?
- Tell us about your dissertation?
- How do you approach teaching basic math classes?

- Tell us about a difficult situation you have encountered in a math class, and how you handled it.
- How have you improved your teaching through evaluations?
- What are your greatest strengths and weaknesses?
- What are your research plans after your dissertation?

The one question you will inevitably be asked is “Why are you interested in our school?” Make sure that you have done your research so that you give a good answer. A good answer to this question can make a strong impression. (The answer should not involve you wanting a job, even if that is the truth.) They may press you on this matter, “How do you see yourself fitting in at a liberal arts school?”

I recommend jotting down notes on these questions before leaving for the Joint Meetings. If possible, have someone give you a practice interview. You don’t want to be too rehearsed, but you want to sound like you know what you are talking about. There will also be a chance for you to ask questions. Make sure you have some. I suggest some of the following:

- How many majors did you graduate last year?
- How many went on to graduate school?
- What type of technology is used in the classroom?
- Can you describe a typical teaching load (As in number and type of classes)?
- What type of student research goes on at your school?
- Have you had any students participate in REU’s recently?
- Is there summer research support available for students?
- What type of scholarly activity goes on in your department?
- Would your department support the involvement with project NExT?

Make sure to write down important notes after each interview. Trust me, if you don’t write them down you will most likely forget, or mix up schools. Throughout the Joint Meetings you will run into people that have interviewed you, so remember names. It is nice to greet someone by name, for instance, “Hello John, how are you doing today?” Chances are they will be impressed. I had one interviewer stop me and remind him of my name. We had a short conversation and as I walked away he was jotting down some notes. Ten days later I received an invitation for a campus interview. After each interview send a short thank you email. Let them know that you appreciated their time and that you are still interested in the position. I suggest something along these lines.

Hello SOandSO ,

I appreciate you taking the time to meet with me this afternoon. I liked everything that I learned about SOandSO College and enjoyed our conversation. I think that I could be a great fit for the position. I wanted to let you know that I am still very interested in the position and I look forward to hearing back from you.

Chris Frayer

4 Campus Interviews

If all has gone well, several weeks after the Joint Meetings you will start receiving requests for campus interviews. These are the most exciting, yet most exhausting, part of the interview process. Typically, a campus interview lasts 1 to 2 nights and includes: Get picked up at the airport, Dinner with faculty, Get picked up at the hotel, Breakfast with faculty, Campus tour, Town tour, Meeting with president, vice president and deans of the college, Lunch with undergraduate students, Meeting with human resources, Give a teaching demonstration, Give a research talk, Interview with the search committee, Dinner with faculty, Get dropped off at the airport. Needless to say, you will be very busy.

4.1 Getting Prepared

The most important things to do to ensure a successful campus interview happens before you leave. When you are contacted for the campus interview, you will schedule a date, learn about transportation and lodging, and discuss the talk and or teaching demonstration that you will be giving. You should also have them send you a schedule of events for the interview. This will allow you to learn the names of the people you will be meeting with, as well as give you a chance to make any suggestions that you feel are necessary.

Make sure that you find out about lodging and transportation. I found that it was typical for schools to have you take care of the flight ahead of time, then get reimbursed later. Likewise, the schools may or may not take care of your lodging, you may have to pay for your lodging and get reimbursed later. Make sure that you ask about their reimbursement procedure. I found that you could get reimbursed for food during your travels. It's nice to get a quick meal at the airport during a two hour layover, especially if you don't have to pay for it. Remember to save all of your receipts.

The most important part of your interview will be the talks that you give. As I was visiting 4 year colleges, I was asked to give a 30 minute teaching demonstration, a 30 - 50 minute research talk accessible to junior level undergraduate students, or a 50 minute talk on an interesting area of mathematics encountered in the standard undergraduate curriculum. You would like every talk to be the best talk you have ever given, and every teaching demonstration the best class you have ever taught. Make sure to figure out exactly what your audience will be, then cater your talk to them. For the teaching demonstration,

I recommend giving a clear and intuitive lecture with periodic questions. You shouldn't be trying to do anything fancy, your goal is to get the students engaged. Anyone can get up and talk about a subject, but not everyone can engage and entertain their audience. As far as preparing your talks, practice them often. For your research talks, have your advisor listen and give feedback. For a teaching demonstration or general talk, recruit some graduate students to offer constructive criticism.

Find out as much as possible about each college before your visit. I recommend reading everything that you can find on their website. Visit faculty members' personal webpages, read their publication list, see what classes they are currently teaching, look for interesting points that you could bring up in conversation. Find out what courses are currently being offered. Is there an active math club or problem solving group? What types of special programs does the department offer? Are there any colloquium series? Also, find out as much information as you can about the college in general. Read the strategic plan and the college mission statement. Learn where the college currently is and where it would like to be in the future. If you know the names of the deans, or if you are meeting with the president, learn more about them. Learn about the surrounding geographic area. All of these things will make your day go much smoother.

4.2 The Interview

Your interview starts the moment that you step off the plane and it doesn't finish until you get dropped off at the airport. You should be energetic, upbeat and smiling the entire time. You will meet with many different people ranging from students and faculty members to deans and presidents. Throughout the day, you will be constantly asked if you have any questions. Don't be afraid to ask the same question several times, you will be able to get different points of view, but hopefully consistent answers. I recommend some of the following questions, as well as any of the questions asked during the Joint Meetings.

- What is the teaching load (as in how many credits, courses and preparations)?
- What are the procedures for tenure and promotion?
- What types of travel funds are available?
- Is summer teaching available?
- I know that you are very committed to quality teaching, what is your process of evaluation?
- How many people have come up for tenure in the last ten years? How many received tenure?
- How are committee assignments made?

- When are you eligible for a sabbatical?
- Can spouses or children attend the college for free or at a reduced rate?
- Is there affordable housing in the area?
- What is the time line for your search?

Luckily, the questions asked of you will mainly be the same ones from the Joint Meetings. However, you may be asked specific questions pertaining to teaching certain classes. For instance, one school I visited wanted me to coordinate all the statistics courses that they offered. I suggest that you give them honest answers. If you are not interested in coordinating statistics course, say so, politely. “As I mentioned earlier, I am very interested in teaching a wide variety of courses. So I would definitely be interested in teaching statistics courses, but I am not sure I am prepared to coordinate all the statistics courses which are offered.” However, if you think that this may be a deal breaker, you might view the task differently. That is for you to decide.

The meetings with the president and deans should go smoothly, they are nothing to worry about. The president is interested in telling you about the college and answering any questions that you might have. I recommend some of the following questions.

- How do you view the mathematics department as part of the college?
- What is your vision of the future of the college?
- What is the most critical issue your school is facing?
- What do you see as the major changes in the curriculum over the next few years?

I found that any of these questions invited a long winded response. You should also be prepared to give a brief description of your research problem. The president wants to see how well you can explain a complicated idea in Layman’s terms. The deans are interested in talking about the tenure process, salary issues and your teaching interests. You should ask the deans about funding for project NExT, and be prepared to sell the program (See [8] for more information). As professional development is a major issue, they should happily answer that they would support the program. If not, this may be something that you will have to negotiate for later on.

You will also have a chance to meet with someone from the human resources department. I suggest that you pay very close attention, benefits could be a deciding factor when considering multiple offers. Important items include: health insurance, deductibles, maximum out of pocket, monthly rates to cover your spouse or children, retirement plan, what percentage the university contributes. These are all very important issues. For instance, if your starting salary is 50,000 dollars and the college contributes ten percent of your salary to retirement, you can view this salary as 55,000 dollars when comparing it to other offers.

Hopefully you put a great deal of time into preparing and practicing your teaching demonstration and or research presentation. For the teaching demonstration, be prepared for faculty members attending, and asking lots of questions. Chances are, they are not heckling you, but seeing how you handle questions in a stressful situation. For the research talk, be prepared to answer general questions as well as in depth technical questions. At one college, it turned out that a faculty member was an expert in nonlinear PDE's, he drilled me the entire talk. I felt as though I was taking a qualifying exam. Even though I viewed his behavior as being extremely rude, I did a good job *dealing* with his questions, which seemed to impress the search committee.

I suggest that you view each of these interviews as an opportunity to meet new people and share your interests in mathematics and teaching. You may not get a job offer, or you may turn down a job offer that they make. Regardless, you have hopefully made some contacts and had a positive experience. After the interview you should send a thank you email letting them know that you are still interested in the position.

5 Job Offers

You have received a job offer, so what comes next? All of my job offers came through phone conversations with the chair of the department or a dean. They called me to let me know that they were going to be making me an offer. They told me the amount of the offer, and asked how long I would need to make a decision. No one should press you on the phone to let them know right away. It seems like 7 to 10 days is a reasonable amount of time to decide. But if you need longer, make sure to ask for it. Also, if as the deadline approaches you feel that you need more time, ask them for an extension.

As my advisor told me, you will never be in a better position to negotiate the terms of your employment than you are now. So what types of things can you negotiate? You can negotiate salary, moving expenses, computers, travel support, project NExT support, a startup package, spousal employment, etc. The key is to decide what is most important to you, or what you need the most, and to go after it.

After receiving the offer, I called the other schools I had visited to find out where I stood in their job search. I let them know that I had an offer, was still very interested in their position and would like to know where I stood in their search. The schools I contacted let me know where they were in their job search process and when they could let me know if they were going to make an offer. Within a couple of days, I received two more offers.

It is very common to receive a job offer and still have other interviews scheduled. This can put you into a hard position, or depending when the interview is, build up your confidence going into it. I would like to mention two things concerning the former situation. Even if you know that you are going to accept an offer, you should not cancel any interviews, or close any doors, until you have a contract in hand. Secondly, if you have purchased an airplane ticket to visit

a school, they will not reimburse you unless you visit ¹. You may be faced with some hard decisions.

5.1 Multiple Offers

You have received multiple offers, so what comes next? All along, my goal was to get *a* job, now I had choices. It turns out that having choices can be a very difficult thing. In the end I had four offers to consider, at four colleges that I was very interested in. I recommend that you make pro and con lists for each school, talk extensively with other people to get their opinions, especially your advisor. If your married, make sure that your spouse plays a significant role in the decision making process. As far as negotiating, if you have multiple offers this puts you in a powerful position.

5.2 Turning down an Offer

If you have received multiple job offers it is inevitable that you will have to turn down an offer. I recommend doing so in a polite email, letting them know that you appreciate the offer and were very impressed with the school. Below is a sample of a letter that I used.

Dear SOandSO,

Thank you for the time and effort you spent considering me for the open position in mathematics. I am grateful for your offer of employment.

While visiting, I met great people that were passionate about being at SOandSO. Overall I was very impressed with the school and faculty. Because I was so impressed with SOandSO, I had a difficult decision to make. After much thought and careful deliberation, I have decided to go in a different direction.

I wish you luck with the rest of your search and I hope our paths will cross again in the future.

Thank you again for your time and consideration.

6 Reflections on the Job Search

Overall, I thought that the job search was an overwhelming process. It started in August of 2007 and I didn't accept a position until February 13th, 2008. However, with the proper preparation and organization the process will go very smoothly. I am convinced, that if a graduate student from the University of

¹What if you have received a contract? Should you still visit the campus so that you will get reimbursed? This is a tough ethical question. Think of it this way, if you do visit, you are hurting other peoples chances of getting the position as well as the schools chance of filling the position. Sometimes its hard to do the right thing.

Kentucky starts thinking about a few things ahead of time, their job search will be extremely successful. Teach as many classes as you can, participate in math Excel or Algebra cubed and get involved with service type of activities. I hope that my experiences and insights will aid you in your job search. Good luck!

References

- [1] AMS employment articles web site <http://www.ams.org/employment/job-articles.html>.
- [2] John S. Caughman, Heather A. Lewis *Tips for the Job Search: Applying for Academic and Postdoctoral Positions*, Notices of the AMS, October 2006, Volume 53, Number 9, 1021-1026.
- [3] Annalisa Crannell *Applying for Jobs: Advice from the Front (and the Rear)* <http://www.ams.org/employment/eims-crannell-oct04.pdf>.
- [4] Hil Grizzard, *A Longtime Math Grad Student's Job Search Experience*, <http://www.math.uic.edu/grizzard/Personal/jobsearch.html>
- [5] Hellen G. Grundman *Writing a Teaching Philosophy Statement*, Notices of the AMS, December 2006, Volume 53, Number 11, 1329-1333.
- [6] Thomas Hull, Michael A. Jones, Diana M. Thomas, *Interviewing for a Job in Academia* Notices of the AMS, November 1998, Volume 45, Number 10, 1353-1357.
- [7] Steven G. Krantz, *How to Teach Mathematics*, second edition, AMS, 1999
- [8] Project NExT Homepage, <http://archives.math.utk.edu/projnext/>
- [9] Thomas W. Rishell, *The Academic Job Search in Mathematics*, AMS, 2003, <http://www.ams.org/employment/academic-job-search.html>.
- [10] Thomas W. Rishell, *Teaching First: A Guide for New Mathematicians*, Mathematical Association of America, MAA Notes Series, Volume 54, 2000
- [11] The Young Mathematicians' Network, <http://concerns.youngmath.net>.