RESEARCH STATEMENTS

Sohini Sengupta, Research Coordinator, Center for Faculty Excellence
Tuesday, February 28, 2012

RESEARCH STATEMENT

Research statement is often a critical part of your job application packet. Throughout a career in academia, you will need to prepare similar documents for annual reviews, reappointment and tenure packages, and for promotion. Thus, the time you commit to crafting a thoughtful and provocative statement of your research interests is an investment in your academic career.
Research Statement

Purpose

• Communicates the research trajectory of the applicant
• Clearly presents your scholarship in non-specialist terms
• Places your research in a broader context, scientifically and societally
• Lays out a clear road-map for future accomplishments within the institution to which you’re applying

Answers Three Basic Questions

• What is your research, to date?
  – What are your major accomplishments?
  – What techniques do you use?
  – How have you contributed to your field?
• Why is your research important?
  – Why should both other specialists and non-specialists care about your work?
• Where is your research going in the future?
  – What are the next steps, and how will you carry them out in your new job?
Research Statement

Basic Structure

- Introductory paragraph
  - Describe the research topics of interest
  - Describe your research philosophy
- Previous and Current Research
  - Link the research topics of interest to any previous and current research projects you are undertaking
  - Highlight what may be significant and innovative (if applicable)
  - Have sub-sections for each project
- Future Research
  - Describe your research agenda after you finish your current project(s)
  - May tie your future research interests with the department's/university's research endeavors and/or resources

Research Statement

Tailor to the Position

- Write a statement that proposes a plan of research compatible with the opportunities available at the target school
  - Understand the environment of the university (e.g., research/teaching expectations, facilities, institutional support)
- May need several versions of your research statement if applying to several different types of job opportunities
Research Statement

Tailor to the Position

• Top-tier research universities
  – Emphasize your unique and critical research expertise
  – Describe any grant-related experience: writing, your role on a grant, awarded grants (including which ones)
  – Any manuscripts in preparation, submitted, and published, and role on these manuscripts

• Smaller universities/liberal arts colleges
  – Will expect more of a balance between teaching and research
  – Depending on department, whether you involve/can involve students in your research

Research Statement

Tips to Consider

• Use headings (and subheadings), bullets, and white space for organizing the statement
  – Avoid page-long paragraphs
• Should be no more than 5 pages
  – Ask department if it has page limit requirements
• Proofread and ask someone you trust to look over your research statement before submitting
• Ask your faculty advisors or recent junior faculty hires in your current department if you can see their successful research statements
• Do not wait until the last minute to write your research statement
Research Statement

Practice Writing Core Ideas

• What is your central, overarching research goal? Or, what are new areas of investigation your research will open up?
• What specific analytical techniques do you employ? List one.
• What is the most interesting (or the most socially relevant) application of your work?
• What is one research question or direction raised by your present work that you would like to address in the future?
• What is the overall impact of your research program (current and future work)?