

## **What's It Like to Work at a Liberal Arts College?**

January 24, 2014

11:00 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

*Rackham Assembly Hall*

### Agenda

#### **Overview of the program and resources available**

Dr. Laura Schram, Assistant Director, CRLT

#### **Panel presentation**

Moderated by Prof. Sara Blair, Associate Dean, Rackham Graduate School & Professor, Department of English Language and Literature

Prof. Daniel Birchok, Visiting Assistant Professor of Religion, Oberlin College

Prof. Vanessa McCaffrey, Associate Professor of Chemistry, Albion College

Prof. Andrew Mozina, Professor of English, Kalamazoo College

Prof. Annemarie Sammartino, Associate Professor of History, Oberlin College

#### **Q&A**

**FOR ADDITIONAL RESOURCES ON FACULTY AND POSTDOC JOB  
SEARCHES, PLEASE SEE:**

**[http://www.crlt.umich.edu/programs/wil\\_lac](http://www.crlt.umich.edu/programs/wil_lac)**

## Online Resources about Liberal Arts Colleges and Job Searches

### Association of American Colleges & Universities (AAC&U)

<http://www.aacu.org/>

AAC&U is a national association committed to advancing liberal education. The Liberal Education and America's Promise section (<http://www.aacu.org/leap/vision.cfm>) is especially helpful for its look at "essential learning outcomes" of a liberal arts education.

### Great Lakes Colleges Association (GLCA)

<http://www.glca.org/>

GLCA is a consortium of colleges in Indiana, Ohio, Pennsylvania and Michigan. The webpage contains links to local liberal arts colleges' webpages and resources on the liberal arts.

**Harward, D. (2007). Engaged learning and the core purposes of liberal education. *Liberal Education*, 93(1): 6-15.**

**Lang, J.M. (2008, May 12). Facing the truth: So you want to apply to teaching-oriented colleges but don't have any classroom experience? *Chronicle of Higher Education***

Available: <http://chronicle.com/article/Facing-the-Truth/45814/>

**Schurman, S. (1995). Small is...different. In A.L. DeNeef & C.D. Goodwin (Eds). *The academic's handbook (2nd ed)* (pp. 17-28). Durham, NC: Duke University Press.**

**Vick, J.M., & Furlong, J.S. (2007, Dec. 12). Applying for a postdoctoral fellowship. *Chronicle of Higher Education*.**

Available: <http://chronicle.com/article/Applying-for-a-Postdoctoral/46620/>

### U-M Intercampus Mentorship Program

<http://www.crlt.umich.edu/imp/overview>

This program offers U-M grad students and postdocs funding to meet faculty at nearby colleges and universities, work together on teaching or research, and learn about students and campus life at places other than U-M.

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# THE ACADEMIC'S HANDBOOK

*Edited by A. Leigh DeNeef  
and Craufurd D. Goodwin*

**Second Edition**

DUKE UNIVERSITY PRESS  
*Durham and London 1995*

(it should not be ignored) steady and valuable service to your department, your college, your university, and your profession. Standing and waiting, *pace* Milton, is never enough.

One last note, the bottom-line question: Suppose I grant you all of the above, you will say, how can *I* know the good place from the bad; the collegial department from the snake pit; the benevolent chairman from the used-car salesman (or worse); the attractive sectarian school from the straight-jacketed one; the tolerable Podunk from the morass of less tolerable, even impossible ones; the odds of my teaching squarely in my field early in my career at *any* of these schools; when to say “No, I’d rather not” or “Yes, I’d be delighted”; when to leave one place and try another; when to *ask* to teach something (and when to decline); how to become indispensable; how to get promoted; how to get tenure; whether to fraternize with the students or not; whether to invite the dean to dinner; how (exactly) even to survive in these places of many wheels, “wheel within wheel with cogs tyrannic [or even with cogs not tyrannic], moving by [at least seeming] compulsion”?

My answer to all these questions smacks of the placebo, the predictable response of the jaded and grizzled veteran of foreign wars. But I’ll give it to you anyway: *ASK!* Ask everyone you know, teachers, fellow students, friends, acquaintances, chairpersons, deans, faculty advisers, and so on—at your school and elsewhere. Check your graduate school bulletin’s faculty roster for the name of the university from which your teachers received their doctorates—and ask the ones who studied where you might like to go. If you have a friend who has a friend who taught at the place you’ve an eye on, call up the friend of your friend and ask him or her. The academic grapevine is a wonderful instrument, remarkably fine-tuned even given its distortions. You may not find a new Jerusalem in your first job, but after all, we all know what was not built in a day. Despite the melancholy lines with which I began this essay, Blake also said, “Blessed are those who are found studious of Literature & Humane & polite accomplishments”—and he looked forward to that time he steadily envisioned as the “reign of Sweet Science.” Even if one’s early or middle journey through the academic landscape seems less steadily blessed than one would like—possibly less than one passionately believes one has deserved—one must sustain that vision, or else surrender to the grinding of those wheels and a tacit commitment to a perfunctory career. “The true American University,” David Starr Jordan (a distinguished past president of Stanford) once said, “lies in the future.” It still does. Nothing endures, after all, but change.

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## 2

### Small Is . . . Different Samuel Schuman

Many of the academics for whom this *Handbook* will prove useful will find themselves, by accident or by design, working in a smaller college or university. For some, this will represent a return to an ambience familiar from undergraduate days; for others, it will be an entirely new institutional context. For all, it will be a startling shift from the doctoral-level research university. One effective approach to such a new setting is that of the field-based anthropologist: think of the small college as a self-contained culture, explicable primarily through its own rules. The wise field-worker tries to suspend customs and patterns of her own cultural context and seeks the underlying mechanisms of the society under investigation unhampered by prejudgments. In other words, consider yourself a Margaret Mead in the guise of an assistant professor, your new collegiate home an exotic isle with unique patterns of economics, reward, labor, and even kinship.

What follows, then, is less a taxonomy than a laboratory manual or field guide. While lacking the specificity of a Peterson’s bird guide (“Look, over there, it’s a southern, co-ed, Quaker-affiliated moderately selective private liberal arts college!”), it may, at least, help the neophyte investigator distinguish fin from feather, or, to beat the anthropological metaphor into the dust, matriarchal agricultural society from patrilineal industrialism.

### I

Small colleges and universities are “different.” They are different, as a class, from large universities, and they are different from each other. Much of this essay will focus upon the first of these sets of differences, trying to make useful generalizations that embrace at least most smaller institutions. But it is vital to remember that small institutions may well resemble each other even less than they resemble their larger kin.

This idiosyncrasy is, in fact, one of the chief characteristics of smaller colleges. There is a sense in which the very “comprehensiveness” of larger institutions guarantees a certain uniformity: one such school is quite likely to comprehend pretty much the same as another. Although important (and endearing) individual traits certainly distinguish even our megauniversities, small colleges tend to be far more distinctive, even quirky. Because they are *not* even remotely comprehensive, their strengths and weaknesses—indeed, their inclusions and exclusions—are definitive and essential. What languages are taught? Which sciences? How are humanities departments organized?

A concrete example: even in faculties of roughly the same size, departmental proportions and instructional personnel may vary dramatically. This can be quite important to an incoming faculty member. Thus, a new anthropologist at one small university may be joining a five-person anthropology department; at another she may find herself the sole practitioner of her discipline in a three-person sociology/anthropology department; at a few institutions, such an anthropologist might be the only person in anthropology *and* sociology in a six-person department of social science. The implications for teaching and advising loads of these different possibilities are obvious and crucial. My point is not the superiority of any of these models, but the rather stark importance of ascertaining *which* one is joining before, rather than after, the fact.

Small institutions are more idiosyncratic, too, because they are usually further from the academic mainstream than major universities. Isolated societies tend to develop and evolve in highly individualized directions. Many faculty members at small colleges rather enjoy being somewhat removed from the intellectual fads (or, depending upon one’s perspective, the latest developments) that tend to sweep through the disciplines, and they delight equally in what often appears to be a refreshing absence of careerism. Others, though, chafe at what is undeniably sometimes our parochialism, and worry about losing touch with mainstream academe. Happily, a good number strike a reasonable and productive middle course: staying in touch with scholarly trends but not feeling compelled to be constantly *au courant*.

One key way in which liberal arts colleges are often quite different from each other has to do with the extent to which they actually practice the “liberal arts,” at least in an old-fashioned, curricular sense. Small colleges and universities, private and public, have been subject to severe strains during the past two decades, and often their nature has changed in response. Some would say that missions have evolved; other, more cynical voices, proclaim defection. The former president of a fine private liberal arts college, David W. Breneman of Kalamazoo College, finds that the number of institutions truly belonging in that category has shrunk dramatically in recent years. He disqualifies

institutions in which the majority of undergraduate degrees are awarded in vocational areas. This is a standard that some (including me) may criticize, but the point remains that at many liberal arts colleges, the traditional subject matter disciplines have been overwhelmed or at least seriously challenged by career-oriented fields such as management, accounting, computer science, environmental studies, sports medicine, atmospheric science, administration of justice, music recording technology, and so on. (All these are areas in which it would be possible for students to major at one or both of the last two institutions where I have worked, both, in my opinion, genuine liberal arts colleges.) In practical terms, young faculty members must either guard against “purist” definitions of liberal education or confine their job search to a rather small proportion of smaller institutions.

An important lesson: never assume one small college is like another. It can be dangerously misleading to presume that an idyllic memory of undergraduate days on a small campus is a reliable template for the entire spectrum of institutions of, say, five hundred to three thousand students.

## II

Small colleges tend to have small departments, and this is a fact of important consequence. A professor in, say, a history department of four, or an economics faculty of three, or, for that matter, a music or classics program with a staff of one (I worked at a good liberal arts college that did, in fact, have single-person departments, complete with full-fledged departmental majors, in these two areas) will face a different kind of teaching load than does the member of a department of twenty-five, fifty or one hundred. Most teachers at small colleges teach “out of their field,” if by “field” we mean the subject specialty in which doctoral research was done. An English professor with a dissertation on non-Shakespearean renaissance drama will probably teach Chaucer, freshman composition, Humanities I, and British literature survey; an ichthyologist will face classes in introductory biology; an Islamist might teach courses with titles like “Religion in America” or “The Old Testament” or “Varieties of World Religions.” Those of us who love small colleges delight in this demand for generalists. It keeps us alert and learning. But it also tends to mean that we find it easy to drift away from staying current in non-Shakespearean renaissance English drama, ichthyology, and Islam.

It is also the case that in many smaller institutions, faculty members will teach so far out of the field that they are, in fact, out of the entire ballpark. If the institution has a large core or interdisciplinary program, our hypothetical Ph.D. in Jacobean tragicomedy will find himself instructing a course in “Inter-

disciplinary Studies 101" or "Christianity and Culture" or "Humanities I: Classical Antiquity." Many thrive on such opportunities to integrate and stretch; many others find the experience disorienting and distracting, at least at first.

Another obvious implication of small departments at small colleges is the dearth of colleagues in a faculty member's specialty area. The ichthyologist or Islamist will find herself or himself the *only* scholar with such an interest on campus. So, for example, it is usually impossible to find a colleague on a small college campus who can give a careful and professional reading to a draft of an article or paper. It is easy to solicit the response of interested amateurs, or a critique of the style, but the subject matter will usually be foreign to departmental peers. Graduate students are often habituated to deep and intense discussion of the latest research or theoretical development within their subdiscipline. On the small college campus the absence of such interactions may be lamented.

At most small colleges, the normal teaching load is six to eight classes per year, three or four per semester. Usually, these loads are *not* reduced for unusual research assignments, or other burdens, although sometimes course relief is a possibility. In a given semester, two or three of the courses taught will have different preparations—for the neophyte faculty member, this may mean three or so new preparations a term for a while. A bizarre but instructive anecdote: at one point early in my teaching career a sudden illness of one departmental colleague and a failure in the hiring process designed to add another to the college roster resulted in my teaching *six* different courses, each with a separate preparation, in the same semester.

Concatenating the size and the shape of a typical faculty load at a small college, we have a pattern that might manifest itself thus. A member of the biology department, with a Ph.D. in freshwater ichthyology, might teach a year-long introductory course ("Biology 101"), with lab, surveying both botany and zoology. First semester, that instructor would perhaps also have a midlevel course such as "Principles of Animal Biology" and an advanced section in, say, "Animal Physiology." Second term would see the second semester ("Biology 102") of the introductory course, another more advanced offering, say, "Aquatic Ecosystems" and potentially an interdisciplinary contribution, for example, "The Sea in Science and Art." This hypothetical situation is by no means extreme. Add to such a schedule the potential for a dozen major or first-year advisees (or both), service on a collegewide committee or two, work on a departmental curriculum review, weekly department meetings, monthly faculty meetings, and, say, nomination to an ad hoc committee preparing for regional reaccreditation. This is a workload designed to combat boredom; it is not one likely to facilitate finishing that first scholarly book, a research project, or an article derived from a dissertation!

Most small college teachers are in their campus offices most of the day

throughout the workweek. Many do not even have a functional office elsewhere. Evenings and weekends on campus are not uncommon (the political science awards dinner; a reception for parents on the Saturday afternoon of Family Weekend). The research university model of a division of time between campus office, classroom, private study, and research library or site, tends to break down at the smaller institution, with the first two becoming dominant, even all-consuming.

### III

Small academic departments also shape the social and general intellectual lives of academics in small colleges. The young academic in a research department of seventy-five, with its own building, parking lot, coffee and mail dispensaries, and the like, will find herself fraternizing mostly with departmental colleagues. In some situations, only the occasional university committee assignment or an accident of residential neighborhood proximity will bring together institutional faculty from different departments or divisions. It may well be possible, at an Ohio State University or University of Minnesota, for a French teacher to spend an entire career without the opportunity to interact with professors of geology or economics. This is far less likely, indeed, often downright impossible, at a small college. Most institutions with fewer than one hundred faculty members, for example, have democratic as opposed to republican faculty governance procedures: the monthly or weekly faculty meeting is a meeting of the entire college faculty. Four or five departments, sometimes with no apparent organizing rhyme or reason, will be housed in the same building; a central campus coffee shop will serve as meeting place for the entire community; and so on. At my current institution, one building houses the art department, the leadership programs office, the management and accounting department, an outreach program for senior citizens, and the university development office. At many small schools, faculty members make their deepest friendships—and sometimes their most interesting and gratifying intellectual relationships as well—across departmental or divisional barriers. Indeed, those barriers are usually quite permeable membranes.

Often, the sorts of interdisciplinary or core programs cited earlier will greatly facilitate such diverse patterns of personal and professional association. Many such courses are deliberately staffed and planned by faculty members drawn from the widest possible departmental constituencies, and at some institutions virtually the entire faculty is, over time, drawn into these curricular ventures.

A good tip-off regarding this dimension of institutional culture for the prospective faculty member is to heed carefully the staffing of the search process.

If interviewing for a position in political science involves extended discussion with chemists, economists, theater historians, and professors of sports medicine, it is a pretty good sign that the potential employing institution values and expects frequent and deep extradepartmental contacts.

#### IV

It is always important for new employees, within and beyond academe, to ascertain with accuracy the standards and procedures by which they will be evaluated. Those standards and procedures will be quite different among small colleges, and there will probably be pronounced generic differences between small and large institutions. Almost all higher education enterprises affirm that excellence of classroom teaching is an important criterion for reappointment, promotion, and tenure. Some actually mean it. There are still many small colleges in America today where, practically, pedagogical quality is the sole basis for major career decisions. In the majority of such institutions it is the most important factor or at least *a* most important factor. This means that classroom teaching should and may be evaluated with thoroughness and rigor: student course evaluations will be heeded; classroom visitations by deans or chairpersons will be regular and more than perfunctory.

Note whether actual teaching, to actual students, is an important element of the hiring process: if it is, chances are it will also be a significant element in the review process as well.

This does not, of course, mean that research, publication, community service, and other factors will be excluded from evaluative decisions. It is, therefore, very important for the faculty member at an early point on the career path to come to a clear understanding regarding the relative weighting of these criteria in the decision-making process, and the means by which effectiveness—as a teacher, scholar, community citizen—will be assessed. This understanding may not be easily reached. In many institutions, official pronouncements in this area may not always conform exactly to actual practice. At small, informal, nonunion campuses, the regulatory-descriptive faculty handbook is notoriously uneven; some are accurate, others flamboyantly unreliable. The wise newcomer will seek to discuss the evaluation and review process with a few trusted colleagues who have themselves relatively recently been through it, as well as with those who will administer it. Find out what seems to have made an actual difference, for good or for ill, and be prepared to find that, more often than not, teaching makes the biggest difference of all.

Tangentially related to evaluation are salary and compensation issues. Expect the salary scale at most smaller private institutions to be demonstrably lower than at larger or public institutions of roughly comparable status. While

many small colleges and universities have generous benefits packages that supplement base salary, they are sometimes not as comprehensive as state-mandated programs in the public sector. Expect, too, that salaries will be formally private, but in fact virtually public knowledge, and the subject of much semi-informed discussion within the campus community. It is rare for a private institution to publish faculty salaries, but it is even rarer for it to be difficult to get a pretty good idea of individual compensation levels. In sum, you probably won't be paid much, your benefits status will probably be decent but not spectacular, and most everyone with whom you come in contact will know it.

It is usually less expensive to live in a small college town than a major university center, and the events—athletic, cultural, intellectual—of the institution are often free to faculty members.

#### V

There is a pronounced difference between the kinds of relationships that develop between teachers and undergraduate students at large and small institutions. At the larger schools, a faculty member may possibly develop a close, mentoring relationship with a handful of strong undergraduate departmental majors. Usually, though, the closer relationships will be with graduate students. In a small college, it is not uncommon for a teacher to teach the same student in courses throughout the undergraduate career, from first semester to graduation. Some such students will not necessarily be majors: it might be quite possible, for example, for an accounting major to take two or three theater courses and act in a handful of plays, under the tutelage of one drama professor. Many relationships, with students of quite varied scholarly bents, will develop at the small college. And, often faculty members are deeply involved in student organizations and cocurricular activities. One of the joys of teaching at such schools is the frequent, recurring opportunity to watch undergraduates grow in intellectual and emotional depth during a period of some four years. There is a kind of maternalism about this relationship that some find cloying, but most see as deeply satisfying.

Some of its consequences can be amusing, some touching, and some downright irritating. There are institutions, for example, where it is considered quite acceptable behavior for students to call professors at any hour of the night and day to discuss out-of-class personal problems, where the pastoral model of the student-teacher relationship is still held by a majority of the faculty, students, and staff. It is also the case that at many institutions the progress and foibles of shared students is a prime topic for faculty conversation. For good or for ill, the passage of higher education privacy legislation has seemed to have little effect upon professorial conversations around the backyard barbecue cooker.

## VI

Faculty at large institutions and at small have always played an important role in the governance of institutions of higher education. At small institutions, that role is likely to be sharply different than at larger ones.

A majority of the major institutional governance tasks remain the same, regardless of the size of the school: all colleges and universities need a curriculum committee of some sort, a personnel review process, a faculty athletic committee, a library committee, an admissions committee, an academic standards committee, or some general equivalent to these and similar groups. At small colleges, thus, roughly the same number of tasks is distributed among a much smaller pool of workers. Although the volume of work is perhaps proportional to the size of the college, the breadth remains more or less constant. Therefore, the faculty member at a small college may find herself serving on committees, study groups, task forces, fact-finding bodies, search committees, and similar institutional extraclassroom organizations in bewildering (and sometimes intimidating) number and range. In one sense, this sort of community service often gives to the faculty of small colleges a demonstrable role in directing the destiny of the institution that can be gratifying and educational. On the other hand, such assignments, often contributing little directly to either teaching or scholarship, can be distracting and frustrating. Every small college vows periodically to revamp its committee structure so as to eliminate this problem. The record of permanent solutions is remarkably slim.

## VII

Many of the founding fathers (and they *were* virtually all "fathers") of small colleges sought locations for their institutions that safely removed impressionable young students from the temptations of city life. (Anecdotal evidence suggests they found plenty of quite satisfactory temptations in rural venues.) There are consequences of this questionable choice that may face the new faculty member at such schools.

First, at some smaller, isolated colleges it may be necessary—and it is occasionally still *required*—that faculty live in the small town that houses their employing institution. The informality and potential closeness of such arrangements is inviting, often especially so for young families. It is not, however, without compensatory difficulties. If the college has antinepotism policies, it can be exceptionally difficult for a spouse to find satisfying employment. Also, these communities are often rather homogeneous, especially compared to major cities and large university towns. They do not tend to be culturally stimulating. If a steady diet of major dramatic and symphonic performances

and first-class art exhibits is a necessity, life in Mt. Vernon, Iowa, or Gambier, Ohio, or Collegeville, Minnesota, may seem inadequate. Often the cultural opportunities of a small college community are those provided by the college itself, plus perhaps a single movie theater. Be prepared, too, for discussions of house painting and plumbing projects, kids' swim teams, and the scandal at the local church more often than analyses of the ballet performance last evening. The prevailing cultural and political climate in such towns, at least outside the immediate college community (and sometimes within it, as well) is likely to be more conservative than in major university cities.

It is worth remembering that a *good* small college library may have 300,000 volumes. If that college is located many miles from the nearest city or university, access to significant library resources (or supercomputer terminal or specialized laboratory facilities) can be exceedingly difficult. Careful planning and time allocation may be necessary just to accommodate an occasional commute. Many librarians at smaller institutions are exceptionally helpful with programs such as interlibrary loan, but the graduate student who is accustomed to popping into a library of 3.5 million volumes to check an obscure citation will be easily frustrated in Deep Springs, California, or St. Leo, Florida.

Whereas the cultural connotations of working at a small school in relative geographical isolation are fairly obvious, the implications for personal social life are a bit less clear. At some such schools, a young, single instructor, or one with an unconventional lifestyle, may be uncomfortable. A faculty of, say, ninety members may have three or five members under the age of thirty, and another half-dozen or so between thirty and thirty-five. There may not be many other individuals in this age group in town. A very young faculty member may feel more social affinity to mature undergraduates than to the majority of middle-aged colleagues. But often there will be strict codes or conventions governing social relations between students and teachers that will discourage or forbid contacts more intimate than an informal afternoon softball game.

Some careful observers have noted, as well, an interesting but sometimes disconcerting phenomenon regarding small college community mores: the pairing of political liberalism and social conservatism. There are those of us still around (albeit, tottering) who can recall settings in which it was acceptable to proclaim one's self a socialist or an anarchist (at least in theory), but still necessary to hide wine bottles in layers of newsprint buried in the weekly garbage set out for collection!

At many more-urban liberal arts schools, and for many individuals, these constraints are inconsequential, but for a few they are real and occasionally devastating. Well-rounded lives extend beyond the classroom and faculty office. Prospective faculty members are wise to ascertain if the extramural conditions of potential employers are a reasonable match with personal needs.



## VIII

Sometimes those entering the professoriat ask if it is wise to accept a position at a liberal arts college or a small university, "on the way to" a more desired job at a research institution. This is a difficult query to handle. On the one hand, any academic employment is probably preferable to none at all, at least over an extended period of time. A five-year employment hiatus in a résumé will probably be a red flag in any hiring process. Also, many young academics come to a smaller institution intending to move on, find themselves captivated by the attractions and challenges of their entry-level post, and stay on indefinitely.

Others, however, for whom a small institution is a clear second choice, are unhappy and consequently do not do very well. Certainly, being denied re-appointment or tenure will not improve the likelihood of career advancement elsewhere.

Of course, there are many instances of young professors coming to small institutions for a few years, building a good reputation as teacher and scholar, and moving on to larger, more research-orientated, schools. There is much variability in the perceived quality of liberal arts colleges, and in the open-mindedness of search committees. Certainly it will be easier in most cases to secure employment at the University of Michigan coming from a job at U.C.-Berkeley than from, say, St. Mary's College of California. On the other hand, the candidate employed at Kalamazoo College may have some advantage based on regional familiarity. The more well known the institution, the more likely favorable reactions from the search committee: a few years at Carleton, Oberlin, or Grinnell are unlikely to hurt a candidate at the state universities of Minnesota, Ohio, or Iowa.

Naturally, it will be important for those seeking to follow this route to make a substantial effort to maintain personal contacts with the "larger world" of professional scholarship, and to keep publishing. Staying in touch with the dissertation adviser is a good idea; attending, even at personal expense if necessary, major professional meetings is probably helpful, especially as a program participant.

A word of caution: although a lack of candor should never be encouraged, it is important to be carefully diplomatic about career plans that call for moving to a research setting. Surprisingly often, I have found, beginning college teachers assume that everyone in a liberal arts college faculty would prefer to be at a major university, and are either working diligently to make such a transition or have become resigned to second-rate status. (For example, "Coming out of Iowa you're not going to get a job at a research university," says [a new Ph.D.], who will happily take a job at [a small college in the Northwest] this fall. "You realize *you're going to have to work your way toward those positions*"

[*Chronicle of Higher Education*, 27 July 1994, p. A16].) Partially, no doubt, as a defense mechanism, but partially also for more genuine reasons, most of us who work in smaller institutions do so, not because we have to, but because we choose to. Indeed, we are not infrequently supercilious and parochial in our proclamations of the superiority of the type of education we profess in comparison with the research universities.

In sum, it is not unrealistic to envision early career years in a small college setting as a preface to appointment at a research university; it is important for those seeking such a path to build a scholarly résumé that will be impressive to recruiters in coming years; it is not wise to make very public proclamations of such intentions.

## IX

Institutions that place a premium on classroom teaching, that deemphasize research productivity, that are far removed (physically, psychologically, or both) from major university centers, and that expect a quick and heavy load of on-campus and off-campus community service labor can be difficult places to work while simultaneously completing a doctoral dissertation. The ABD young academic will need to attempt a realistic and hard-boiled assessment for thesis completion very early along the career path. It is not enough to guarantee access to supercomputer time or major library collections—although these are important guarantees, indeed. Equally important, and harder to weigh, are time and institutional willingness and understanding of the project. What are the expectations of the college regarding summer work? Are there substantial vacations (fall and spring breaks, midwinter holidays, and so on) during which real progress can be made? Will the department or institution view with favor requests for minimal committee assignments for a few terms while the dissertation is completed? These are probably questions that should be asked before the hiring process is complete, rather than after appointment has begun.

This difficulty can be curiously complicated by conflicting institutional expectations. It is not unprecedented for a college to insist upon the completion of the terminal degree before, say, a review in the second or third year of employment . . . and simultaneously to make such completion quite difficult for a very, very busy instructor. Here, as elsewhere, it is sensible to seek the advice of more than one knowledgeable colleague.

## X

I have tried to sketch some of the features of academic careers in small colleges with accuracy. I hope the picture that emerges is neither romantically

rosy nor forbiddingly bleak. For many of us who choose this version of an academic career, it is the quintessence of the collegiate experience: teaching and learning over a broad area, in intense and close intellectual relationships with diverse students and colleagues. If such a culture calls you, you are invited to doff the objectivity of the observing anthropologist and embrace our customs, conventions, and costumes. Small college teaching has never been a more difficult, a more rewarding, or a more important vocation.

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 3

**The Morality  
of Teaching**
**Stanley M. Hauerwas**

Some time ago I was asked to write an essay on ministerial ethics that, I think, would strike many as a bit unusual. If you cannot trust ministers, who can you trust? That we have to think about the kind of ethic that ought to characterize ministers seems to support those who claim we live in a morally confused, if not corrupt, age.

No less odd, I think, is to be asked to write an essay to help “enculturate” those planning to become university teachers. After all, those who become professors have been around universities for years, and you would think there is nothing they do not know. Just as city kids become streetwise, graduate students become “university wise” — it is a survival strategy. Being asked to write a manual on how to be an academic, therefore, seems analogous to being asked to write a sex manual. What has happened that we now do not seem to know how to do what everyone thought was a matter of nature or a fairly simple learning procedure?

It is not accidental that these concerns are currently being raised, for it seems we have simply lost some of the skills that in the past have sustained the professions and, in particular, academic work. For example, consider the following incident concerning a book written by Timothy Cooney on moral philosophy. Mr. Cooney, in *Telling Right from Wrong*, asserts that while there is such a thing as morality, it is a highly restricted category. Using the refined skills of contemporary philosophy, Cooney argues that morality applies only to those issues that threaten to destroy society. Everything else is simply a matter of taste, manners, or both.

Mr. Cooney, who is not a professional philosopher, submitted his book to Random House accompanied by a letter from Professor Nozick of Harvard University urging its publication. Jason Epstein, the editorial director of Random House, was not only extremely impressed with the book but also that it was recommended by a philosopher as distinguished and as professionally

# Postdocs at Oberlin and Kalamazoo Colleges

***Interested in teaching at a liberal arts college?*** As part of an exchange funded by the Mellon Foundation, applications are being accepted for four post-doctoral fellowships at Oberlin College or Kalamazoo College.

## The opportunity features:

- One-year appointment to teach and conduct research at a major liberal arts college
- Beginning salary of \$46,500 per year
- Half-time teaching load to free up time for research
- Guidance and mentoring from an Oberlin College or Kalamazoo College faculty member

Students from all fields in the humanities and humanistic social sciences are encouraged to apply. **Applicants must have earned a U-M Ph.D. at some time after June 1, 2012, or expect to do so no later than August 15, 2014.** The positions are designed to support the fellows in developing both their teaching skills and their research programs. Students with a strong commitment to teaching and a genuine interest in pursuing an academic career are encouraged to apply.



To apply, please see:

[http://www.rackham.umich.edu/postdoctoral/university\\_of\\_michigans\\_postdoctoral\\_initiatives/exchange\\_program/](http://www.rackham.umich.edu/postdoctoral/university_of_michigans_postdoctoral_initiatives/exchange_program/)

**For more information, please attend:**

What's It Like To Work at a Liberal Arts College? - January 24, 2014, 11:00-12:30 p.m.  
Rackham Assembly Hall - For details check <http://www.crlt.umich.edu/programs/wil>



**For questions about the program, please contact:**

Associate Dean Sara Blair, [sbblair@umich.edu](mailto:sbblair@umich.edu)

**If you need technical assistance submitting materials, please contact:**

Jessica Rapai, [kruejess@umich.edu](mailto:kruejess@umich.edu)

Applications must be received by

**February 17, 2014**

# Rackham-CRLT Mentorship Program

**The Rackham-CRLT Mentorship Program** connects graduate students and postdoctoral scholars with faculty from nearby universities and liberal arts colleges such as Albion College, EMU, Kalamazoo College, Kettering University, Oakland University, and Oberlin College.

In 1-3 campus visits, you can

- develop valuable networks and experiences that will be useful for your faculty job search
- learn about what it's like to teach at a place other than U-M
- get useful advice about your teaching, research and career plans

*This program pays for expenses incurred during the mentorship, like lunch and travel.*

*"It was interesting to see how a small liberal arts college works. I enjoyed my interaction with my mentor and her students."*

*"In every job interview I did this year, this program caught the attention of the search committee....On a more personal note, the program made me feel much more confident about going into my first year of full-time teaching."*

To get started, please visit the Center for Research on Learning and Teaching's website:  
<http://www.crlt.umich.edu/imp/overview>

Questions?  
Please contact Meg Bakewell  
mbakewel@umich.edu, 734-615-9281



Co-sponsors:



CRLT

RACKHAM GRADUATE SCHOOL  
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

# Preparing Future Faculty

## RACKHAM-CRLT MAY SEMINAR

The Horace H. Rackham School of Graduate Studies and the Center for Research on Learning and Teaching (CRLT) seek applicants for the fifteenth annual Seminar on Preparing Future Faculty. This seminar prepares advanced graduate students who have achieved candidacy for their first faculty jobs by providing information about:

- 1. Preparation for the academic job search**  
(Creation of a teaching philosophy and course syllabus)
- 2. Information about higher education**  
(Institutional types, tenure, and field trips to local college campuses)
- 3. Discussion of effective and reflective teaching**  
(Meetings with faculty, conversations about multicultural teaching and learning, and demonstrations of instructional technology)

The five-week Seminar will begin Tuesday, May 6, and end Thursday, June 5, meeting every Tuesday and Thursday from 8:30 a.m. - 1:30 p.m. Breakfast and lunch will be provided.

For more information on the Seminar, please see <http://www.crlt.umich.edu/programs/pffseminar>

Email: PFFSeminarAPPS@umich.edu or call 615-9263 with any questions.

**Application  
deadline is  
Monday,  
February 24, 2014  
4:00 p.m.**

**Applicants should submit materials online: <http://www.crlt.umich.edu/MayPFF-2014-app>**

- 1. Application form**, which includes contact information, candidacy, teaching experiences, and teaching-related training.
- 2. Cover letter** (limited to 2 single-spaced pages) which answers the following questions:
  - At which type of academic institution would you like to be a faculty member (e.g., research-oriented, teaching-oriented, or a mix) and why?
  - What are your core values regarding teaching? Please provide examples from your own teaching as a GSI and/or learning as a student.
  - How will the Seminar enhance your previous training and experience as a college-level teacher?
  - What else do you hope to gain from the PFF Seminar?
- 3. Current CV**



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