The Academic Interview

Kathryn McKinley
University of Texas at Austin
About me

Love math ➔ Computer Science
Love boys ➔ UG Research Summer
Love research & France ➔ Marry Scotty 1985
Love research & France ➔ Rice PHd 1992
Love research & France ➔ Post Doc, Ecole des Mines
Love research & France ➔ Asst Prof UMass 1993
Love research & France ➔ Tenure 1999

Love boys ➔ Assoc Prof UT Austin 01
Love boys ➔ Cooper 1995
Love boys ➔ Dylan 1998
Love boys ➔ Wyatt 2001
The Academic Interview

- Invitation
- The Talk
- 30 to 60 minute One-on-One
- Meals

- **Goal:** Convince them that you will improve their department.
The Invitation

• Research University
  – Papers in top conferences
  – Great letters
  – Spark

• Teaching College
  – Papers in conferences
  – Teaching experience/evidence

• Factors out of your control
  – Area, slots, etc.
The Talk

• **Goal:**
  – Convince them you are smart and a good teacher
• **General Audience**
• **Clearly state problem & your contributions**
• **Enough details to convince the one expert**
• **Practice, practice, practice**
One-on-One

• **Goal:**
  – Convince them they want to work with you
  – Decide if you want to work with them
• Connect with their research
• Read 2 to 4 of their papers that really interest you
Indirect Questioning

• What’s the best thing about your dept?
• What’s the worst?
• How does the dept make important decisions?
• Who do you collaborate with?
• Where are last year’s PhD graduates working?
• What did you do yesterday?
• What do you like best about your job?
• What do you like least?
Meals

• At most one drink
• Good topics: travel, hobbies, kids
• Bad topics: politics, religion
Miscellaneous Tips

• Take breaks in the restroom
• Stay alert: sleep, exercise, caffeine

• Arranged marriage theory of interviewing: everyone should be able to behave for a day