

Graduate Student Career Development: Strategies and Resiliency

Working Group Discussion



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Our Goals Today

In this session, we will share our experiences related to graduate student career development. We will also discuss effective ways to help students develop self-care and resiliency skills when encountering failure on the job search, particularly the faculty job search.



IMPORTANCE OF THIS TOPIC

Many graduate students encounter difficulty on the job search after graduation, both due to the competitiveness of the faculty job search and, for students applying to non-academic jobs, challenges with translating graduate school experience to other roles.

How can we better prepare grad students for their post-graduation careers?

How can we build up students' self-confidence and resiliency when facing a difficult job market?

There is a Problem

Average Balance on Federal Graduate PLUS Loans



Source: US Department of Education

Average Graduate Student Loan Debt [2023]: for Master's & PhD

Find the average graduate student loan debt, including the average debt by degree and institution type for both PhDs and Master's degrees.

Education Data Initiative

The path to professorship is long, rocky and confusing. Why?

One university I worked at had no promotions criteria; at another they were so vague as to be meaningless

The Guardian / Sep 24, 2018

How Many Ph.D.'s Actually Get to Become College Professors?

The Atlantic

Not that many.

The Atlantic / Feb 23, 2013

Should I become a professor? Success rate 3% !

Many young scientists envision an academic career but only 3-5% of them will become a professor and pursue an academic career.

smartsciencecareer blog / Feb 17

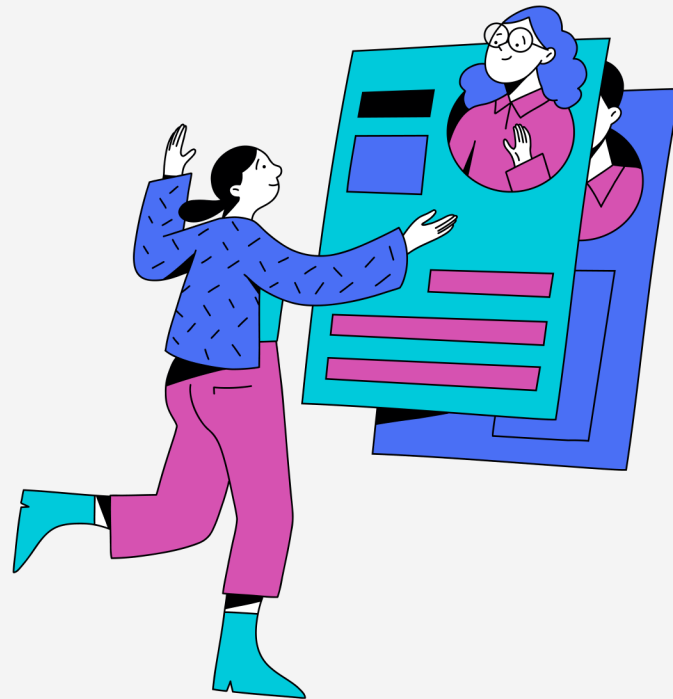
Adjunct faculty face low pay, minimal administrative support, AFT finds

A new American Federation of Teachers survey documents the struggles contingent faculty face, including a lack of healthcare benefits and job security.

Higher Ed Dive / Nov 6, 2023

Comments I've Heard from Grad Students

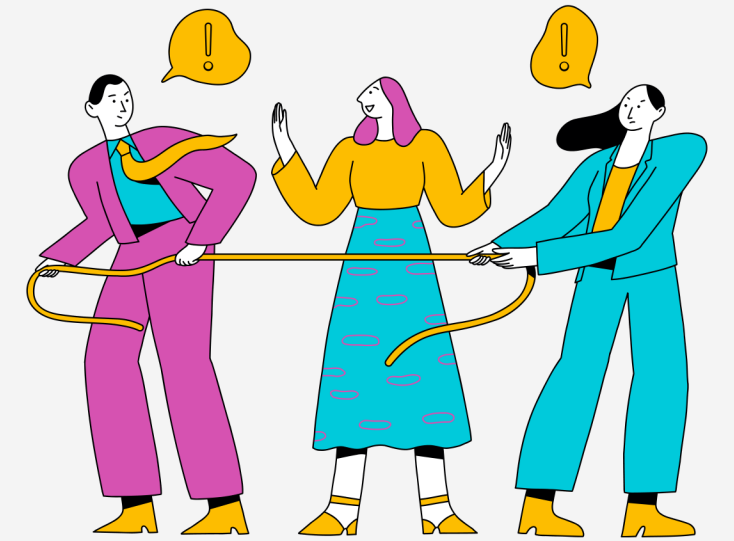
What have you been hearing?



"What's the difference between a resume and a CV?"

"I didn't realize career services had resources for me."

"Everyone else in my cohort is getting jobs, but not me. What am I doing wrong?"



"I want a job outside of academia, but my faculty advisors don't know how the industry job search works."

"No one wants to hire international grad students."

"I don't have any skills that would be relevant outside of higher ed."

My Own Experience

(Ph.D. in English Lit)

Faculty Job Search:

- >50 applications
- 3 interviews
- 1 campus visit
- 1 offer (NTT, very low pay) - Didn't accept

Pivoted to "alt-ac" applications:

- ~10 applications
- 4 interviews
- 1 offer - Accepted

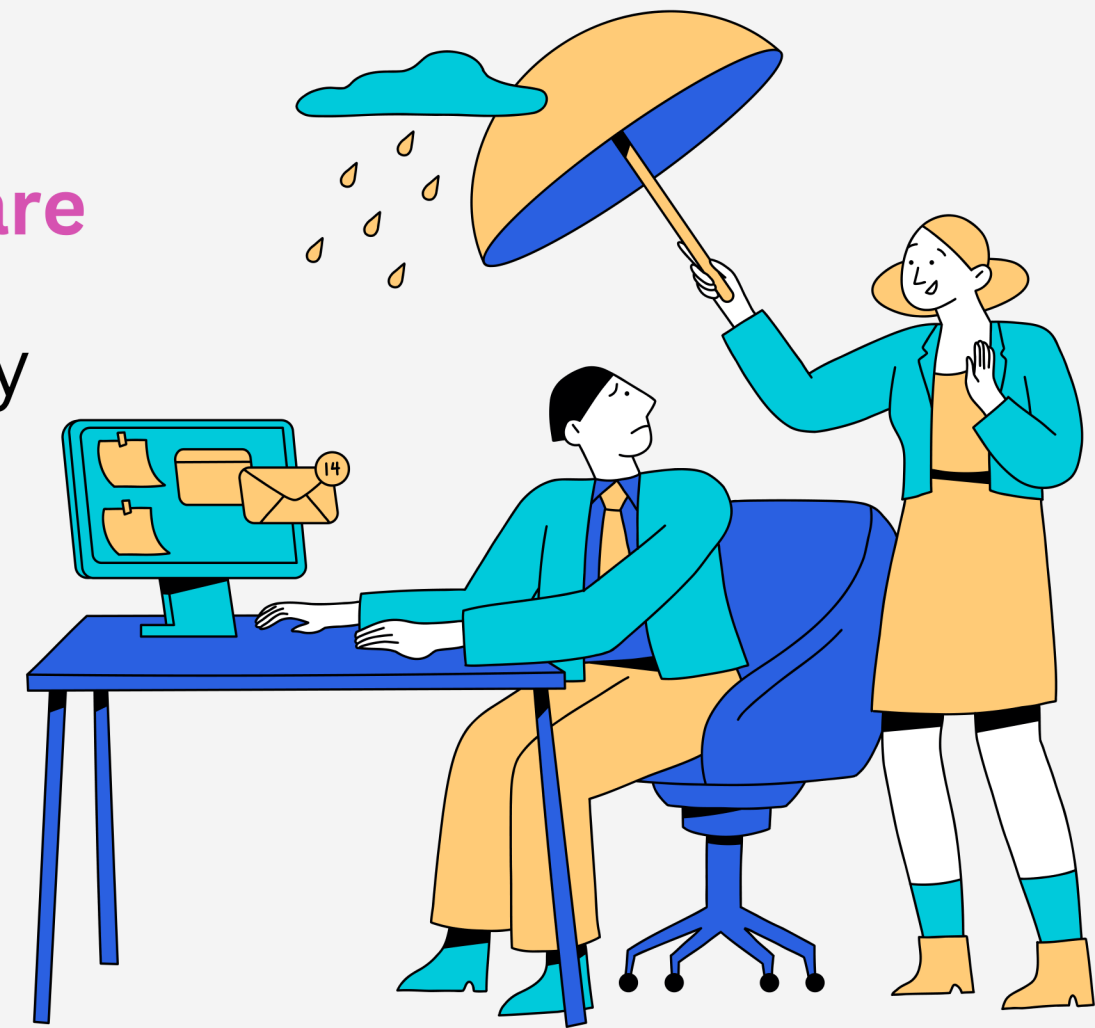


Effects on Mental Health

JDP 2020 Interview Survey: “an overwhelming majority of Americans—93 percent—have experienced **anxiety related to job interviews**” (2020).

Logan E. Gin, et al. (2021): “**Graduate students are more than six times as likely to experience depression** compared with the general population” (2021).

University of Rochester Health Promotion Office: “**graduate students are experiencing significant levels of anxiety and stress**, financial insecurity and loan repayment concerns, difficulty with work-life balance, and **uncertainties about entering the job market.**”



Debunking a Common Myth

Attributes Employers Seek on a Candidate's Resume

Attribute	% of Respondents
Problem-Solving Skills	88.7%
Ability to work in a team	78.9%
Communication Skills (written)	72.7%
Strong work ethic	71.6%
Flexibility/ Adaptability	70.1%
Communication skills (verbal)	67.5%
Technical skills	67.0%
Analytic/ quantitative skills	66.0%
Initiative	65.5%
Detail-oriented	61.3%

"I don't have any skills that would be relevant outside of higher ed."

Actually, graduate students **already have** the skills employers are looking for. These skills are relevant both in and out of higher ed.



National Association of Colleges and Employers

Source: Job Outlook 2024, National Association of Colleges and Employers

Let's Brainstorm

Problem: Faculty mentors aren't all trained to support grad students in the job search, or may not be up-to-date on trends.



Problem: Grad students feel underprepared and anxious about entering the job market.

Problem: There simply aren't enough TT faculty jobs for all the graduating PhD students.

Problem: Students feel discouraged after being passed up for a position or being ghosted by an employer.

Let's all hop on this collaborative document and write down some ideas or observations!

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