

Tips for Successful Recruitment Using the Job Register

The AAS Job Register is widely read within the astronomy community both within the US and internationally and has served many as an effective recruitment tool. It is most effective, however, when combined with best practices and utilized with some knowledge of the context of hiring cycles and conventions in the field. We offer these suggestions for those considering using the Job Register as part of their hiring process.

Using the Job Register

The web pages at <http://jobregister.aas.org> contain detailed guidelines for use of the Job Register as well as general advice for creating your announcement. We strongly suggest that you review and follow these guidelines as you compose your announcement. Your institution may also have guidelines and required wording for job announcements.

Both employers and those seeking employment are best served by an announcement that provides as much information as possible about the position either through the Job Register announcement itself or through supporting web sites or other documentation. It is especially helpful to provide a contact, particularly an email address, for applicants who have questions about the job offering or the status of their application, or want to keep potential employers informed about changes in their status.

- For those advertising faculty positions, provide information on any preferences in research specialties or expertise, list resources (telescopes, computing, etc.) available to the position, specify teaching responsibilities when known (e.g. graduate students or undergraduate only). It is especially helpful for job seekers to know at what level the position is being filled, for example assistant professor only, or if there will be consideration for appointments at more senior (tenured or non-tenured) levels.
- For positions for Permanent/Staff/Non-Faculty, how much time is available for research and what privileges and responsibilities come with the position?
- For postdoctoral positions, provide a list of job duties, including, for example, how much time is available for personal research, what are expectations for start dates, what is the anticipated duration of the position and is it extendable? Is there funding available for conference and observing travel or for relocation costs? Are there expectations for service or opportunities for teaching or educational outreach activities? Applicants also welcome information on health or retirement benefits available, as applicable.
- For research assistants (no PhD required), include a list of duties and responsibilities and specify the job duration and possibility of extension.

Common hiring cycle

Within the US, the typical cycle for hiring depends somewhat on the level of appointment, but is frequently tied to the academic calendar with announcements made in the fall, recruitment over the winter and spring, and appointments beginning the following summer/fall.

- Undergraduate summer and graduate fellowships are most frequently posted in the early fall, with applications due in January/February and notifications of acceptances in March and April.
- Postdoctoral positions are typically posted in August/September with applications due anywhere from October - December, and selection in January/February/March for start dates typically in the coming academic year.
- Faculty positions are typically posted in the fall, with short lists prepared and interviews conducted in the March/April timeframe, for positions that would begin the coming summer/fall.
- Non-academic positions can follow any cycle, but because candidates are often drawn from those positions already on an academic cycle, often conform to the same calendar.

Supporting recruitment activities

The AAS and its member activities offer a number of additional ways to identify candidates for positions and to facilitate the interview process. Among those opportunities are:

- Attending the AAS meetings, particularly the January meeting

Many people who are on the job market attend AAS meetings to give talks or posters and to meet potential employers, particularly the winter AAS meeting. Attending these meetings offers an excellent opportunity to meet, hear the presentations and converse with potential or current job applicants.

- Using the AAS Job Center and Interviewing candidates at the AAS meeting

The AAS hosts a Job Center at each winter AAS meeting as a place for job seekers to learn about positions available and for employers to advertise their positions and to interview candidates. There is no cost to employers or job seekers to participate in the Job Center. If you are planning to conduct interviews or have questions about the Job Center, please contact jobs@aas.org.

Best practices

• Keeping applicants informed

Because the job market in astronomy is extremely competitive, many applicants are seeking jobs from many potential employers. It serves all concerned to keep the applicant pool as well informed as possible about the process of recruitment and the status of their application; it is good practice to acknowledge receipt of the application and supporting letters. Consider making it clear in the job announcement what the anticipated timeframe or schedule is for conducting reviews of applications, drawing up short lists, and making final selections. In the case of competitive fellowship programs, consider including this kind of information on the program web site. *Try to communicate to applicants as soon as is practical the outcome of the selection process so that those who have not been selected can factor that information into their decision-making.*

- **The Rumor Mill**

For years various members of the astronomy community have maintained a widely known and used web site on which informal information about the status of recruitment is posted. (<http://astrobetter.com/wiki/tiki-index.php?page=Rumor+Mill>.) As potential employers, be aware that misinformation may be posted.

- **AAS policy on notification of postdoctoral positions**

The AAS Council has passed (1988) and reaffirmed (2003) a resolution stating that no postdoctoral position should require a candidate response prior to February 15 of each year. This policy applies to postdoctoral positions whose recruitment cycles follow the normal academic search timeline (offers in early spring to begin summer or fall of the same year). The text of this resolution is available on the [Council Resolution](#) webpage. Employers should take this policy into account in their recruitment process.

- **Ensuring the broadest possible applicant pool**

There are a number of resources available to help in the recruitment process to ensure that your applicant pool is diverse, qualified, and responsive to your needs. The AAS Committee on the Status of Women (<http://www.aas.org/cswa/AASWOMEN.html>) issues a weekly electronic newsletter that includes job postings; contact aaswomen@aas.org with your announcement.

Many universities offer guidelines on recruitment and selection that encourage the development of a diverse workforce. This includes strategies for basing decisions more on qualifications and less on perceptions, thus leading to stronger short lists as well as often more diverse ones. We offer the following list as suggestions for further information:

The ADVANCE Program 'STRIDE' at the University of Michigan:

<http://web.mit.edu/cortiz/www/Diversity/UniversityofMichiganSTRIDE.pdf>

University of Washington Faculty Recruitment Guidelines:

<http://onyxia.engr.washington.edu/advance/workshops/F07-Faculty-Recruitment.pdf>

Iowa State University Resource Guide for Recruiting:

<http://www.provost.iastate.edu/office/resource.html>

University of Wisconsin Women in Science and Engineering Leadership Group:

<http://wiseli.engr.wisc.edu/about.php>