



NASP Technical Assistance Brief

HOW TO BECOME A FACULTY MEMBER: TWO PATHS TO THE SAME GOAL

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BACKGROUND

While there is a growing need for university-based trainers in school psychology, there are many myths and misinformation about how to become an academic, how to prepare for such a career, and what a full-time academic position entails. Becoming an academic is filled with great rewards and significant challenges and involves more commitment than might appear to those outside of the university setting. Teaching, research, and service are integrated and expected, whether the primary focus is on teaching or research. The focus and expectations will vary depending on the institution, but generally will provide the opportunity for pursuit of individual goals and interests to the extent that these complement the rest of the faculty within a department. At the same time, the combination of expectations needs to be considered, because these consume far more than teaching and research time. An academic career may not be the immediate route for every graduate student in psychology. However, for some the path to the academia is clear. What follows is divided into two sections: Following the Traditional Path and From Practitioner to Academic.

FOLLOWING THE TRADITIONAL PATH

- Know your strengths; know your interests. Do you enjoy teaching? Do you enjoy supervising and mentoring others? Are you committed to integrating ongoing research in your life?
- Commit to your career path early in your graduate training. Academia is a lifestyle choice!

- Develop an area of expertise/interest/passion. While it is wonderful to be interested in everything, it is important to establish a specialty niche for yourself.
- Establish a presentation and publication record that reflects your expertise/interest/passion.
- Serve as a teaching assistant or a course instructor.
- Assist in grant preparation with a faculty member.
- Join professional organizations, attend conferences, and establish support networks.
- Become familiar with the differing expectations of the academy—which institutions focus on teaching, which focus on research, and which are tenure track versus clinical faculty.
- Obtain an APA/APIIC (Association of Psychology Postdoctoral and Internship Centers) internship, if at all possible, especially if you plan to seek a position in an APA-approved program.
- Complete your doctorate (of course).
- Publish your dissertation, and obtain a postdoctoral fellowship or some hands-on practical experience. In some cases, this can be done while an Assistant Professor, but not always.
- Take the Examination for Professional Practice of Psychology (EPPP), the Praxis in School Psychology examination and any other requisite examinations to obtain appropriate licensure/certification credentials. Consider American Board of Professional Psychology (ABPP) certification in School Psychology
- Obtain letters of support along the way. Professors, supervisors, and employers may not be readily available when you need a reference.
- Actively maintain your vita.
- Stay current in the field.

FROM PRACTITIONER TO ACADEMIC

Upon graduation, many gravitate toward the practice component in the profession and work in the field when completing their doctorates, although they are interested in teaching or research. At an indeterminate point, there are those psychologists who choose to turn to full-time academic life, either as a tenure track faculty member or as a clinical appointment on a year-to-year contract. The practicing clinician brings richness to a graduate training program, particularly from clinical and pragmatic perspectives. Should this be a possible outcome, the following steps are recommended:

- Become involved with university life either teaching a course as an adjunct or being a field-based trainer for practica or internships. An ongoing relationship with a single university will establish continuity and connection.
- Obtain appropriate credentialing: NCSP, psychology licensure, ABPP.
- Be involved in professional organizations—local, regional, and national, if possible.
- As a practitioner, maintain an active interest in research through program evaluation, through intervention, or within areas that meet the needs of your student population. Involvement with a university trainer can facilitate the research involvement. Collaboration with faculty and graduate students can provide opportunities to be engaged in active research.
- Present locally, regionally, and nationally; publish if at all possible.
- Stay connected and network with others in practice and in academia.
- When you are nearing your transition, let others know of your interests.
- Become familiar with the differing expectations of the academy—which institutions focus on teaching and which on research, tenure track versus clinical faculty.

How to Become a Faculty Member: Two Paths to the Same Goal

Regardless of the pathway, if you are interested in an academic career, you might be interested in the following website: <http://classifications.carnegiefoundation.org>

Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. Carnegie classifies institutions based on the type of degree offered, size of the student population, and emphasis on research. The search engine can be used to look up a given institution.

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