

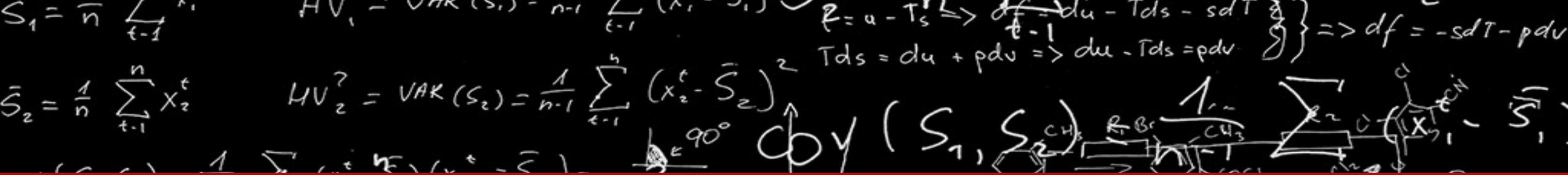
# Finding an Academic Position During the Pandemic

Fall 2020 Virtual Academic Career Fair

Martin Wells, Cornell University

Chair and Professor of Statistics and Data Science

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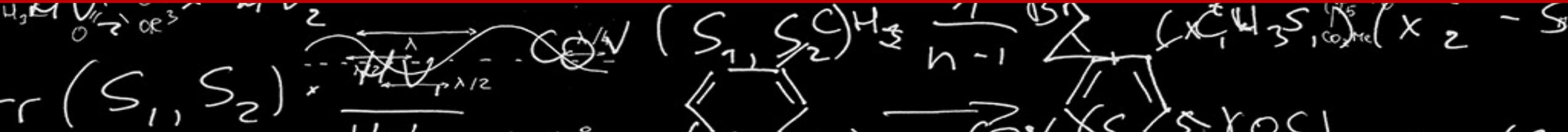


# Statistics and Data Science

[https:// stat.cornell.edu](https://stat.cornell.edu)

The department has cutting-edge research programs that address a wide range of theoretical and applied problems. Our faculty and students are advancing the frontier in Statistics, Data Science, and other fields with a combination of theoretical, methodological, and applied work.

Faculty research areas include: Bayesian inference, high-dimensional statistics, machine learning, ensemble learning, functional data, statistical computing, spatial analysis, times series, nonparametrics, mathematics of data science, biostatistics, econometrics, empirical finance, computational biology, imaging, fairness and transparency, networks, probability, empirical processes



The Cornell **Department of Statistics and Data Science** in the colleges of Agriculture and Life Sciences, Computing and Information Science, Industrial and Labor Relations has ***MULTIPLE*** tenured and tenure-track faculty positions.



**Statistics and Data Science** has 18 tenured and tenure-track professors, 4 lecturers, 36 PhD graduate students, 60+ MPS graduate students and over 180 undergraduates.

Cornell University is located in Ithaca, New York, a city of about 35,000 people in the heart of the Finger Lakes region. Both Cornell University and the City of Ithaca offer a wide range of cultural and outdoor activities, with the pleasures of both city and country close at hand.

**Ithaca is Gorges!**



# Who are we looking for?

## **1. Potential for strong research contributions.**

- Use your cover letter, statements and personal website to highlight things that are not obvious in your CV.
- An articulation of a focused research agenda is important.
- Strong letters from your advisor and other faculty matter a lot.
- Show that your work connects with that of current department faculty.

## **2. Strong commitment to teaching and mentoring undergrads and grads.**

- Use your teaching and diversity statements to highlight experience and vision.

## **3. Potential for scholarly impact and department citizenship.**

- Should demonstrate potential for securing research and student funding.
- A good fit with departmental needs and willingness to serve.

# A Three-Round Interview Process

- 1<sup>st</sup> round: 10-15 candidates; short Zoom interviews with the search committee covering a brief overview presentation of your research and teaching.
- 2<sup>nd</sup> round: 8-10 candidates; half-day Zoom interviews that include a one-hour research talk and meetings with groups of faculty and grad students.
- 3<sup>rd</sup> round: 4-6 candidates; three quarter-day Zoom interviews for additional meetings with faculty and administrators.

# The Job-Talk\* and Meeting Conversations

## 1. What have you done and how?

- What is your research about? Explain the central contributions making clear how your work builds on the prior work of others.
- What distinguishes your research from other ongoing related research in your area?
- Guard against the tendency to overstuff your talk with technical developments and philosophy by having a well-organized, personal website that lays it all out.
- Communicate your near-term research agenda.

## 2. How to deal with breadth versus depth?

- Being able to explain your research to a broad audience is as important as the research itself.
- Your audience will include department graduate students and faculty. There may also be attendees from related academic disciplines. There will be both non-experts and experts in the audience.
- The challenge is to give enough of a high-level picture so that the former appreciate your work, and enough detail so that the latter understand your work.
- In striking this balance, it is important to be solicitous of questions from the floor, taking the time to clarify ambiguities and knowing when to take overly detailed conversations off-line.

# Tips for Zoom Interviews

- Practice, Practice, Practice!
- Look into the camera while speaking.
- Have a way to write during the interview.
- Choose a professional background.
- Find a brightly lit room.
- Pick a quiet space.
- Charge your laptop.
- Update your computer.
- Find a good internet connection.
- Turn off notifications.
- Wear professional attire.
- Be aware of body language.
- Ask your interviewers questions.
- Practice, Practice, Practice!

# ADVICE FOR APPLICANTS

- We all struggle for meaningful social interactions over Zoom and need to try our best to deal with the challenge. Be prepared to deal with the technology during the interview.
- Be prepared to answer very specific technical questions about your research. Have a way to write out formulae during the interview.
- Demonstrate your interest in the specific position. Only apply to a job if you would accept a position if offered.
- Do some homework on the faculty in the department so that you are familiar with their current research interests.

- Don't be afraid to ask different interviewers the same questions about the position. You will likely get a variety of answers because folks have different viewpoints. Ask the search committee for clarity if you are confused about something. Be consistent in your answers to questions.
- Ask about what it's like to live in the town, housing, things to do, etc.
- Most advisors and faculty have sizable networks of professional colleagues, any one of whom could be the key to finding a position. It's always nice to have more people to turn to for advice.

# ADVICE AFTER RECEIVING AN OFFER

- Be transparent and specific about salary and start-up needs.
- After the interview be transparent about the timing of other offers. Chairs can only help if they have information.
- If you have multiple offers, decline offers for positions you are not interested in. Chairs get annoyed if they feel a candidate is freezing the search process in order to gain leverage.
- Most universities seeks to meet the needs of dual career couples and have a Dual Career program. Chairs can only be proactive if they have information.