



CAIRIBU ARCTICS COMMUNITY FORUM

INTERVIEWING FOR RESEARCH POSITIONS



ARCTICS COMMUNITY FORUM

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY - April 8, 2026

GOAL: Review different strategies to navigate research position interviews and position oneself as a strong candidate

Summary

Investigator Perspectives

Introductions

- [Dr. Petra Popovics](#), Assistant Professor in the Department of Microbiology and Molecular Cell Biology at Old Dominion University, studies lower urinary tract symptoms linked to benign prostate disease.
- [Dr. Marvin Langston](#), Assistant Professor of Epidemiology at Stanford University, studies cancer and benign lower urinary tract disease.
- [Dr. Michael Odom](#), Assistant Professor of Urology at Duke University, studies diabetes-related bladder dysfunction.

Dr. Popovics' Experience and Tips for Interviewing

- **Dr. Popovics** faced a challenging job search in a post-pandemic market. She had a moderate publication list, a K12, a K01, and an internal grant. Additionally, she had developed BPH animal models and worked with human tissues.
- She aimed to find a position with strong research infrastructure, access to animal studies, opportunities for clinical collaboration, a lower teaching burden, and room to grow an independent program.
- However, **she had no high-impact publications (difficult to achieve in BPH research), found that some institutions deprioritized non-malignant urology, and encountered clinical urology departments that required R01s to qualify for tenure-track positions.**
- She advised trainees to:
 - Tailor interview responses to specific departments' priorities, resources, and patients
 - Explain why the institution is a logical, long-term fit for you
 - Be prepared to defend the significance of your scientific niche
 - Present a clear funding path and feasible first grant strategy
- **You want to show you can collaborate with others, Dr. Popovics said, bring the department funding, and build an independent program.**
- Drs. Popovics and Langston agreed interviews are also opportunities for candidates to ask questions about balancing teaching and research, mentorship, resources, collaborations, and overall department culture. These questions are best-suited for research faculty, junior faculty, and core facility staff.

Dr. Langston's Experience, Challenges, and Tips

- **Dr. Langston** highlighted the importance of sharing your previous institutional affiliations and degree trajectory to frame how you got to where you are today.
- An advantage of this approach is that interviewers or search committees may have ties to these institutions or collaborators, and **this point of commonality can make you appear more favorable.**
- Dr. Langston's goal was to find a springboard for his research career without shouldering a heavy teaching burden. Like Dr. Popovics, he also did not have high-impact publications.
- One challenge he encountered was battling **imposter syndrome**, which impacts even the most accomplished people. If this is a challenge, Dr. Langston suggested speaking with others, particularly mentors, about these experiences to help you recognize you are not alone and to improve your confidence.

- Another challenge of searching for research positions is being able to stand out. **Dr. Langston suggested emphasizing attributes that make you unique** – whether that be grants (internal or external), research interests, teaching history, specialized trainings, journal relationships, consortia membership, professional associations, or high impact papers. Understanding your position and leaning into your strengths allows you to present yourself in the best possible light.
- Prepare ahead of the interview by researching the institution and their faculty, have a plan to explain your goals, craft an elevator pitch, and lay out a plan to acquire significant funding.
- Dr. Langston recommended to ask questions about grant resources – whether that be for submitting to external grants or internal funding – and about who in the department or research has been successful in obtaining such awards.



Dr. Odom's Journey to a Faculty Position

- When searching for a faculty position, Dr. Odom prioritized Duke University because it emphasized research over teaching, had greater availability of resources and established collaborations, and allowed him to retain his remaining year of K12 funding. **Dr. Odom strongly suggested to consider personal reasons for pursuing a position, such as family or finances.**
- Another reason for selecting Duke was that he was also already familiar with institutional policies due to having completed a K12 fellowship there. Another reason for remaining at Duke was because the position he sought was in a clinical department that was specifically looking to expand into basic science research.
- Dr. Odom secured an interview by laying out a clear funding path that leveraged his K12 grant and postdoctoral research to generate data for an R01 submission. He then demonstrated his productivity through publications, conference presentations, and awards, and he communicated his enthusiasm to further his science in the future.
- He suggested to prepare for the interview by:
 - Becoming familiar with the interview format and department
 - Having talking points to emphasize your strengths and how you will contribute to the department's mission
 - Developing a long-term plan describing how your scientific niche can meaningfully advance the standard of care
- Dr. Odom's final suggestions for interviews were to be enthusiastic, personable, and confident, to respond to questions with detailed and specific answers, and to fall back on your pre-interview preparations.

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