

Interviewing the Teaching Faculty Hiring Process

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ABSTRACT

As teaching-focused positions proliferate and university teaching careers become more professionalized, there is growing attention being paid to how teaching faculty are created. However, how teaching faculty are hired also deserves scrutiny.

Teaching faculty hiring varies widely between institutions, raising questions of whether hiring processes are effectively identifying, evaluating, and recruiting qualified applicants, and which approaches are most effective. Variation in application requirements and interview processes may also result in a higher workload for teaching faculty candidates when compared to peers applying for other types of faculty positions.

This panel brings together faculty with significant teaching faculty hiring experience and new teaching faculty who were very recently on the job market. Together we'll discuss what is and is not working in teaching faculty hiring, and how we might improve the process for both institutions and candidates. We anticipate engaging with those involved with hiring teaching faculty, as well as current and future teaching faculty candidates.

CCS CONCEPTS

• **Social and professional topics** → **Computer science education**.

KEYWORDS

Teaching, Teaching track faculty, Computer Science Education

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1 SUMMARY

An increased focus on teaching excellence and the growing professionalization of post-secondary teaching has led many computer

science departments to scale up their hiring of teaching-focused faculty. The nature of teaching faculty positions varies widely between institutions. Growing attention is being paid to the promotional expectations, workload, contract length, departmental rights, and other aspects of these roles [1]. There are regular conversations at the SIGCSE Technical Symposium about the nature of the roles [2] and who is qualified to take them [3]. However there seems to be limited discussion how teaching faculty candidates are recruited, interviewed, evaluated, and hired.

In our experience, hiring processes for teaching faculty vary more between institutions than “research+teaching” faculty processes. For example, many institutions require some kind of teaching demonstration, but the topic may be given by the institution, or chosen by the candidate; and it may be given to a real class, or to a group of faculty, who may pretend to be students. Some institutions also require a research presentation.

Our panel has four panelists and one moderator. Two panelists are senior faculty with experience hiring teaching faculty at separate institutions. Two panelists are junior faculty who interviewed for teaching faculty positions last year, and who have different backgrounds and different goals. The moderator is new to leading teaching faculty hiring, and is looking to improve the hiring process and candidate experience at their institution. Panelists will use their shared experience and perspectives from both sides of the hiring process to explore what’s working and what’s not, and to examine differences in the interview process across institutions.

The intended audience includes anyone interested in identifying and recruiting excellent and diverse teaching faculty, as well as potential candidates for teaching faculty positions. Due to the composition of our panel, the discussion will focus on hiring junior teaching faculty applicants at R1 universities. However, we anticipate that the discussion will encompass topics relevant to other kinds of institutions and to hiring more senior candidates.

2 PANEL STRUCTURE

All panelists will present in-person at SIGCSE TS 2024.

If this panel is selected to be livestreamed, a link will be provided for attendees to ask questions remotely and the moderator will alternate between in-person and online questions.

The panel will have two rounds of questions where panelists will share background on themselves and their institutions, and their experiences with teaching faculty hiring (e.g., the hiring process for senior panelists, and experience on the job market for junior

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panelists). Each panelist will have 5 minutes per round, for a total of 40 minutes. There will be 35 minutes for Q&A with the audience.

3 POSITION STATEMENTS

3.1 Geoffrey Challen

Geoffrey Challen is an Associate Teaching Professor in the Department of Computer Science at the University of Illinois. He has participated in teaching faculty hiring for several years. He was the first teaching faculty to chair the search at Illinois, and designed and implemented several changes to the hiring process.

The University of Illinois is a public R1 U.S. land-grant institution. Around 20 of 120 computer science faculty hold teaching-focused positions. Most teaching-track faculty at Illinois hold professorial titles, but other instructional titles are available, including ones that do not require a Ph.D. Teaching faculty at Illinois are not eligible for tenure, but are provided with multi-year contracts which are renewed annually. They vote on everything except tenure cases, and serve in department and college leadership roles.

Teaching faculty hiring at Illinois runs separately from research faculty hiring. Recently, teaching faculty candidates have been asked to submit a short prerecorded teaching demonstration, and give a interview talk on their approach to effective pedagogy in lieu of a live teaching demonstration.

3.2 Victoria Dean

Victoria Dean is an Assistant Professor of Computer Science at Olin College of Engineering, a small, private primarily undergraduate institution. She completed her PhD in Robotics at Carnegie Mellon University in 2023.

During the 2022–2023 job market cycle, she applied for teaching faculty positions at R1 universities as well as “research and teaching” faculty positions at primarily undergraduate institutions. She did onsite interviews at 8 primarily undergraduate institutions and 11 R1 teaching faculty positions. She also interacted closely with over a dozen candidates on the teaching faculty market in the same cycle. She can speak to the range of hiring practices across many institutions, including required application materials, teaching demonstration formats, and offer timelines. From her experiences and the experiences of her peers on the market, she can share insights about what candidates notice in the process and make suggestions for how hiring can be more candidate-friendly.

3.3 Nate Derbinsky

Nate Derbinsky is a Teaching Professor and the Associate Dean of Teaching Faculty in the Khoury College of Computer Sciences at Northeastern University. He has been involved in hiring dozens of (computing) faculty at multiple institutions in numerous countries.

Northeastern University is a private R1 institution with 13 campuses in the U.S., U.K., and Canada. Teaching-track faculty (called the Teaching Faculty) have professorial titles (Assistant / Associate / [Full] Teaching Professor), are classified as non-tenure-track (with renewable appointments, where length is based upon rank), and are included within a “One Faculty” model of shared governance (including full voting rights, eligibility for leadership, etc). At time of submission, Khoury has nearly 100 full-time teaching faculty at 8 campuses (as well as several that work remotely, teaching online

courses). Most members of the Teaching Faculty hold a doctorate or equivalent terminal degree in their field; exceptions must be approved by the Provost in advance.

Teaching Faculty recruiting has many similarities with tenure-track recruiting, but operates on a rolling basis, potentially spans multiple campuses, and involves research presentations only if candidates express an interest in a research-active workload (teaching demonstrations are mandatory).

3.4 Matt Wang

Matt Wang is an Assistant Teaching Professor in the Paul G. Allen School of Computer Science at the University of Washington. He received his M.S. in Computer Science from the University of California, Los Angeles in 2023.

He underwent a narrow search in the 2022–2023 job market, applying to and doing onsite interviews for just two teaching-focused positions at R1 universities. He looks to provide insight from the unorthodox parts of his background. Prior to outreach from a current faculty member at the University of Washington, he was unaware of permanent teaching roles without doctoral degree requirements. Subsequently, applying without a PhD changed his approach to evaluating potential roles. He focused on materials outside of typical instructor-of-record experience; in his case, largely an emphasis on K-12 education, institutional advocacy, and open-source software development. He can suggest strategies for broadening the applicant pool in future teaching-track job searches, with a particular focus on applicants with less traditional teaching experiences.

3.5 Jacqueline Smith (Moderator)

Jacqueline Smith is an Associate Professor, Teaching Stream at the University of Toronto. She will be playing a larger role in teaching faculty recruiting this year, and is actively seeking to improve the hiring process.

The University of Toronto is a public R1 institution in Canada. Teaching faculty at the University of Toronto have professorial titles (Assistant/Associate/[Full] Professor, Teaching Stream), are eligible for tenure-equivalent “continuing status”, and participate as full voting members of the department. Teaching Stream recruiting roughly parallels the “research+teaching” faculty recruiting process, requiring two teaching demonstrations instead of a research talk.

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