You, as a product
(Getting hired as an assistant professor)

Kasper Daniel Hansen
< khansen@jhsph.edu | www.hansenlab.org >
Department of Biostatistics
Johns Hopkins University

To get hired, somebody needs to hire you.

In most universities, hiring is done by a department.

Depending on the dept., this decision is made

- across the entire department
- within a subgroup of the department (people working on X)
- by the chair

Typically, this involves many people, all of who has their own opinion about what constitutes a good hire.

Consequences of a dept. hiring

When a dept. hires you they commit resources (funding), take a risk and hope for some payoff.

Departments (because of the university structure) are
- less interested in the success of other departments
- typically field conservative (biostat hires PhDs in stat/biostat, CS in CS etc)
- typically mostly interested in “their field”

Resources

It is basically impossible to do research in modern US institutions without external resources (funding). Funding is used for

- Your own salary
- The salary of students / postdocs / staff
- supplies and equipment (for biostatistics this is mostly computers / HPC)
- space etc

It is very dependent on the institution, how much money you need to cover in each of these items, but somehow (either explicitly or implicitly) these funds have to be raised.

Funding comes from
- external grants (in our field typically NIH (and NSF, DOD etc) and non-government sources like the Gates foundation, CZI etc.
- Tuition (teaching)

Time horizon

To goal of a hire is to produce a successful (= promoted) associate professor.

This is a time horizon of 5-6 years and possibly longer.

Usually, there is a grace period (3 years) followed by a ramp-up period.

Changes in biostatistics

Traditionally, biostatistics have been a support discipline.

This means funding has come from outside the department, which has all kinds of implications about how biostatistics depts. think of funding.

But there is a shift towards biostatistics profs to be PIs (principal investigators).

Being a PI (from a funding perspective) means to apply for, be granted and thereby be in charge of their own grants.

This trend is particularly relevant for genomics.

Parameters

- Research portfolio and proposal (are you making an impact?)
    - Impact in your subfield
    - Impact on the whole field
    - Impact on Science

- Ability to obtain and maintain funding

- Teaching

- Communication skills

- (sometimes) Collegiality

- (rarely) Ability to lead a research program.

How much weight there is on these things, is very institution- and person-specific.

In an R1 institution, the two top ones are - without doubt - research and funding.

Evidence for your ability

For all parameters, it is always best to show direct evidence, but sometimes indirect evidence is all you can do.

Example: it is unusual for a candidate to have extensive teaching experience apart from TA'ing. Many people infer that "a great job talk" => "abililty to teach".