Reviewer #1: This is an interesting topic and uses a reasonably large sample size.  The data are properly categorized, as needed, to clarify the results.  
  
One typo: page 3, line 4 has "... took taken ...".  Obviously one is left over from a prior revision.

**Thank you for this correction – it has been made.**   
  
The presentation could be tightened up considerably.  The presentation of percents and p-values could (should) be combined.  Dividing them only left me confused as to whether I was reading about another set of comparisons.

**We have made several clarifications to help the reader – for example, the last paragraph on page 4 and first paragraph of page 5:**

*Third, of those who completed ≥ 5 national presentations, 51% (25/49) entered academics. In contrast, of those with 1-4 presentations or those with 0 presentations, 34% (31/91) and 29% (18/63), respectively, entered academics. When comparing the groups, applicants who had ≥5 national presentations were significantly more likely to pursue academia compared to those without any presentations (p=0.02). Applicants who had ≥5 national presentations were also significantly more likely to pursue academia then those with 1-4 presentations (p=0.05). There was no significant difference in career choice when comparing those with none versus 1-4 presentations (p=0.47)****(Table 3a).***

*Fourth, a stated desire to enter academics was also highly significant with 54% (35/65) of those clearly stating a desire for an academic job doing so* ***(Table 2).*** *The percentage of those stating a desire for private practice who actually took an academic first job was 5.9% (1/17); thus, those with a stated desire to enter private practice rarely entered academics. That percentage was 29% (20/68) for those who were unsure/ no mention, and it was a similar 34% (18/53) for those with a stated desire to work in an “academic setting.” Furthermore, applicants with clear academic aspirations were statistically more likely to pursue academia versus those with private practice goals (p=0.006), those who were unsure/ no mention (p=0.005), and those desiring an “academic setting”(p=0.032)****(Table 3b).*** *When comparing the groups, those desiring an “academic setting” were also significantly more likely to pursue academia than those desiring private practice (p=0.049), they were not more likely when compared to those were unsure/no mention (p=0.593). Lastly, those who were unsure/no mention trended to be more likely to pursue academics than those with private goals (p=0.075), but this result was not statistically significant* ***(Table 3b).***

The method of presentation could be revised to make the salient points more apparent. Clearly, a stated desire to enter private practice is the most important factor, as none of those went into academics.

**Thank you for pointing this out. There was an error in our submission on the abstract where a part of it had been inadvertently deleted, making it unclear. We have corrected this, and we believe this makes the salient points more apparent.**

For those indicating a desire for an academic position, it would be nice to create bullet points or some table of those factors that were found in the logistic regression analysis to correlate with the probability of entering academia.  The logistic regression is more important than the univariate analyses, because it shows what combination of factors WORKING TOGETHER will impact the probability of entering academia. The results of univariate analyses can be misleading, since some factors are highly correlated with other factors and do not aid in predicting the probability of entering academia. The odds ratios do provide an indication of how important those factors are, and should be included.  
**We agree with the importance of the multivariate analysis, and, as such, included the odds ratios for the multivariate factors in table 5 and in the paper. We also have provided a table (Table 5) with which factors are associated with academia in a multivariate analysis.**

I would really like to see the estimated probability of entering academia for each combination of the significant factors being present or absent. This should be readily obtainalbe from the logistic regression outcome. I think this would add a lot to the presentation.

Frankly, the p-values do seem less significant than I might have anticipated, suggesting that the relationships might not be reproducible in another study.  I don't know there is anything you can do about that, except to check your printouts.

**We have reviewed the data and p values several times with our statisticians to confirm accuracy. We agree with the reviewer’s impression. However, as stated in the paper, we believe the outcomes reflect the many variables that go into job choice, only some of which are listed on an application and available for evaluation in this study, but we were nevertheless interested to find that there are in fact objective criteria within applications that were significantly associated with job choice.**

Reviewer #2: Page       Line    Comments  
1       10      Change "not infrequently" to "frequently"

**We have made the change.**

2       11      Change "?off in a?"  to "?of?"

**We believe it is correct to leave in “off” instead of “of”.**

2       17-23   How certain can the authors be that the applicants are not equating #1 ("academic Spine Surgeon") with #4 ("academic setting").  I would think that they are interchangeable in may applicants' minds.

**We appreciate the reviewer’s concern; however, it has been absolutely clear to us in interviewing applicants as well as reviewing the data in this study that there are two types of personal statements with regards to stated academic desire. Some state they want to definitely become an academic surgeon, while others state they enjoy the stimulation of teaching/ research/ being in an academic environment and want to continue that in some sort of capacity but will not commit to being a faculty member in an academic institution. We believe that these two categories are clearly distinct.**

3       3       Why do the authors' suppose that the most predictive factor would not have been the recruitment back at the home institution?

**We again appreciate the reviewer’s comments. We do not know why some letter writers state they are actively recruiting the applicant and yet those applicants do not take the job. This could be because the job may no longer be available or a “better” job elsewhere might arise. As stated, family, life, and financial decisions can change from the time of application to the time of accepting a job. Another possibility is that the statement may be the writer’s attempt to convey unwavering, absolute support for the applicant. It is an interesting observation, but unfortunately our study does not allow us to clearly state why.**

4       5       Do the authors' feel that obtaining the job status of a prior applicant by an internet search was a potential source of error?

**We absolutely agree with this observation. We attempted to contact all applicants personally but could not do so in every case, despite multiple efforts. The best option we had in those situations was an Internet search. This has been listed in the text as a limitation of the study, but would theoretically not bias the data in one direction or another. (page 14):**

*Furthermore, for the applicants who were unreachable, an Internet search was done to identify what job the applicant took. This method may be a potential source of error. However, we assumed that it would not bias the data specifically in one direction or the other.*

4       20      Change to "?34% (31/91) and 29% (18/63), respectively, entered academics"

**We made the appropriate change in the paper.**

6       18      Although there is no statistical significance to it, I am curious as to what was the job status of the 2 female applicants.

**Both female applicants pursued academia. We added a comment on page 6, paragraph 3:**

*It should be noted however that both female applicants entered academia.*

8,9     21-22,1-4       Please rewrite the sentence beginning with "Those desiring an "academic setting" were 5.88 times more likely?"  It is a long sentence that is not clear to the reviewer.

**We have changed that sentence to make it less confusing**

*Those desiring an “academic setting” were as likely to enter academics as those who were unsure/ no mention, but this was not significant (odds ratio 1.14, p=0.75). Those desiring an “academic setting” were 5.88 (p=0.11) times more likely to enter academics versus those who stated a desire for private practice. Applicants who were unsure/ no mention were 5.0 (p=0.13) times more likely to enter academics than those desiring private practice.*

14      3-11    Perhaps the authors' stated it, but how many applicants had all 5 of the factors listed, and of those, how many went on to an academic position?  
**We appreciate this insight. We have added a section on page 6, first full paragraph with this information:**

*Of these five factors, applicants taking an academic position had an average of two factors versus one factor for those who did not enter academic practice. In addition, five out of six (83%) applicants with all five factors went into academics and nine out of 14 (64.3%) applicants with four factors went into academics.*

Reviewer #3: Authors, you have foloowed a group of fellows nicely, and made this a "Study", but have left out a significant definition. What is an "Academic" job? Is it only a fulltime university post? Is a private practice which has a fellowship program, and publishes academic? Is a university position, but one that bills seperately still Academic? Does an academic postion mandate that you have educational responsibilities for both residents and students?I think you need to clarify this.

**We understand the reviewer’s concern, and so we defined an “academic” job on page 3, 2nd paragraph:**

*An academic job was defined as having a title of clinical faculty or a level of professorship at a teaching institution.*

Reviewer #4: Objective: determine factors that are associated with spine fellows choosing an academic career

Page 8 line 25: How reliable is searching the internet to determine the first job a surgeon took after fellowship? The physician could conceivably have changed jobs by the time of the internet search. If a surgeon can be found via the internet, then you should be able to contact them.

**We appreciate this limitation of this study and it has been specifically noted in the revised text, as noted in our response to the same question posed by reviewer 2**.

Page 14 lines 13-25: Should this be an "and" statement, because for each of the listed variables (independent of each other) there is a 50% chance of choosing an academic career path.

**We apologize for the error. We have changed the conjunction to OR as these are independent factors.**