

The Competition for Academic Positions

People who are already faculty members but have decided to move from one institution to another

This is now a common trend. Since competition is fierce people tend to accept the first position offered them and later become more discriminating in their choice of institution once they have established their ability to acquire funds and students and have published a few papers on their own. Some wait until they get tenure to launch their second move. These individuals on paper can easily outperform the credentials of most recent Ph.D.s with post-doctoral experience. Though academic jobs may be advertised as entry level positions at the rank of assistant professor, the competition is really open to all. Academic job ads are deliberately kept as open as possible in order to scout the market for the "best candidates" available. See [Volatility Profile of Academic Positions](#) to discover how important this is. You can correlate the appearance of a given job ad in trade magazines with the announcement in the department website of the new faculty member hired and, if you have good grapevine contacts, with hints of a faculty member intending to leave a department. One point to note is that moves are made between universities of the same status; that is, a faculty member from a research focused university will likely move to another with the same focus. Similarly, one from a primarily undergraduate institution tends to move to another of the same type. Rarely, is it the case that moves are made between primarily research and primarily teaching institutions. Those that are successful in doing this often have the support of a faculty member at the target institution who helps to pave the way for the transition to be made. Regionalism factors play heavily into this as well. Many of these moves from one university to another are initiated at conferences where parties from both sides can meet and negotiate terms of the deal, usually between technical sessions or over a meal.

Recent Ph.D.'s and post-docs who have degrees from biology, biochemistry, engineering, or physics departments

The emerging areas of chemistry have pushed the envelope of who is being recruited in Departments of Chemistry. The trend to hire graduates from other disciplines is strong. It also says that chemistry departments do not believe that their own chemistry programs can provide a crop of people with the talent required to meet the demand for emerging areas in chemistry. This will change as Departments overhaul their programs and recruit more of these types of faculty. However, these new recruits tend to have short tenures in chemistry departments and end up at departments for which they would normally have applied in the first place, namely, biology, biochemistry, engineering and physics departments. The culture of chemistry departments is in transition and as yet cannot support the intellectual environment necessary for these individuals to flourish. Faculty members from traditional areas of chemistry still represent the majority of decision makers in departments. Again, this situation is expected to stabilize as the new wave faculty entrench themselves over time.

Recent Ph.D.'s and post-docs from big name groups in Canada and abroad

These people come from groups whose supervisors are either Nobel Laureates, most cited chemists, authors of famous texts, or members of editorial boards of prestigious journals. Success by association is almost guaranteed. Beware that any negative experience with a big name advisor will severely damage any chances of success at securing academic positions. Their fame and influence are far reaching.

Recent Ph.D.'s and post-docs from influential supervisors in Canada

These people come from groups whose supervisors are either chairs of departments, deans, members of granting committees, or executive members of chemical society boards. These are people who have clout in decision making and are active participants in shaping chemistry in Canada. Beware that any negative experience with a big name advisor will severely damage any chances of success at securing academic positions. Their fame and influence are far reaching in both positive and negative directions.

Recent trend to hire Ph.D.'s and post-docs from the United States

Historically the chemistry knowledge brought to Canada came from the United Kingdom. The majority of retired and emeritus professors in Canada are British. This is now offset by a tide from the United States. However the tendency to hire Canadians is increasing, but these Canadians have significant post-doctoral experience from the United States especially if they are men. Women chemistry faculty members in Canada tend to have educational experiences with higher Canadian content and are more likely to post-doc in Europe in national laboratories and institutions. This may change as more women are hired and their competition pool may resemble that of their male colleagues.

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