**Amy Devine-Keum:**

Good afternoon, everyone. I'm Amy Devine, and I would like to welcome our speakers today. Miikka Rokkanen, who is at Amazon, Miguel Acosta, who will be talking about his experience at the Fed and Tanya Avilova at Bowdoin.

We encourage you to ask questions, and if you would please just say your name, your field, and your year in the program before you begin your question, we'd appreciate it.

So let's begin with our speakers providing information. Introduce yourselves and tell us a little bit about your background and your career trajectory. Tanya, can you begin? Please.

**Tatyana Avilova (she/her):**

Yeah, absolutely. Would you like our career trajectory up to now?

**Amy Devine-Keum:**

Sure.

**Tatyana Avilova (she/her):**

Okay. So hi, everyone it's great to be here. So my name is Tanya Avilova. I graduated from/finished my PhDin 2022. I am Applied Micro with a focus on health and economic education. And after finishing the PhD, I did a 1 year postdoc at University of Tokyo, and then, in fall of 2023, I started as assistant professor at Bowdoin College, and so now I'm going to my second year there. And happy to talk about, you know my experience in academia and at liberal arts colleges specifically so, welcome any questions about that.

**Amy Devine-Keum:**

Thanks. Miguel, could you also introduce yourself.

**Miguel Acosta:**

Sure. Sure. So I'm Miguel Acosta. I also graduated in 2022. My fields are,my research is mostly empirical, and it's primarily macro, but a little bit in international trade.So I worked for the last 2 years immediately after grad school at the Fed in DC. At the Fed Board, and then have recently started a new job at the University of Wisconsin, just as of this semester, so it's so new, I hardly have anything to say about it, anyway. So I'll be mostly talking about the Fed, most likely.

**Amy Devine-Keum:**

Thank you. And Miikka.

**Miikka Rokkanen:**

Yeah, hi all, so I finished my PhD, in 2014, and then I joined Columbia as an assistant professor for 3 years. I was teaching and doing research in labor economics and econometrics. And after those 3 years I decided to make a switch to Amazon. So now I've been there for gosh, more than 7 years. 7 years there, working in our customer behavior, analytics organization.

**Amy Devine-Keum:**

And I think a question that everyone has as part of this introduction is if you could explain why you decided to specialize in, say tech or policymaking, or, you know, a career working at a liberal arts college. And additionally, what skills the job market candidates should really think about kind of focusing on to pursue a career in those respective fields.

**Tatyana Avilova (she/her):**

So we can go in the same order, we can mix it up. So in terms of so I guess I wanted to stay in academia because I liked the combination. You know, I wanted to continue doing research, but I also, during my time at Columbia, had really enjoyed teaching. And so you know, staying in academia, and particularly, you know, going to a liberal arts college where teaching really is, you know, prioritized, and is, you know, a lot of focus is placed on educating the students and the quality of education, you know, that seemed like a good fit. So you know, certainly one of the things that liberal arts colleges specifically look at is, your teaching experience, and more specifically your teaching philosophy, and just how you think about it, and I'm happy to talk kind of in more detail, sort of the things that I did well at Columbia to try to signal the fact that I was interested in teaching, and that I wasn't just interested in doing research. But of course, at a liberal arts college, research is also important. So unless you're finding a position that's specifically teaching focused. you kind of have to be able to balance both hats, balance both things, and to be honest, I'm still trying to figure out how exactly to balance both of those things. I think that's kind of the trick of the job, and still learning. But I guess maybe the good news, is that what I hear from other faculty who are at the same level and other disciplines is that everybody else is still learning. So it's not, you know. It's not just a fixed effect.

**Miguel Acosta:**

Yeah. So I think, I knew when I was applying for jobs that I was most interested also in continuing to do research. And so I mainly like, focused my search within - I mean, yeah, I guess you can do research anywhere. But I thought you know, the most straightforward path to that was through applying to academic jobs and then applying to jobs at the Feds. And my sense was that - and then this turned out to be true, that essentially, the jobs aren't too different from one another, like in an academic job and a job at the Fed, in terms of like your research and papers that you write make a big difference in terms of how you progress. So both within the Fed and outside of the Fed, too. And so then the question is, sort of what else do you do as your job, and I think I wasn't entirely sure - I liked teaching also, but I had also been a research assistant at the Fed before grad school, and I sort of knew that I liked being involved in policy work. So I was pretty open there and sort of had a broad search.

Then you know, in terms of how you might think about making yourself as versatile in terms of being able to get a job at a policy institution or elsewhere is, I think there's still a heavy emphasis on having, like a solid job market paper and any other papers that you may have time to work on. Because at policy institutions, they want people that are sort-of able to continue to stay plugged into what's going on in the research world, so that they can then bring that into helping policymakers make their decisions.

But I think there's definitely more emphasis on hiring people that have some applied work. So I think, like very heavily theoretical work often doesn't get you very far in terms of the positions like at the Fed, because they want people that are able to have some experience, you know, whether it's working with applied theory or with working with data. Those are the tools that you need to be able to do the policy work. So I think showcasing some of that to the extent that you can, and showing that you can do these more applied types of analyses are a good way to help market yourself there.

**Miikka Rokkanen:**

So it sounds like out of the 3 of us, I've made the, you know, the biggest transition over time. So let me try to kind of do a little retrospective for you. So I did grad school being committed that I wanted to be a professor when I grew up. I went through, let's say, the first 4 years of grad school being committed, that I wanted to be a professor. My last year, maybe this was a job market related stress as well, I started kind of thinking that, I don't know, maybe there's other things I could be doing. I also, importantly, I had an office-mate in grad school who was hired at Amazon, a year before I graduated. So I was hearing about his experiences, and that sounded interesting. But at the time when I went on the market, again, I had spent a lot of time being committed that I want to be a professor when I grew up. So I did apply to a few tech tech jobs that were, you know, out there when I was on the market. Including Amazon.

But I kind of thought that I wanted to try the academic route, if I'm successful. Given that it's something I wanted to do, and I wasn't sure if I'd changed my mind at the time. And I was, you know, lucky enough to get the job at Columbia, and I was actually at the end of the day super excited about it. I enjoyed my time at Columbia, but then there was a push and a pull, in my case, that made me get interested in looking into the tech option.

The push was something that was already kind of lurking in the back of my mind in grad school, and became more prevalent as I was an assistant professor. I realized that I am a problem solver at heart. I get very excited about taking on research projects. But I didn't necessarily have the stamina and motivation to go through the whole process, especially when it comes to actually getting my stuff published. So over the 3 years as an assistant professor, I said, I’m feeling like, Okay, you know, I feel like I'm just hoarding these new projects, but I'm not seeing them through. So that was kind of the push side of it, I think. Is this the right thing for me?

On the pull side, again I had continued staying in touch with this former office-mate of mine from grad school, who was at Amazon, and he was telling me about how awesome that is, and so on. And I got really intrigued by the option of being in a more fast paced environment, where we're working as a team that's very disciplinarian, and so on. And kind of feeling like - instead of writing papers, I'm participating in building something, you know, with the engineers and so on. Where I happen to be on a team where we're like a central team, whose mandate is really about building data products that I use to support decision making. So that idea of, you know, because I'm a method geek, also an important thing to mention. So I get excited about it, when I get to do something on pen and paper, and then I get to work with engineers to turn it into a production system that's supporting decision making. So that was kind of cool and also as an active Amazon customer, I was excited to see how the sausage is made. So those were kind of the things that drove me to that decision.

In terms of how to market yourself. One thing I've realized over the years, as I look at new graduates who are applying to Amazon for instance, I've realized that I'm not sure if there was any more higher.

You know? I feel like what has happened over time, like I entered Amazon at a time where I hardly knew anything about machine learning. Sure I was very equipped, I was very good at my Stata and stuff like that. But I wasn't a coder per se. That wouldn't be my competitive advantage, anyway.

Nowadays I feel like a lot of people who are applying, they're really teched up. Both in terms of their understanding of machine learning, as well as their understanding of different coding languages and stuff like that. And there's a lot of, I would say, emphasis put on even an economist coming to a tech company being able to be somewhat independent. What I mean by that is, you're not just relying on someone giving you data. You can actually get your hands dirty. And you know, get the data yourself, and so on. I'm not saying that everyone has to have that skill, like a necessary condition. But it definitely helps. If you can show that you've either, through your normal coursework during grad school, or maybe by doing some online courses, or whatever you can kind of critically say that you know about machine learning, you know about different coding languages, and so on. That helps a lot.

And also one thing I'll add, and that is. I believe in the power of networks and networking and so it's a good idea if you know, the tech option is of interest to you, and then this kind of general thing that applies to many other fields as well. But you know, consider trying to get yourself out there, you know. Reach out to people. Try to figure out if you know someone who knows someone in the industry. That's actually one of the ways I ended up making the transition, by the way, from Academia to industry was that I knew these folks. In addition to my office-mate, I knew some other folks from my grad school days, who had gone to industry in different companies. And that network really helped me get my feet in the door and get to talk to people, and that way, get into interviews and so on.

**Amy Devine-Keum:**

Thank you so much. So this is an informal forum. I'd like to open the floor to people who can ask questions. Please proceed as.

**Palaash Bhargava:**

Give us a little bit more detail about what.

**Amy Devine-Keum:**

I'm sorry, Palaash, we are having trouble hearing you. Would you repeat your question or type it in the chat?

**Miguel Acosta:**

It's like very muffled.

**Palaash Bhargava:**

I think that was because of my headphones.

**Amy Devine-Keum:**

Okay. Great.

**Palaash Bhargava:**

Yeah, Miikka, I had a question for you, which is, could you give us a little bit more detail about what your day to day looks like at Amazon, and how much research is involved, what kind of research you’re doing.

**Miikka Rokkanen:**

Yeah. So let me start by saying that there's a lot of heterogeneity across, let's say, economists at Amazon, in terms of what kind of role they have. My rough categorization of this is whether you are an economist that's embedded in a business team, which is not me, but so I'll talk about the other one in a second. But if you're embedded in a business team, it might be quicker things, or you might be more like doing applied research. In the sense that you might be writing a paper.

I mean, it's very different than an academic paper, but you might be writing a paper about a specific question, trying to analyze something and come up with an answer to that specific question. Or, let's say, like a program evaluation type thing.

The other kind of role, where I'm in, is more of a central science role. So in my case, again, as I alluded to earlier, I work in a team where we basically own these data products or analytics products that are used for decision making across the company. So then in my role, it's a lot about working on methodological problems. More like an economic or an applied econometrician, maybe more emphasis on the applied. So it's more of an econometrician type role where you're trying to figure out methodological problems, and get a lot of pen and paper type work. Working closely with scientists, more like machine learning focus guys, from different different fields. Working with Sds, on, turning these ideas into these production systems that are working at Amazon scale.

I definitely feel like I wake up, especially in my kind of role in my kind of team. I definitely feel like I wake up in the morning thinking that I'm going to go to work to ‘do science’. It's very different from doing academic science, though I should say, I'm not writing papers. I'm not writing academic papers. I'm not trying to get stuff published externally, but I try to keep up with the literature. I try to tackle all kinds of, you know, econometrics problems, and so on. And I feel, relative to being in academia, I would say, I've lost some of the depth, you know. I used to think of myself as a recreation discontinued design expert. I don't think I am anymore, I've kind of lost touch with that literature, because it's not something I do in my work.

But at the same time it's been replaced by feeling like I have more breadth in my knowledge. I've had to learn more about machine learning, certain stats, more about decision making, on uncertainty and that kind of stuff. So that's been super valuable.

My days are kind of a half and half, I would say, between, you know, meetings either with my team or or with stakeholders and customers - I mean internal customers. And then, on the other hand, my focus time, which in my case is a little bit of coding and data work. But for the most part it's really pen and paper work, or either reviewing documents by others, or writing documents. Again, either on science topics or topics that touch more closely to the business applications.

**Palaash Bhargava:**

Thanks. Super.

**Miguel Acosta:**

Am I allowed to ask questions?

I was just curious. How does one sort of end up in a business team versus what you described as like Central Science, but another type of team.

**Miikka Rokkanen:**

Yeah. Initially, there's a little bit of randomness to it in the sense that. Let's say you're applying, what kind of roles happen to be available. I mean already at the entry level, when you're entering the company. There is a matchmaking process trying to match the right candidates to the right kind of roles. But there is a lot of randomness, for instance, in my case. I kind of had 2 different roles that I was able to choose between. And I wanted the central kind of role because I was an applied econometrician at heart, or wanna be an econometrician, as I like to call myself. SoI was interested in that kind of role. But sometimes it's just random. But then over time, there's a very fluid job market internally. So over time, people kind of sort themselves into the types of roles they want, and often people might try both. I'm actually, I guess, an unusual Amazonian in the sense that I've spent my whole time in the same team, and the same role, kind of growing in that role. Often people like to move around, get, find new challenges and try these different types of roles.

**Miguel Acosta:**

Sure.

**Palaash Bhargava:**

Sorry, Miguel, I have a question for you now.

Could you tell us, how did you transition from Fed to academia, and what is the process there? How much is it possible in general, versus how much do people get stuck in policy jobs?

**Miguel Acosta:**

I think a lot of it has to do with. Some of it you can control, and some of it is luck, I think. There's definitely a combination of both things. I was lucky enough to be hired into us, so as with Amazon, there's a lot of heterogeneity in terms of the type of work that you do. I mean, this is true at the board where there are now, I think the numbers are up to 400 economists or something. So there's a whole lot of different jobs that people can do but within whatever your policy work is, there are some teams that you may be hired into that have like a little bit more, or a little bit less policy time. So I was in a section that had a fair amount of time devoted to research. Also most sections, I think this is true pretty much across the whole Fed system, will give you a little bit of a research honeymoon, where they give you somewhere between 6 months to a year of time, where you aren't involved in policy work. It can be a little less. It can be a little more, if things happen then, and they need you for something. They might cut your honeymoon short.That’s pretty much true across the system. And they do this so that you can sort of recover from the job market and try to get your research going again before you get hit with other responsibilities.

I also had some external motivation, because my spouse was also an economist and had a job in a different part of the country than I did, so I basically knew that during my honeymoon period I was gonna do nothing else other than just try to submit my chapters of my dissertation and get rejections and then change them and resubmit them as quickly as I could. So then, that was the part where, I guess that would be like how I did it. It was by just continuing to submit and revise papers until some of them hit. And then I guess the luck comes in with the timing of when they hit, some of them were like revisions were requested on some of them. So I think between trying to get, you know, get the publication ball rolling. And then also, networking was also sort of, going to conferences, and without being very obvious about it, trying to mention that you might be interested in moving. That was sort of the way that I went about things, and it's not so unusual. I think a lot of people get there, and it's not so much about being stuck. But it's that you actually really like the job. I actually really like the job.

I think if it weren't for these external reasons, I may not have really tried to leave, so there's that. But I think it's not so uncommon for people also to work there for a few years and realize that they would like to transition, and people do it. It's not uncommon. I don't have any numbers. But there are lots of anecdotes that I could give of people who have, and people switch to all sorts of other jobs. They'll switch to other Feds, they'll switch to industry. They'll switch to this or the switch to academia and maybe other things. But it's fairly common.

A lot of times it happens more at the stage where, after you've worked at the Fed for like between 5 and 10 years. I don't know where exactly it is. You start to get moved up in the management up the org chart. So then people at that point decide whether they want to, have to start managing people, or whether they would like to do a job that doesn't require that. So that's where a lot of people will jump ship by choice.

**Palaash Bhargava**:

I see. So in terms of when the workload starts building up. How much time did you still get for research, or was it something that you had to find time and then the Fed doesn't really give you the time to work on research and turn you more towards policy? Also for conferences that you mentioned, is it a general fact/policy, that they would encourage you to go to these conferences? Or was it of your own volition?

**Miguel Acosta**:

I'll start with the easier one, which is that in terms of being able to remain engaged with the academic research community. The Fed is very supportive of that. So there's a like in terms of budget for traveling and attending conferences. You basically don't have to worry about that, especially if your paper is accepted and you're presenting at a conference. There's funding to send people there, and that engagement is valued, it's encouraged. So both financially, and then also, like your performance reviews are based, a lot, on publications and also on: are you discussing papers, refereeing papers, going to conferences, stuff like that. So they're very supportive.

Research time, that's where things vary a fair amount. I don't think I was there long enough to have a good, I can't give you exactly my numbers. I think you can sort of expect to be somewhere between 25% policy work at the low-low end, to maybe 60% policy work that would be at the upper end. Especially once you start sort of moving up and having to manage people, there's like managerial time. And so the research time gets even smaller. But somewhere between 75% and 40% of your time is just for you to do what you want. And presumably people are doing research. That's what they want you to be doing. Yeah. So that's all.

**Miikka Rokkanen**:

I want to touch on one topic that Miguel mentioned. I realized that I take this for granted so it wouldn't even come to my mind to mention it about Amazon, and maybe tech in general. In a place like Amazon, there's actually 2 paths for growing. There's an IC (individual contributor) path, that I'm on. And then there's a managerial path. So kind of 1 difference, it sounds like, based on these 2 worlds, that at Amazon you can keep on growing. I've been growing there for 7 years without ever managing anyone, and that continues to be true, to the future. I mean, there's always the option of trying, switching to the manager path, or vice versa. But there's always the option to keep on being like a subject matter expert, and as you grow. Maybe something worth mentioning.

**Tatyana Avilova (she/her)**:

And I think, I'll chime in just more generally with thoughts about just switching between different types of fields. I think the underlying kind of message that I want to communicate is, there's always the option to switch to a different field. In the sense that if you start out in policy you're not forever siloed into working in policy, you can always go somewhere else. Now where you want to make the transition might be more difficult, depending on where you start. So the general sense that I've heard is that it's harder to switch into academia if you don't start there versus, especially if you're not on a research track at another institution. And even if you are able to switch into academia, specifically what kinds of departments you might be able to go to might also depend on what kind of work you're doing.

So, for example, when I was on the market I applied to the Rand Corporation, and they do a lot of policy related type research, but they're primarily a soft money institution. So I don't know if this term has come up in other info sessions that you've all had. But the distinction is that positions that are salaried are considered hard money, meaning how much you're paid, it's just where you are pays you the money. Where soft money means that you have to bring in grant funding. So you have to apply for external funding, and that determines that part of your salary relies on that essentially. So Rand is more of a you start out in a hard money position, but over time it transitions into being a soft money position. And so because of the type of research that people at Rand do. And because of that facet, most people, economists there end up going to policy schools afterward. Or maybe, you know, not necessarily Econ departments. So anything is possible essentially on the market and down the line. But those are some things that you might want to keep in mind, as you're thinking of, even as you're comparing different offers later on. Okay, where does it make sense for me to start out? And if I start out here, what would a transition look like down the line if I wanted to do that? So it's always a good thing to keep in mind.

**Amy Devine-Keum**:

We have a question from Kosha Modi for Miguel. How different is the process of choosing projects and policy.

**Miguel Acosta**:

Hmm! You mean, in terms of your own research or the projects you choose for research or what policy projects? I mean, I could just answer one very quickly. Typically what you're asked to do in terms of your policy work is just a direct function of what section or team you're hired into. So there's a lot of material that the economists at the Fed prepare for policymakers. Every time the policymakers meet to set interest rates, which you don't have a choice in terms of working on that. There's all those materials that need to be prepared. There's some like ad hoc, sort of policy work you can do. But it's you know, a lot of that is determined by what's going on in the real world, and somebody needs to try to say something about it. In terms of your own research. There's no there are no restrictions on what you do with what papers you write outside of your policy work. Often people are inspired by what they see in policy work, or they will be asked to like, something will happen in the world and you'll have to write a memo about it, or try to write something, and that will turn into a paper. So then the policy and the research will look correlated. But that's all. That's by choice that that happens, or by randomness, that something happened that you're interested in studying more. So generally at the Feds, what your research is is unrestricted.

**Amy Devine-Keum**:

Guess I had a follow-up question, what do days look like? You know about life as a PhD student, and are there opportunities to work 24/7? Do you have overtime? Do you have a good work-life balance? Can you talk about that?

**Miguel Acosta**:

Yeah, everybody could answer this, but since I'm talking, or was most recently talking.

So it depends, I mean. I think, like, when I first started out well, during sort of research time, there's a very clear distinction, because you're typically staffed on doing policy work over a given time interval like for a particular policy meeting, like a Fed interest rate meeting, which is, those happen every 6 weeks. So you know, during the 6 weeks I'm on policy, and then, outside of that. You're sort of again, free to choose how you how much or how little you, well, I don't know. I mean, if you don't work at all you're gonna get in trouble.

But I'm just saying there's no real enforcement. So I think I found that I was able to get plenty done by working like normal. You know you go to work and you're there all day, and unless people are distracting you, you have a good amount of time to work, and I, for the most part, found that that was enough. So I wasn't having to work 24/7 on the research side. And then the policy side, like the first time that I did it. I found it pretty hard. And so there were just a few nights where I guess. Well, they don't pay overtime. But I was definitely working overtime. The first time that I did my policy work, just to make sure that I had everything done in time. Because there’s really a schedule. There's certain meetings that happen. And at those meetings you need to bring certain products. Then, you know the second round. And I did think I did 3 policy rounds each time. You know that happened less, and I sort of knew how to manage time, and I got better at the work. So you know, then it really became sort of a normal workday type of job after I got the hang of it.

**Miikka Rokkanen**:

So I can go. So Amazon, I would say, Amazon has been a positive surprise. I somehow thought it might be different. But I have a very healthy work life balance. I definitely treat it as a 9-5, 9-5 job with a twist. And what I mean by that is probably like in many other jobs, there are deadlines. And at least I'm one of those people who likes to say, I claim, that I work best under pressure. So you know, before a deadline, I might work unusual hours, and so on. But then it evens out over time, and the culture is such that we try to, in my org, make sure that there's a healthy work/life balance. Having happy employees is one way to retain them.

And you know, if you have to work hard before a deadline, then we try to even things out. At least for me, when I was in grad school I definitely had very unhealthy working habits. I think as an assistant professor, I kind of had such a smooth transition from being a grad student to being faculty that I continued, with those unhealthy, weird working hours, and so on.

I often said that I was a bad boss for myself. And also, that was the time before kids. One thing I should mention for completeness, is that I became a dad around the same time as I switched to Amazon. So being a dad also brought some structure to my life that wasn't there beforehand in terms of my working life. So to what extent is Amazon versus a kid? I don't know. And again, there's opportunities to work as much as you want at Amazon as well, you know. If you wanna just really be super successful, and so on. You can go and do it, but there's no expectation like that.

**Tatyana Avilova (she/her)**:

So I'll answer the question in the chat about the day-to-day. Also, along with the question about work-life balance. So, like Miikka mentioned, I feel a lot of my bad habits from grad school still persist because it is almost a seamless transition into being faculty.

What my day to day looks like does differ on the time of year significantly. So if it's during the semester and I'm teaching, I would say as much as 80% of my time is spent on teaching. Whether that's preparing lectures, office hours with students for upper level classes that I'm teaching, grading the assignments. You know, preparing all the writing, the assignments for the students, meetings. And then 15% is, 15 to 20% is admin work. And then, during the semester, at least at this point, if I'm lucky to carve out about 5% of time for research, I call that a win at this point.

Now as you transition, you kind of get the hang of teaching. You've had experience teaching more classes, you build up a stock of teaching materials. And you have your classes that you're teaching, that amount of prep. Time is going to shrink.

Necessarily, you know, you might still update occasional lectures, depending on, if a course is based more around current events, you might incorporate some things, some new materials in there, and also just to keep it interesting for yourself. But certainly that balance is going to shift. Now, this is also depending on your institution. The further along you get the more service you're going to have to do for your department, and also the college or university that you're at. So that's serving on, attending academic fairs, advising thesis students, dissertation projects. Or, you know, advising graduate students depending on what you know. If you're at a place with Master's or PhD programs, it could be serving on a search committee, hiring faculty.

The wider you know the college, you might be asked to work on particular committees for the university itself. And so, over time that will also take up, or require more of your attention. And so, being able to protect your research time, and take charge of that is really really important. But you know, those are all the commitments that you have to balance during the semester during breaks especially. Winter break between, for me fall and spring semesters, and then summer. There's essentially once you get the grades in for the end of the semester. The rest is your time and you can use that, however you want. And so over the summer I was able to have a much better work life balance, but also dedicate much more time to research. So, that's essentially what it looks like.

And again, some folks may be better right off the bat kind of dedicating more time to research during the semester. But that's still something that I'm that I'm figuring out. And one other kind of more technical thing that I wanted to mention. When you're looking at academic positions and trying to gauge what the day to day, and the workload is going to look like for that job, they'll often mention teaching load. So, Bowdoin, it's 2/2, meaning that you teach 2 sections each semester. Bowdoin is actually quite generous in that we only teach 2 sections each semester, a lot of other liberal arts colleges have a 2/3, or 3/3 teaching load. I've seen schools that have 4/4. Now, that's the number of sections that you teach. It also depends how many preps you have, so how many distinct courses you have to teach. So this past spring I taught 2 sections, but one prep. And so that already saves you a lot of time. This fall and last fall I have 2 different courses that I'm teaching. So that also adds time, because you're preparing for 2 different classes, of course. But this fall I'm repeating classes that I've taught before, and I have to fix the mistakes of the past with how I'm teaching this semester, but it already feels like I have much more time to kind of dedicate to other things. So those are things to, when you're looking at positions that have a teaching component, to watch out for. And then once you get to the point where you get to talk, you know in fly outs, folks do ask about sort of service commitments as well and what that looks like. And you know, what does service look like for junior faculty at the institution. Other requirements. Is junior faculty, is assistant professor's time protected, and to what extent? So those are all good things to ask about, and don't hesitate to do that.

**Palaash Bhargava**:

Tanya. So there are a bunch of places that sort of talk about 9 month appointments. What does that mean? Get paid for summer.

**Tatyana Avilova (she/her)**:

Yeah. So my position is for 12 months. So the way that I understand it is that for 9 months it basically gives you the flexibility to apply for more grant funding over the summer is my understanding for how that works. But if Miikka and Miguel. If there's sort of different wisdom about that or technicality, please please chime in.

**Miguel Acosta**:

I think I'm on a 9 month appointment. And then there were like a certain number of summer fundings incorporated in my offer, but the number is finite. So I guess as I get closer to that running out, I'll have to. Yeah, it'll give me an opportunity to apply for grants. Basically, that's my understanding. I figured I would worry about it when I got closer to running out of summer funding.

**Emilio Zaratiegui**:

Hi. My name is Emilio Zaratiegui. I'm a 6-year, so I'm on the market currently. I had a question for Tatyana about navigating the postdoc. And the offer, finding the postdoc, and then also talking to the place where you had an offer about postponing the entry.

**Tatyana Avilova (she/her)**:

Yeah, absolutely. So I was applying to everything simultaneously. I was actually in a kind of a funny position, because the postdoc I ended up doing at Utopia was the first offer that I got, and they gave me a very short turnaround that was like 5 days or something, and I was able to negotiate a few extra days.

But basically, what happened is, and this you know more generally. Once you get an offer somewhere you can essentially communicate to all other places where you've had a fly out, that you now have this offer, and here's your deadline to decide on it. And that's totally normal. It doesn't, you're not being pushy by doing that, you're just kind of gently asking like, ‘Can you give me more information about where I am in your hiring process?’. Some places told me that we ‘just extended an offer to somebody else, but their deadline to decide is before your deadline for the postdoc, so we'll let you know after they get back to us’. Other places told me we ‘extended an offer to somebody else, and their deadline is after yours, so probably you won't, you might hear back, but don't count on it. But we'll keep you posted’. And then other places got back to me right away, saying, ‘Yes, we're happy to extend an offer to you’. And so once I kind of knew what my set of options was. I also asked places where I got offers, ‘Would there be an option to defer for a year?’, and some said, yes, and some said, no, like government positions, they're going to want to hire you right away, so it's very unlikely that they'll allow you to defer for a postdoc, more research oriented places. It will depend. I think they're also less likely to allow you to defer. But it might be possible, depending on the kind of postdoc that you get an offer from, and then for academic institutions, I think it also depends. I know that one school did not allow somebody that they made an offer to defer for the postdoc. But then, when they eventually made the offer to a different candidate, because the first one said no, they actually allowed that later person to defer the postdoc. And I think what happens is that as the schools move down their list of candidates from the first round of interviews, they really don't want to have to go to their second list of fly-out candidates and interview them. So it actually might give you a little bit. I mean, you do want to be towards the top of their candidate list, but being towards the bottom also, I think, gives you a little bit more leverage in some sense that you might be able to kind of negotiate a little bit more. But it just depends on the school, and I think the best approach is to be open at that point and say, I'm considering this postdoc, and be able to kind of lay out the argument for: Why it would be beneficial also for the school, to whoever it is that you're talking to, to allow you to take the postdoc. You know how it might benefit your research, how it might benefit your teaching. If you're applying to a liberal arts college, you know what kind of additional experience you'd be able to gain and skills you'd be able to gain from that and just kind of lay out your case, and if they say yes, we allow you to defer. That's great. But if they say no, just say thank you for considering, and then you kind of know what your options are to decide.

**Emilio Zaratiegui**:

Great. Thank you.

**Miikka Rokkanen**:

Can I ask a question from Tatyana?

I think in the intro you mentioned about, being able to talk about how you were signaling the teaching side. I'm kind of curious to hear how you went about that.

**Tatyana Avilova (she/her)**:

Yeah. So for those who are currently on the market, if you haven't already done this, it may be difficult to do, but for those who are 5th year, 4th year.

So what I did is, and you know I'll preface this with, you don't have to do all of this to signal that you're dedicated to teaching, but these are the things that I did. So I was a TA for 4 years at Columbia. I also taught, one summer I was an instructor in the Columbia Summer School. I also did a few workshops through the Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL) on inclusive teaching practices, and, pedagogy and course planning. With all those things, I put all those on my CV, and hopefully, it was a good signal to say, I'm dedicated to teaching, and this is, you know. I take this seriously.

I think what is also helpful aside from doing those, is, CTL does have workshops on how to write a good teaching statement and how to write a good diversity statement. So in addition to having, showing that you've done teaching and have maybe gone to some other workshops. Just going to those workshops to help you to know how to present your ideas about teaching, and you know your thoughts about diversity, I think, is very important. And if you're able to kind of convey those ideas and be able to communicate them, even if you haven't worked as an instructor at the summer school, or you haven't done a lot of other workshops. Then I think you would still essentially, they would not rule you out as a candidate. I think it might be harder if you've only done the minimum required 2 semesters of teaching at Columbia, and the rest of your time was funded, and you have done nothing else related to teaching. I think then it might be a little bit more difficult to signal that, even if your teaching statement is really well written. But you don't need to have dedicated, I think, all your time to teaching as well. So there is kind of a balance.

**Amy Devine-Keum**:

With our remaining few minutes left, as you all have successfully launched your careers: Do you have any advice that you wish you had known while you were in the PhD Program that you'd like to share with all of our current students?

**Miikka Rokkanen**:

So this thing that's happening right now is at least one thing I didn't get. When I was going into the market, meaning that there was a very heavy - okay, that's not totally fair. There was some, but I'm thinking about the tech option, for instance, - there was a lot of heavy, heavy emphasis on the usual research institution track. Again this was 2014, something like going to tech was a little, maybe a little bit frowned upon. So if I had not had an office-mate who would tell me about it, I'm not sure if I would have really learned about this option (Amazon). So, yeah, like, you know, just having someone telling you about these differences, what you can do with your PhD in Econ is a big thing. And sure I would, the technical side, I wish I had known more. You know, coding languages, machine learning, that kind of stuff as well from a technical side. But just knowing the options out there is big.

**Miguel Acosta**:

I think. Well, I don't know how related this is to thinking about careers, but in terms of just grad school success in general, something that now it feels so obvious, but I didn't really realize this. That there's a good reason to listen to your advisors and try to answer their questions and take their suggestions. I mean, for one you should do it because they're good and they're gonna help improve your research. But also they write you letters. And so a lot of times the questions they have are the questions they actually want to know the answer to/see how you answer the question so that they can say nice things about you. That also goes for when you're giving talks, and people ask you questions, you want to have answers to that, because those are people who are going to evaluate your work. So take questions seriously. I think that's my one piece of advice that took me a long time to realize, like its importance.

**Tatyana Avilova (she/her)**:

So just more broadly, we're thinking about kind of more general advice. So one, I would say, don't be afraid to explore different options and apply broadly. It’s fine if you sort of want to target a particular market, but don't be afraid to explore outside of that. Another thing is that, I kind of realized, just going through the market and sort of reflecting it afterwards. There's just so much randomness about what happens, and so many things that you can't control, and you won't ever know about in the sense that. I'll give you an example, that the common wisdom is that in cover letters you should, signal preferences for locations with maybe, ‘Oh, I have family living here’, or ‘I grew up in Vermont’, and ‘that's why I would love to move back to the state that I love so much’. And sometimes schools will respond to you, and sometimes you'll just get no response whatsoever. Just kind of keep in mind that it's not necessarily something that you did. It might just be that for whatever external reason the committee just decided that they wanted to move ahead with somebody else's application. But it doesn't mean that you’re a bad researcher, or a bad economist. So keep that in mind. Lastly, I think, especially at the end of this week, there's probably feelings of a lot of uncertainty about what's going to happen. Just wanna make sure that you all know at the end of the day that it's going to be okay. You know that things will work out. The market shakes itself out usually, all the time, it does and you'll be okay, too. So.

**Miguel Acosta**:

I think you're muted, Amy. Sorry.

**Amy Devine-Keum**:

Thank you. On behalf of everyone, I'd like to thank you all for being here and sharing your insights. I'm sure our students would love the opportunity to follow up with you if they have any questions. and to wish you all the best. Thank you so much for being here.

**Miikka Rokkanen**:

Thanks a lot.

**Miguel Acosta**:

Thank you.

**Tatyana Avilova (she/her)**:

Thank you.