



Academic Interviewing

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Office of the V.P. for Research & Graduate Studies

These slides will be available at:

[http://www.virginia.edu/
vprgs/postdoc/resources.html](http://www.virginia.edu/vprgs/postdoc/resources.html)

GSAS Career Services Website: Academic Interviewing

<http://artsandsciences.virginia.edu/gradschoolcareer/academiccareers/interviewing/index.html>

The screenshot displays the website's header with the University of Virginia logo and navigation links. Below the header is a main navigation bar with orange buttons for Home, Admissions, College, Advising, Graduate School, Research, and Office of the Dean. A large banner reads "GRADUATE ARTS & SCIENCES CAREER SERVICES". A breadcrumb trail shows the path: Home / Graduate Career Services / Academic Careers / Interviewing. The main content area is titled "Interviewing" and contains a list of links: Overview, Before the Interview, Conference Interviews, Phone Interviews, Campus Interviews, Interview Questions, Interviewing Skills, and Resources. A right-hand sidebar menu lists "About Us", "Academic Careers" (with sub-items: The Job Search, Application Materials, Interviewing, Overview, Before the Interview, Conference Interviews, Phone Interviews, Campus Interviews, Interview Questions, Interviewing Skills, Resources), "Offers", "Academic Glossary", "Special Opportunities", and "Additional Resources".

UNIVERSITY of VIRGINIA
COLLEGE and GRADUATE SCHOOL of ARTS & SCIENCES

Contacts | Depts / Units A-Z

Search

Home Admissions College Advising Graduate School Research Office of the Dean

GRADUATE ARTS & SCIENCES CAREER SERVICES

Home / Graduate Career Services / Academic Careers / Interviewing

Interviewing

- [Overview](#)
- [Before the Interview](#)
- [Conference Interviews](#)
- [Phone Interviews](#)
- [Campus Interviews](#)
- [Interview Questions](#)
- [Interviewing Skills](#)
- [Resources](#)

About Us

Academic Careers

- ▶ [The Job Search](#)
- ▶ [Application Materials](#)
- ▶ **[Interviewing](#)**
 - ▶ [Overview](#)
 - ▶ [Before the Interview](#)
 - ▶ [Conference Interviews](#)
 - ▶ [Phone Interviews](#)
 - ▶ [Campus Interviews](#)
 - ▶ [Interview Questions](#)
 - ▶ [Interviewing Skills](#)
 - ▶ [Resources](#)
- ▶ [Offers](#)
- ▶ [Academic Glossary](#)
- ▶ [Special Opportunities](#)
- ▶ [Additional Resources](#)

Academic Interview Formats

Jobs announcements begin to appear in the fall.
Apply for A LOT of jobs.

- Conference/Meeting
- Phone/webcam
- On-site (campus)

On-Site (Campus) Interviews

- At least one day, often two, sometimes three.
 - Multiple meetings (individual/group), opportunities to perform, social situations.
- You are one of two-five invited candidates.
- The institution pays all expenses.
 - Some pay directly, others reimburse you.
 - You may be required to make your own travel arrangements, or they may make them for you.
 - Save all receipts. Do not offer to pay for anything – doing so makes you look desperate.
- People are generally very welcoming and friendly. You will probably enjoy yourself more than you expect!

Interview Format/Agenda

You should receive this information beforehand

- Common components:
 - Meeting with Search Committee (may include faculty from other departments, administrators, residents, postdocs, trainees, students, administrators, etc.)
 - Meeting with administrators (dean, provost, department chair)
 - Job talk/seminar & maybe chalk talk
 - Teaching demo/meeting with students, trainees
 - Tour of campus and area
 - Shared meals, receptions, entertainment

THEIR Perspective

Much ado for good reason

Consider this.

It will help.

If you've been invited to interview, the committee assumes you can do the job.

The interview allows people to evaluate you as a potential colleague.

Filling a tenure-track position
is a big financial investment
and a matter of determining
legacy.

Think in terms of convincing
them that you are
tenurable.

Whether the position is
tenure- or non-tenure-track,
keep in mind that an academic
search is a huge investment of
time, money, and effort on the
hiring side,
and a major feat to coordinate.

YOUR Perspective...

Be purposeful, not passive!

- Know in advance what points you want to make about your fit with the position. Don't depend on the interviewers to draw these out. (Sometimes interviewers are inexperienced at interviewing.)
- Taking some ownership in the process will help you feel less stress and powerlessness.

You will need to address your...

- Research accomplishments
- Research plans, future interests
- Interest in the institution
- Fit
- Teaching

Think R.I.F.T.

Your goal in the interview is
to show that you're
“job ready” –
that you're a
forward-thinking professional
with a future that's
compatible with theirs.

You will be nervous, but...

Think of the interview as a conversation among colleagues.

Show how invested you are in your profession and what you find attractive about their opening.

General Tips

- Consider what you have to offer from their perspective – what has **meaning to them**?
- **Customize** your preparation to each interview.
- Remember that the interview is a two-way street.
(You're evaluating the opportunity, too!)
- In every interview, show that:
 - You've done your homework
 - You're productive
 - You enjoy your work
 - You're comfortable in the classroom
 - You're comfortable in THEIR environment – *important!*
 - You've thought about what it means to be a faculty member
 - And last but not least, that you're a pleasant person.

Before the Interview...

■ KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE!

- Is it a research institution, a small liberal arts school that values teaching highly, a school with a heavy teaching load and a mixed student body, etc.?

- *Thoroughly* research the institution, department, interviewers (if possible), and the students.

Researching the Institution/Department

- Review the institution's mission, history, philosophy, strategic plan, programs and services, etc. to identify its priorities and "brand." Look for recurring key words and phrases.
- Familiarize yourself with the work of the department's faculty, their subfields (read what you can), the courses they teach, and their other professional activities. **VERY IMPORTANT!**
- Know a little bit about the area/community for small talk.

Carnegie Classifications

<http://www.carnegiefoundation.org/classifications/index.asp>

 The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching EVENTS • NEWSROOM • FAQ • CONTACT

Home About Us Program Areas Publications **Classifications** Perspectives Change

Classifications

Lookup & Listings Classification Descriptions Technical Details Summary Tables Resources Staff

Home > Carnegie Classifications > University of Virginia-Main Campus Printer Friendly E-Mail this

back | start over

University of Virginia-Main Campus

Charlottesville, Virginia

Level:	4-year or above	<input type="checkbox"/>
Control:	Public	<input type="checkbox"/>
Enrollment (Fall 2004):	23,341	
Classification	Category	
Undergraduate Instructional Program:	A&S+Prof/HGC: Arts & sciences plus professions, high graduate coexistence	<input type="checkbox"/>
Graduate Instructional Program:	CompDoc/MedVet: Comprehensive doctoral with medical/veterinary	<input type="checkbox"/>
Enrollment Profile:	MU: Majority undergraduate	<input type="checkbox"/>
Undergraduate Profile:	FT4/MS/LTI: Full-time four-year, more selective, lower transfer-in	<input type="checkbox"/>
Size and Setting:	L4/R: Large four-year, primarily residential	<input type="checkbox"/>
Basic:	RU/VH: Research Universities (very high research activity)	<input type="checkbox"/>

To find similar institutions, check the dimensions of interest and click the 'find similar' button

For greater flexibility, use Custom Listings

Notes

Undergraduate program classification: the percentage of majors is within 5 points of a category border (arts & sciences direction).

Undergraduate profile classification: the transfer-in percentage is within 5 points of the category border.

Size & setting classification: the percentage of students in residence is within 5 points of the category above.

Please Note

All-inclusive classifications are time-specific snapshots of institutional attributes and behavior based on data from 2003 and 2004. Institutions might be classified differently using a different timeframe.

Classifications FAQs

Answers to questions you may have about the Carnegie Classifications.

GSAS Career Services Website: Academic Glossary

The screenshot shows the website header for the University of Virginia College and Graduate School of Arts & Sciences. It includes a navigation menu with links for Home, Admissions, College, Advising, Graduate School, Research, and Office of the Dean. The main heading is 'GRADUATE ARTS & SCIENCES CAREER SERVICES'. Below this is a breadcrumb trail: Home / Graduate Career Services / Academic Careers / Academic Glossary. The main content area is titled 'Academic Glossary' and features two entries: AAAS and AAU. The AAAS entry describes the American Association for the Advancement of Science, founded in 1848, which is an international nonprofit organization dedicated to advancing science. The AAU entry describes the Association of American Universities, founded in 1900, which represents 62 of the top research universities in the United States and Canada. A right-hand sidebar contains a list of navigation links: About Us, Academic Careers (with sub-links for The Job Search, Application Materials, Interviewing, Offers, Academic Glossary, Special Opportunities, and Additional Resources), Careers Beyond Academe, Advising, Programs, Current Events, Announcements, Postdoctoral Work, FAQ, Alumni Spotlight, and Useful U.Va. Links.

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GRADUATE ARTS & SCIENCES CAREER SERVICES

Home / Graduate Career Services / Academic Careers / Academic Glossary

Academic Glossary

Academic Glossary*

AAAS

Founded in 1848, the [American Association for the Advancement of Science](#) is an "international nonprofit organization dedicated to advancing science around the world by serving as an educator, leader, spokesperson and professional association." Its journal, *Science*, devotes an extensive section to [science, careers](#).

AAU

The [Association of American Universities](#) was founded in 1900 "to advance the international standing of US research universities." Today it represents 62 of the top research universities in the United States and Canada—including U.Va., one of the AAU's earliest members (1904). The AAU "focuses on issues that are important to research-intensive universities, including research policy

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- Programs
- Current Events
- Announcements
- Postdoctoral Work
- FAQ
- Alumni Spotlight
- Useful U.Va. Links

Remember the Value of People

- Don't hesitate to talk to people who may have knowledge of the institution, department, or faculty.
 - Faculty here at U.Va.
 - Faculty at institutions you attended
 - Alumni at institutions you attended
 - Other postdocs, friends

Researching the Students

- In addition to the department's webpage, consult the pages of the institution's:
 - Office of Admission
 - Office of Institutional Research/Data/Assessment
(this sometimes takes a bit of digging)
- What is the demographic profile of the student body? How many majors are there in the department/division compared to others? Are there recruiting efforts?

Example: U.Va. Admission Page

ADMISSION INFORMATION

Profile

ENROLLMENT (FALL 2007)

13,353 undergraduate students
7,014 graduate and professional students

ADMISSION STATS (CLASS ENTERING 2007)

18,048 applications
6,274 offers of admission
3,260 students enrolling
88 percent of enrolling students ranked in top tenth of class
1280-1490 middle half of class SAT I

ADMISSION DEADLINES 2007 - 2008

First-year regular decision: January 2, 2008
Transfer entering in August: March 1, 2008
Transfer entering in January (Arts and Sciences, Nursing only): November 1, 2007

ADMISSION REQUIREMENTS - FIRST YEAR

In reading applications for admission to the first-year class, we value intellectual ability,

ENTERING STUDENT COSTS 2007-2008

	Virginians	Non-Virginians
Tuition and fees	\$8,690	\$27,940
Books and Supplies	\$1,100	\$1,100
Room	\$3,905	\$3,905
Board	\$3,420	\$3,420
Personal Expenses	\$1,760	\$1,760
Travel	\$340	\$380-\$1,330
TOTAL	\$19,215	\$38,125 + travel

FINANCIAL AID

\$34 million in aid distributed by the [Office of Financial Aid](#)
Most aid awarded on the basis of demonstrated need
Applicants for need-based aid must file the [FAFSA](#) and any necessary University Financial Aid documentation no later than M 1

MERIT SCHOLARSHIPS

Non-need-based aid is offered through ROTC and athletics, and approximately 30 [Jefferson Scholarships](#) are available to first-year students who have excelled as scholars, leaders, and citizens. Information about other merit scholarships can be located on the [Financial Aid Web site](#).

Links to U.Va. info

- Admission page:

<http://www.virginia.edu/undergradadmission/profile.html>

- Institutional Assessment page:

http://www.web.virginia.edu/IAAS/data_catalog/institutional/historical/degrees/school_by_race.htm

The Interview Itinerary/ Agenda

- Know this in advance.
- You may not receive the itinerary until shortly before the interview. Build time into your schedule for last-minute research.
- Get as much information as you can about expectations for the job talk and/or teaching demonstration.

Preparing to Talk About Yourself

- Preparing for standard questions is imperative to performing well in an interview.
- There is no excuse for not thinking about your answers in advance.
- Practice them (preferably with someone else) to ensure that you can present your ideas clearly without talking too long or getting off track.
- Take care not to sound scripted.
- Know the materials you submitted *by heart*.

Generally speaking, research institutions will focus attention on your research, and teaching institutions on your teaching.

You should always, however, be prepared to discuss *both* when interviewing for a teaching faculty position.

Preparation Basics: Your Research

- Prepare to give 2 spiels about your research: for people in your field, and for educated people outside of it. Prepare short versions (a.k.a. elevator speeches, ~1 minute) and longer versions (~5 minutes). *Practice this out loud.*
- Be prepared to discuss the **future direction** of your research. Convince your audience that you're thinking ahead. **The committee will like ideas that do not simply extend your present work.** This discussion will likely include plans for applying for grant funding, collaborating with others in your field, etc.

Preparation Basics: Your Teaching

- In discussing what you would bring to the position, especially your teaching, think in terms of **specifics**.
- Use tightly constructed **stories/examples**. Present the situation, your action, and the result.
- Be prepared to discuss your teaching methods, the use of technology in the classroom, etc., as appropriate.
- As always, keep the needs/mission of the department and institution in mind.

Visit the U.Va. Teaching Resource Center at
<http://trc.virginia.edu>

Interviewing Technique: S.A.R.

- Prepare stories/examples prior to interview focusing on:

Situation

Action

Result

- Concise, vivid, concrete
- Approximately 2 minutes
- Address outcomes

A Word on Attire

(everything is a text...)

- Think in terms of the best dressed person in your department speaking at a conference.
- Avoid overdoing accessories, jewelry, make-up, etc. that detract.
- Remember that **every moment** of interaction is part of the interview, and dress accordingly (e.g. something comfortable but not sloppy for the airport pick-up.)
- Carry your materials in a portfolio or briefcase, not a knapsack. Carry as little as possible.

What to Bring

- Copies of:
 - Your CV, research statement.
 - Reprints, article abstracts.
 - Teaching materials (particularly for small institutions): syllabi, course proposals, class exercises, teaching philosophy, portfolio, evaluations, etc., if you have them.
 - Handouts for your presentation, if applicable.

Note: if you hand out copies of something, don't give yourself one – this prevents looking like you need to review what you wrote.

More to Bring

- Pad of paper for note-taking. Your questions.
- You may want to pack a few snacks. It can be difficult to fill up at meals while conversing with people.
- Cash for unexpected expenses.

During the Interview...

- Be yourself (corny but tried and true).
- Be positive, poised. Smile. Maintain a sense of humor.
- Be **confident** (but not a know-it-all) and sincere. Don't act like you're trying to give the "right" answers.
- Ask for clarification if you don't understand a question.
- Address people as they are introduced.
- Be cordial to *everyone*; shake hands (practice this).
- Show that you would "**hit the ground running**" in every aspect of the job if offered the position.
- Listen and observe.
- Be flexible in unexpected or problematic situations.
- Don't take things too personally and don't let strong opinions rattle you.

Challenge: Be prepared to sustain a high level of energy while repeating yourself a lot.

Remember that every new person you meet is hearing you speak for the first time.

Answering Questions

- Don't hesitate to take a moment to **pause** and think before you respond. Doing so conveys confidence.
- Use the **present and past tenses** at least as much as the future tense to underscore your accomplishments, not make promises.
- Make **eye contact with everyone** in the room, not just the person asking the question.

Research Questions

- Tell us about your research.
- How does your work engage others in the field (e.g. relative to a hot, recent article. Are you on the cutting edge?)
- What is the value of your work to an educated person outside the field?
- What methods did you use?
- What theoretical approaches have had the most influence on you?

More Research Questions

- What are your publication plans?
- What publishers do you think may be interested?
- What journals best suit your work?
- What are the limitations of your work?
- What's your next project/research plan?
 - What resources will you need? Start-up costs? Space? How will you fund it? (Especially important for major research institutions.)
- What grants will you apply for?
- What do you think of X's work?

Teaching Questions

- What is your teaching philosophy?
- Which of our courses are you prepared to teach?
- What is your dream course? (Think both practically and creatively – something that would fit with the department's standard course offerings and something that shows your innovative flair. Size? Level? Course goals? Methods? Graduate/undergraduate?)
- What books would you use to teach X? Are they in print?
- How do you address diversity in your courses?
- How will you adapt your research to provide opportunities for undergraduate research?
- What experience do you have in an environment like ours?
- How has your research influenced your teaching?

General Questions (think “fit”)

- Why are you interested in our institution?
- What do you consider the proper balance between research and teaching?
- How do you see yourself enhancing our department (specific) and institution (general)?
- How will you make the transition from a research institution to a small school?
- Our mission is X (say, at a denominational or single sex institution). How would you contribute to that and to our community?

And...

...toward the end of the interview...

So what do you
think of us?

Also be prepared for icebreakers
and random questions in social
conversation.

Examples:

What do you do in your spare time?

What do you think about the war?

So U.Va. has a new provost, eh?

Reading up on U.Va. news can pay off.

Handling Inappropriate Questions

- Interviewers aren't supposed to ask you about race, age, sex, religion, national origin, physical disability, family or marital status, but some may do so, especially in social contexts.
- React calmly and politely, and respond in a way that addresses the concerns they may have without necessarily giving them the specific information they're fishing for.

Example

- “I imagine you’ll want to start a family at some point...?” (to a woman)
 - Suggested response: “I’m fully committed to this opportunity. I’d love to tell you more about my research/teaching interests, and I’ll pursue those regardless of the personal decisions I make.”
Note how this demonstrates the candidate’s professionalism.
- You’re well within your rights to refuse to answer a question, but remember that people are people – and this might not win them over. Graceful dodging, on the other hand, can allay worries and even impress.

Questions *You* May Ask:

Use this opportunity to demonstrate your knowledge of the institution/department, and gather information. Avoid questions that may come across as confrontational.

- Is this a new or a replacement position?
 - If new, how does it factor into the department's larger plans?
- *Very important!*: How does the department (and institution) define a good faculty member?
- What support is available to junior faculty for research and conferences?
- In what directions is the institution headed (for the dean)? How do you envision the department five years from now (for the department)?
- What are the teaching responsibilities, course load?

More Questions *You* May Ask

- What is the process for tenure? Does family/maternity leave affect the clock?
- What is the department's tenure rate? What is the percentage of assistant professors in the department who have obtained tenure?
- Do opportunities exist for interdisciplinary collaboration?
- What formal and informal structures are there for faculty to interact? Faculty mentoring?
- Describe the ideal assistant professor's first year.
- What is your timeline for making a decision in this search?

Note: Questions that refer to information you've gained during the interview reflect your attentiveness and interest, thus scoring points!

What **NOT** to ask at this point

- Salary (premature until an offer is made, although you may be given preliminary information).
- Healthcare/retirement benefits (usually non-negotiable anyway), sabbaticals, childcare, etc.
- Information you can get from the website.
- Job opportunities for a partner should not be a focal point in the interview — *you* are the one being interviewed. *But* if your acceptance hinges on your partner finding employment in the area, you should mention that s/he would look for a job there as well. How much help the department/institution gives for **spousal/partner assistance** varies.

The Job Talk

- Usually about 30-45 minutes, with 15 minutes for Q&A. *Not* the same as a scientific paper.
- Tailor your content and tone to your audience and the format.
- Practice (preferably in front of others).
- Manage your time well – do *not* go over!
- Work in time to test A/V equipment ahead of time. Bring back up.
- Make eye contact with your audience.

More on the Job Talk

- Show excitement/enthusiasm for your work!
- Give credit where due.
- In a good job talk, everyone in attendance learns something, experts and non-experts alike. Be sure to answer the following:
 - What problem do I address?
 - Why is it important? (Cover this *early* in your talk!)
 - What are my methods?
 - What is significant about my work? How does it advance knowledge in the field?
 - Where am I headed?

Chalk Talk

- Less formal, smaller audience.
- Present research agenda (for first grant).
 - Short- and long-term goals.
 - Problems, techniques, feasibility.
- No slides, perhaps handouts of data.
- Be prepared to write on black- or whiteboard.
- Interactive session.
- Convey importance, contribution to field.

The Teaching Demonstration

- If giving a lecture in someone else's course, request a syllabus and review the readings.
- If speaking on a topic of your choice, ask for a description of the audience.
- When possible, try to engage the students in discussion and be prepared with a back-up plan if no one speaks up.
- Remember that you're being judged on your:
 - Content
 - Public presence
 - Ability to think on your feet.

Don't let down your guard
at any point in the interview!

For example, during car rides
and meals – even if your host
adopts a casual tone –
remember that s/he is not
your friend or confidant but
rather someone who plays a
role in the interview.

Departure

- Shake hands when saying good-bye, if possible. (This applies to meetings throughout the interview as well.)
- Offer to provide additional information or answer questions if the need arises.
- If you want the job, be sure to make that known. If you don't or you're unsure, make whatever positive statements you can in thanking your host/s.

After the Interview

- Send a thank-you letter to the host and/or department head referring to highlights of the interview and reiterating your interest in the position (assuming you're still interested). Ask that your thanks be conveyed to others.
- Promptly submit any paperwork, receipts for reimbursement.
- Wait. Calling/emailing is not acceptable.

Summary of Key Points

- Be purposeful – do your homework.
- Make argument for your fit.
- Convince them that you are tenurable.
 - Your work is exciting – future contributions.
 - Active research agenda.
- Show enthusiasm for your work.
- Show interest in them.
- Convince them that you are a good colleague.

GSAS Career Services Website: Offers

<http://artsandsciences.virginia.edu/gradschoolcareer/academiccareers/offers/index.html>

The screenshot displays the website's header with the University of Virginia logo and name, navigation links for 'Contacts' and 'Depts / Units A-Z', and a search bar. Below the header is a main navigation menu with links for 'Home', 'Admissions', 'College', 'Advising', 'Graduate School', 'Research', and 'Office of the Dean'. The main content area features a large banner for 'GRADUATE ARTS & SCIENCES CAREER SERVICES' and a breadcrumb trail: 'Home / Graduate Career Services / Academic Careers / Offers'. The 'Offers' page content includes a list of links: 'Overview', 'Considerations', 'When to Negotiate', 'What to Negotiate', 'How to Negotiate', 'Accepting and Declining Offers', and 'Resources'. A right-hand sidebar menu lists 'About Us' and 'Academic Careers' with sub-links for 'The Job Search', 'Application Materials', 'Interviewing', and 'Offers' (which is highlighted).

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Home / Graduate Career Services / Academic Careers / Offers

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- [Overview](#)
- [Considerations](#)
- [When to Negotiate](#)
- [What to Negotiate](#)
- [How to Negotiate](#)
- [Accepting and Declining Offers](#)
- [Resources](#)

About Us

Academic Careers

- ▶ The Job Search
- ▶ Application Materials
- ▶ Interviewing
- ▶ Offers
- ▶ Overview
- ▶ Considerations
- ▶ When to Negotiate
- ▶ What to Negotiate
- ▶ How to Negotiate
- ▶ Accepting and Declining Offers
- ▶ Resources

Schedule an Appointment if you would like to:

- Have your materials critiqued
- Conduct a one-on-one mock interview
- Get general interviewing/job search advice

Call 243-4014 or email wperry@virginia.edu

Recommended Reading

- More info available at GSAS Career Services website:
<http://artsandsciences.virginia.edu/gradschoolcareer/academiccareers/index.html>
- Series of articles subsumed under “Conferences, Interviews, and Presentations,” *The Chronicle of Higher Education*
<http://chronicle.com/jobs/topical/conferences.htm>
and under “Getting the Job,”
http://chronicle.com/jobs/topical/get_job.htm
- Heiberger, Mary Morris; Vick, Julia Miller. *The Academic Job Search Handbook*, 3rd edition (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001), 4th edition coming in 2008.

*Making the Right Moves: A Practical
Guide to Scientific Management for
Postdocs and Junior Faculty*

Burroughs Wellcome Fund
Howard Hughes Medical Institute

[http://www.hhmi.org/resources/lab
management/moves.html](http://www.hhmi.org/resources/lab-management/moves.html)

Contact:

Wendy Perry

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Professional Development Programs
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Graduate Studies

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To schedule an appt. call: 434-243-4014

Email: wperry@virginia.edu

<http://artsandsciences.virginia.edu/gradschoolcareer>

<http://www.virginia.edu/vprgs/postdoc/>