

Welcome to Column 12 of Hey Jane! This is a project of the SWS Career Development Committee. Questions and answers are generated by the committee and SWS members. Answers are compiled from several anonymous sources. All columns are archived on our committee's page on the SWS website <http://newmedia.colorado.edu/~socwomen/about/career.html>

Disclaimer: The author of this column responds to both hypothetical questions and specific questions posed by SWS members. The situations addressed in the column are typically NOT reflective of the author's own personal life or current professional status.

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HEY JANE!

"How do I negotiate being pregnant or nursing an infant while I'm on the job market?"

JANE SAYS:

How you deal with being pregnant on the job market will depend in large part on what stage of pregnancy you are in – each stage presents unique challenges. Women who are nursing while on the job market encounter yet another set of challenges. The two main concerns that women who have been on the job market while pregnant or nursing express are 1) when or whether to bring it up and 2) “controlling” the body during an interview.

*When to disclose a pregnancy:

Most people would recommend waiting as long as possible before disclosing a pregnancy. It's probably never a good idea to bring it up in a cover letter of a job application. Rarely would it be a good idea to reveal a pregnancy prior to a campus interview. The one exception to this is if you are in a very late stage of pregnancy and you are unable to fly. In this case, unless you're lucky enough to have a local interview, you might request a phone interview with a follow up campus interview some time after your delivery date – of course this will depend on the department's schedule for hiring.

If you are in the early months of pregnancy and not “showing” you might consider waiting until you have an offer on the table to tell the employer about the pregnancy. If your pregnancy is visible, you will likely need to address this during the campus interview. You might say something like, “As you can see I am pregnant. I'm due in May and will be fully prepared to begin working in August.” If this takes the interview in the direction of more personal questions, you should be prepared to redirect the focus back to your professional goals, highlighting your research agenda and plans for future projects.

No matter the stage of pregnancy, you should be prepared to address the issue (either during the interview or once you have an offer) and to let the hiring department know you have a plan that will balance your needs with the department's needs. Keep in mind that the Family and Medical Leave Act (as well as other leave policies) - only applies if you've been an employee for 12 months. Some institutions may be willing to work with

you on this, but they may not be legally obligated to facilitate a parental leave for a brand new employee.

If you will want to defer your appointment for a year or more, it may be best to defer your job search. You probably shouldn't even hint at delaying your start date until an offer is on the table

Prior to the campus interview, you should have as much knowledge as possible of the institution's policies. It also helps to be willing to do as much as possible before the baby's arrival and during any leave you might take.

Once you have an offer on the table, it's time to get creative with negotiating. Some things you could ask for:

- * To delay your start date until Spring.
- * A reduced teaching load for the first year or for the first semester (or a reduced number of preps).
- * Paid or unpaid leave for the first semester (but you would still receive benefits)
- * Administrative duties in lieu of teaching for the first semester.
- * Help in getting your courses covered (guest lectures, etc) for a couple of weeks.
- * On-line courses that could be taught from home for a semester

Of course as with any negotiation, you may not get exactly what you want, so it's important to be flexible. It's also important to let the department (and larger institution) know that you are concerned with their needs too and want to work with them to figure out a way to balance their needs with your needs. (See Hey Jane volume 8 – on parental leave - for more creative ideas

<http://newmedia.colorado.edu/~socwomen/about/HeyJanecolumn8505.pdf>)

*Managing the Body:

Even if the pregnancy is not visible, you are likely to have to consider your body. For example, you may be more easily distracted than usual, and so may want to consider taking careful notes during both a phone interview and/or a campus interview.

While it may be possible to “hide” an early pregnancy, you may be suffering from morning sickness or may have to use the restroom more often than usual. You might request a copy of the itinerary prior to arriving at the campus interview and at that time, ask if would be possible to schedule some breaks during the day. You might want to make sure that you carry water or juice and some crackers with you incase you feel nauseous during the day.

Another sticky position you might find yourself in is a lunch or dinner situation where someone insists that you have a glass of wine. A simple “no thank you” usually works, but if you feel that you need to have an excuse, you might say something like, “I'm afraid a glass of wine right now would put me to sleep.”

If you are visibly pregnant, the need for breaks might be more apparent to hiring department, although it still might be the case that you have to request an occasional break or two.

Regardless of the stage of pregnancy, you should dress professionally for the interview. There are plenty of companies that sell professional maternity clothes. It is also possible these days to find very comfortable and supportive professional looking shoes.

***Nursing:**

If you are nursing while you are on the job market, you basically have two options during campus interviews: you can bring your child and caregiver with you (at your own expense) or you can find time and space to pump. One SWSer who chose to bring her partner and child to the interview was asked by the department to bring her family to dinner and on a campus tour.

Even if you are lucky enough to have some scheduled breaks during the interview day, this may not be sufficient if there are no private spaces for you to pump. One SWSer suggested bringing along a manual pump (quieter than an electric pump) to be able to make the most out of whatever space is available. It's possible that to find an appropriate space you may have to enlist the help of someone in the department. Figuring out the "right" person to approach about this may not be an easy task. You can't assume that all women will understand, and you can't assume that no men will understand. Check out faculty CVs before you arrive (which everyone on the market should be doing anyways), is there anyone whose research is on balancing work and family or on reproductive health or breastfeeding; is there someone in the department who appears to do feminist work? Once you are on campus, do you see pictures of children in anyone's office or a Girl Scout cookie sign-up sheet on anyone's door? These kinds of things may give you a sense of who you might find as an ally. If you have worked with an administrative assistant or office manager to arrange your travel plans and itinerary, you might feel comfortable asking this person for help. Administrative assistants are often some of the most resourceful people on campus.

***For Hiring Departments:**

For those readers who may find themselves in the position of interviewing candidates who may be pregnant or nursing, there are things you can do to make this process easier. For example, regardless of the job candidate (pregnant or not), why not schedule some downtime in the interview schedule. Academia is unique in its multi-day, marathon interview. I can't imagine any candidate who wouldn't appreciate regular bathroom breaks and a little "backstage" time during the day. You might also consider telling all candidates (again, regardless of gender or pregnancy status) about family leave policies at your institution, just as you might explain health care and retirement. You can also help by being flexible and creative during negotiations. If it is not possible to delay the start date or to offer parental leave in the first semester on the job, is it possible to offer a

reduced teaching load, to cover the new hire's courses for a couple of weeks, to assign on-line course for the first semester, or to have the new hire take on administrative responsibilities rather than teaching the first semester.

*One last note:

The most important thing to remember is to approach pregnancy and breastfeeding on the job market in a way that is most comfortable to you. Don't assume that all departments will resist your request for accommodations or that these request will automatically work against you in the interview process, and if they do, consider whether or not you would really be happy in this type of department.

CAVEAT to all professional advice: Always check with your departmental colleagues, chair, dean, etc. to find out what the norms and expectations are in your institution. And consult with your professional mentors to determine what is most appropriate in your specific situation.

I hope this helps! Stay tuned next month for Question 13: "I am due for a sabbatical, how do I line up something really interesting/unique/fabulous during that time?"

-- Jane

Do you have a question for Jane? E-mail it to lara-foley@utulsa.edu.