

# Central APA 2018 Committee Session: “How to Get and Keep a Full-Time Position at a Community College”

Report compiled from the notes of Nathan Kellen

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This report is the compiled from my notes of the Central APA 2018 Committee Session: “How to Get and Keep a Full-Time Position at a Community College”. The session panelists were:

- Richard Legum (Kingsborough Community College - CUNY)
- William Behun (McHenry County College, Illinois)
- Bill Hartmann (St. Louis Community College - Forest Park)
- Andy Wible (Muskegon Community College)
- Kristen Zbikowski (Hibbing Community College)

The following are my notes of the panelists’ discussion. No attempt has been made to differentiate between individual panelists’ views or points. All potential misinterpretations are due to my note-taking. I have opted to reprint my notes sorted roughly by category, rather than in the order presented by the panel. My interpretation of various statements and how to present and categorize them is present throughout.

## Who is a Community College Position For?

Community college (CC) positions are very different from positions at other higher ed institutions (OHEIs).<sup>1</sup> Some of these differences will be discussed in the next section. Some are relevant to whether a CC position is for you.

First and foremost, a CC position is **only for those dedicated to teaching**. As a full-time CC position is a primarily teaching position, and may involve no research whatsoever.

CC applicants may be interested in serving their communities as a public servant. You have an ability to teach students who may not otherwise get higher education, and may thus help further their goals and lives in a way that are more obvious than at an OHEI. CC applicants may be community-minded, and interested in improving their community through more than just classroom education.

CC applicants may be interested in a challenging position, given the nature of the CC student body (described in the next section). CC applicants may be interested in philosophical pedagogy and innovative teaching methods.

CC applicants need not be American citizens or green card holders (as opposed to adjuncts). Because CCs are public institutions, they are typically able and willing to hire non-citizens.

CC applicants must have a minimum of 18 graduate credits in philosophy or a closely related discipline. CC positions do not always require a PhD, although the market has become competitive enough now that most full-time positions go to PhDs.

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<sup>1</sup>I will use this term often to distinguish between community colleges and non-community colleges, hence the abbreviation.

# The Nature of a Community College Position

CC positions are very different from non-CC jobs, including both “research” and “teaching” jobs at small liberal arts colleges (SLACs) or universities.

## Teaching Load

A standard teaching load is 5x5.<sup>2</sup> Some CCs have summer teaching, and you will be expected to teach at least one course in that term, bringing the total load to 5x5x1. Some panelists report hearing some CCs moving towards 6x6 loads due to budget cuts.

## Community College Students

The student body of a CC is diverse in multiple ways. CCs, like many OHEIs, are often diverse in terms of race and gender.

CCs are also diverse in terms of *academic preparedness* in a way that OHEIs rarely are. CC students come in with a varied distribution of academic preparation; some might have high school diplomas or GEDs, others may have previously gone to other higher ed institutions, some may be immigrants from countries with different academic standards and secondary education, and some may be adult learners of various different backgrounds. There is no standard CC student in the way you might be familiar with a “standard college freshman” at OHEIs. CCs do not have entrance requirements other than a high school diploma or GED, also affecting the range of student preparedness.

In addition to diversity in terms of race, gender and academic preparedness, a CC student base is more likely to be diverse in terms of nationality, English as a first or second language ability, age, income status and previous family higher education experience.

## Teaching at a Community College

CC instructors are expected to treat teaching as their primary job, because it is. Unlike at OHEIs, you are not required to balance research and teaching (in any ratio). Teaching is the primary goal. **CC jobs require a commitment to teaching, and are not advisable for those not passionate about teaching.**

## Administrative Duties

CC instructors do have administrative duties like their counterparts at OHEIs. Instructors may serve on committees regarding race, nationality or gender of the student body. CC instructors may also serve on panels uncommon at OHEIs, including ones having to do with the nature of the CC student body, e.g. a panel which serves the economically disadvantaged part of the student body. CC instructors will also serve on hiring committees, including those of different disciplines, and not necessarily just the humanities.

In addition to committee work your position may also have a built in administrative position, e.g. “Philosophy Certificate Coordinator”. If you later move to a pure administrative position (e.g. dean) your position will likely not be held for you (as opposed to at a OHEI).

## Full-Time and Tenure Track

There are indeed full-time CCs positions (as opposed to adjuncting). Sometimes these are listed as *full-time* and sometimes as *tenure-track*. Just because a position is not listed as being tenure-track does not mean it is an adjuncting or fixed-term position; the school system may just not have an official tenure system like OHEIs.

Unlike at OHEIs, including “teaching jobs” at SLACs, publication is **not** a requirement for tenure at CCs. If the CC has tiers of instructors (e.g. ‘Associate Professor’, ‘Professor’) a very small (1-2) amount of publications may be required to achieve a promotion. Not all schools have such tiers, and may just have all instructors at the same rank.

Full-time jobs do not require re-negotiation at the end of each year.<sup>3</sup> Full-time positions may have a 1-3 year probationary period where you can fail to be re-appointed at the end. Once this probationary period is over no re-appointment is needed at any point, and you are effectively tenured, even if not by that name.

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<sup>2</sup>Read: 5 courses per semester.

<sup>3</sup>Barring particular political climates which require this, e.g. in VT.

# Community College Position Compensation

CC position benefits are overall similar to faculty compensation and benefits at OHEIs, despite the many differences between the two types of positions.

## Salary

Most CC positions will start around \$50k, except for areas in which the cost of living is significantly higher than the nation average, in which the salary will also be raised. Salary raises over time, and can be competitive with many OHEI positions. One panelist reports making \$100k.

## Benefits

CC positions will have benefits often comparable to other public servants', including health insurance, life insurance, dental, vision and retirement plans.

CC positions also routinely have higher ed specific benefits, including free or greatly reduced tuition for employees and dependents. If the CC is part of a wider network, this waiver may also apply to other schools in that same network.

Teaching sabbaticals are sometimes available. Stipends for the development of new courses are often available if a proposal is put together.

## Contracts

CC position contracts are often available online at the CC website. Because CC positions are unionized you can rely on the contract numbers being what you would expect, were you to take the job.

## Applying to Community Colleges

Applying to a community college position is *very* different from applying to OHEIs.

One theme which was touched on again and again, and which I will flag immediately: **every application must be tailored to the specific institution**. When you apply to a community college you are, in part, applying to be part of a community, and care must be taken to show that you recognize this.

## When to Find Community College Jobs

CC positions do not follow the job market schedule set by OHEIs. Some CC positions are advertised as early as February, but most are advertised from April-May. It is common for the application open period to only last a month.

## Where to Find Community College Jobs

CC positions are rarely advertised on PhilJobs. There are a number of other places to find CC positions, including:

- Chronicle of higher Education
- Inside Higher Education Daily Email Newsletter
- Jobs Registries, e.g.: <https://www.ccregistry.org/jobs/index.aspx>
- State CC/public colleges network website

All jobs will also be posted on the individual CC's website. Some jobs may *only* be posted on the CC's own website. Look at each target CC's website and look for "employment", "jobs", "careers". Search for "full-time".<sup>4</sup> Search for both "philosophy" and "humanities".

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<sup>4</sup>Noting again that not all CCs have a tenure-track system.

## The Application

CC positions will generally require the following in an application:

- Cover Letter
- CV
- Transcripts<sup>5</sup>

CC applications will generally **not** require letters of reference. If they do, your letters should be focused on your teaching. Do **not** send huge packets of teaching materials; they will not be read.

### Cover Letters

**Your cover letter should be tailored to each institution.** Your cover letter should talk about your teaching philosophy. If you have a personal connection to the community (e.g. you are from there) you should note this in your cover letter. A cover letter should be no more than two pages. Make it clear in your cover letter that you know about this particular institution and that you want that particular position, in that particular community.

### CV

Your CV should list your teaching experience first. You should list all of your teaching experience - including all adjuncting positions. If you have taught at community colleges previously, make sure that is clear. If you have previously attended a community college, make sure to indicate that.<sup>6</sup> If you have taught online courses, be sure to indicate this specifically. If you have taught courses outside of philosophy (e.g. 'World Religions') indicate this.

If you have a long publication record, you might consider listing "Selected Publications" in order to avoid looking like a flight risk.<sup>7</sup> If you have teaching related publications, e.g. papers in *Teaching Philosophy*, be sure to list those.

### Application Forms

Most applications will also require you to fill out an actual application form. Be sure to fill out any forms sent to you, including those which ask for information already contained on your CV. Do not omit anything from your application forms.

## Interviewing for a Community College Position

If you are invited to interview for a CC position you should be aware how such an interview differs from OHEI interviews.

### Pre-Interview Process

You should research the members of the hiring committee online before your interview. You should plan to walk around the campus to get a feel for the campus and school before the interview. Check out the bookstore and see which books are being assigned for courses that you may be asked to teach, as there is a chance that the school will ask you to continue using the same book that is currently assigned.

### Interviewing on Campus

You will generally be required to pay your own way to a CC interview. Interviews will happen on campus. Interviews will happen at most a month before the semester begins; often as little as a week or two before. Interviews may last as little as an hour and a half in total.

<sup>5</sup>To prove you've had minimum 18 graduate credits in philosophy.

<sup>6</sup>As opposed to leaving it off your CV, like you may for an OHEI application.

<sup>7</sup>This is not an idle worry; if you have the record of a high-powered researcher, you should consider making it clear in any way possible that you want this teaching-focused job.

## **The Interview**

The hiring committee will almost always be interdisciplinary.

### **Teaching Demonstration**

Your interview will always include a teaching demonstration. The goal is *student engagement*. If all you do is lecture, expect to fail. But don't go too outside your comfort zone; be sure you are familiar and comfortable with the teaching methods you are demonstrating. Try to look at the courses currently offered and their syllabuses and books.

Because your audience is interdisciplinary, aim for something practical and immediate value and to avoid history. Keep your teaching demonstration simple, and be sure to practice it with colleagues multiple times in order to be fully comfortable. Avoid giving too much information. Aim for 15 minutes, 20 minutes max.

### **Interview with Dean**

You will also interview with the dean, as you would at an OHEI. The dean will be given a list of finalists to choose from, so aim to impress them as well as the hiring committee. The dean may choose someone the hiring committee does not designate as their favored candidate; a sword which cuts both ways.

### **Post-Interview**

After the interview, consider calling one of the committee members to get a post-interview report and determine what went well and what didn't, and whether they might have any comments. Do not pressure the committee member to give you details, but they may offer some which will help you in any future interviews.