

Academic Career Survey Executive Summary

Earlier this year, the American Floral Endowment began surveying academic professionals about their experiences and advice to help young professionals interested in pursuing an academic career in horticulture learn more about the field. In Fall of 2021, the survey gathered data from 22 respondents with various backgrounds.

Almost all respondents work within the horticulture or plant science departments at public institutions. The department sizes varied widely. While almost half have more than 20 faculty members, nearly 20% have less than 10. Most of the institutions have more than 15,000 undergrads, although 35% of them have fewer than 15,000. More than 80% provide four-year degree paths, while the rest offer two-year programs.

Practically all the respondents have more than 16 years of experience as a faculty member and most work as either professors, associate professors, or assistants and earn salaries over \$100,000.

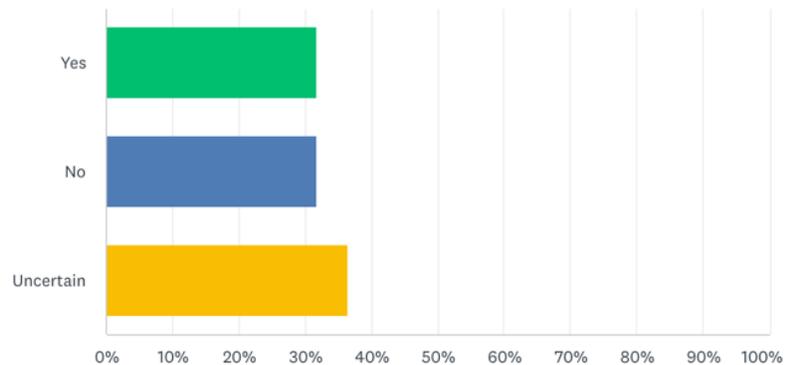
While most respondents held faculty positions for a long time, **at least one third mention that their departments will be looking to hire new floriculture faculty in the next one to three years.** The majority noted that these job openings typically receive between 0-50 applications.

According to 85% of respondents the best place to find academic job postings is the career page of university or college websites. 60% also mentioned that their departments post open positions through the American Society for Horticultural Science (ASHS). While many industry professionals post job openings on Indeed or social media sites, less than 1/6 of academic institutions will use those platforms.

Department websites and the ASHS may be great spots to look for a job; however **nearly 75% of respondents mentioned they earned their roles through graduate school or networking connections.** Maintaining a strong professional network will not only introduce candidates to

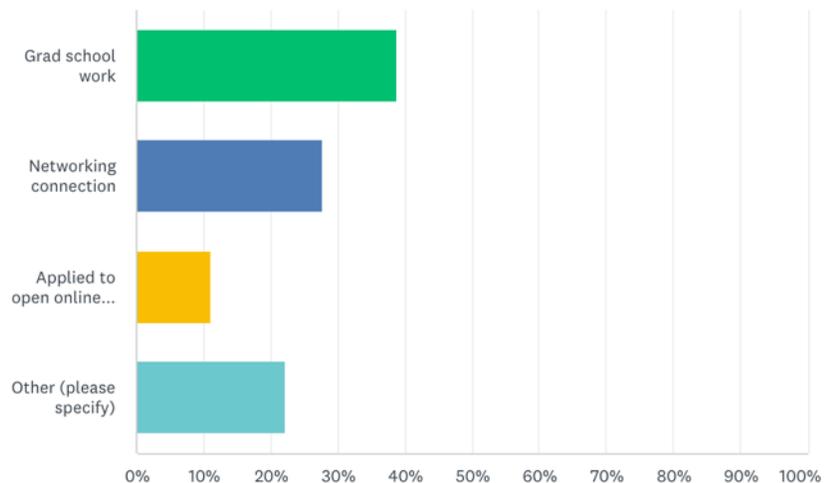
Does your department have or plan to hire any new floriculture faculty in 1-3 years?

Answered: 22 Skipped: 0



How did you get the job that you're in?

Answered: 18 Skipped: 4



potential job opportunities but will be helpful in corroborating interpersonal skills.

Concerning the actual positions, the survey suggested a diversity of roles exist. The amount of time spent working on a floriculture crop varied both widely from 0-100%. The ratio of teaching to research also varied widely, although almost all respondents noted that at least some of their time was dedicated to both.

When preparing for a role at an academic institution, many stressed the significance of having both strong teaching skills and meaningful research experience. Grant writing, publishing volume and other evidence of research output were all considered “must-have” skills and experiences. Respondents also advised that someone preparing for an academic job in floriculture should seek “real teaching experience in college” and take education or teaching related courses.

Common Must-Haves for Academic Applicants



Familiarity with the up-to-date issues in the industry and a breadth of plant knowledge are also helpful for candidates interested in securing open positions. The demand for hard skills is balanced with a need for soft skills. **Institutions are looking for faculty who have strong interpersonal skills with both the ability to collaborate with other faculty members and patience to work with students.** Excellent written and verbal communication skills are considered equally important as the hard skills.

While earning a position at an academic institution requires multidisciplinary experience in both teaching and researching, the reward of working in a diversity of roles with passionate department members makes an academic career in horticulture promising.

Here is some highlighted advice quoted directly from academic professionals through the survey:

Advice for Young Professionals Entering Academia

What advice would you give to someone preparing to find their first academic job in floriculture?



"Publish, write some grants, pursue superior "soft" skills; be technically competent and know why you do your work."



"All aspects (teaching, research, outreach) are important to represent what you can contribute. Ultimately, though, do what you love--if you're a teacher, don't take a heavy research appointment and vice versa."



"Network with people in the floriculture field, both in the academe and industry."



"Have as much experience in the sector as possible (research, internships, etc.)"



"If at all possible, take any type of education/teaching courses if there is ANY interest in teaching. Or if there ISNT any interest in teaching."



"Try to keep a part time job in the industry to keep in touch with people and their methods."

Advice for Young Professionals Entering Academia

In your opinion, what must-have traits, skills, or experience should an applicant show on an academic job application?



"Thesis research should demonstrate sound statistical design and analysis. They should have excellent letters pertaining to being a self-starter; takes initiative; experience teaching."



"The person needs to show he/she can think on their feet and is willing to learn and make changes in their teaching and research styles as the person matures in the job."



"A cover letter is just as important as your CV. Show enthusiasm."



"It would help to show a clear career path in one area, rather jumping around too much among different sectors."



"High trust, strong desire to learn, the will to ask for help."



Young Professionals Council

This survey and data were made possible through the American Floral Endowment's Young Professionals Council.

Established in 2015, the YPC offers leadership and networking opportunities for young industry professionals while getting involved in volunteer opportunities within the floral/horticultural industries.

YPC members participate in online and in-person meetings, webinars, and other networking opportunities to share ideas, collaborate with influential industry members, and help promote careers in the floral industry to support AFE's mission.

YPC Benefits:

- Professional development through career tools and webinars
- Networking opportunities with industry experts and peers including a private Facebook discussion group for members
- Growth for the floral industry through sharing connections, events, and resources

Membership is FREE! To learn more and join, visit endowment.org/ypc.