Things I’ve learned getting an assistant professor gig and doing it for a less than a year

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My Story

• Born in Los Angeles
  – Did very little to be proud of.

• Did my undergraduate degree (Math/CS) and MEng at Cornell, got exposed to databases

• Did my PhD at Washington with Dan Suciu
  – Got Married

• This year, started as an assistant professor at Wisconsin
  – Found out what cheese curds are.
Getting the Job

Choosing the Job

Doing the Job
Getting the Job

• Job market is always tough
  – Is this year worse than last year? Probably!
  – Lots of stress.

• Apply everywhere you are interested.

• Interviews are fun: talk to smart people about their work.

• Interviewing tips:
  – You are interviewing them as much as they are interviewing you.
  – The talk matters.
  – Please send thank you notes.
Choosing the Job

My two most important questions:
(1) Are these people that I want to be around and will they help me get better?
(2) Will my wife be happy if I move there?

• (1) is the most important, but fortunately easiest.
  – DB people are uniformly nice, very smart, and hard working. It’s great!
  – As a junior person, everyone knows more than you do – and there is a lot to learn.

• (2) Well…. not much you can do here.
  – My wife is the best. So, it will probably be more difficult for you.

Not on my list: salary, best startup package, in a particular city, etc.
Doing the Job

• My first technique: “Drive the job like you stole it.”
  – It’s only fun if you are doing what you want.
  – This doesn’t mean you do what you want all the time...

• Ask senior people for advice and listen

• Listen to your students.

• Identify your weaknesses and try to fix them
  – I work hard, because I’m lazy.
  – Also, impatient, easily distracted, don’t know enough... there are lots of things to fix.
Summary

• It’s all about the people.

• Looking for a job is the best experience you’d like to never do again.

• Doing the job is a lot of fun.