

Improving Your Odds of Employment at a Liberal Arts Institution

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Western New England University

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RULES FOR THE TALK

Interrupt and ask questions at ANY time, whether about applying for jobs, or about Western New England University.

Everything on these slides is based on my opinion! Others may have completely different advice.



MY BACKGROUND

Grew up in Indiana, father a
mathematics professor

Undergraduate degrees from Purdue

Graduate degrees from UCLA

Currently at Western New England
University, also had experience at
Trinity College, Hartford



JOB HISTORY

Ph.D. 1997 (job market not good)

Interviewed at the Joint Mathematics Meetings in San Diego

Great interview with Trinity College in Hartford, CT (top tier liberal arts college) for one of two three-year visiting positions

Campus interview in February, offered one of the positions



TRINITY EXPERIENCE

2-3 Teaching Load

Thrown into teaching Introductory Statistics

Talented undergraduates

Treated as an equal by the department

Won a teaching award

Asked to stay a fourth year, with a tenure-track position then opening up

Campus politics...

WESTERN NEW ENGLAND

Wanted to stay in the same geographic area

Interviewed at Joint Math Meetings in New Orleans

Tenure-track position at Western New England “College”

12 credit hours/semester (almost always two preps),
reduced to 9 hours contractually

Was given three years off the tenure clock

Dean of Arts and Sciences is a mathematician!
(Berkeley Ph.D., 1983)

WESTERN NEW ENGLAND

Private, independent, co-educational institution
founded in 1919

Originally part of Northeastern University

3700 students,
including 2550 full-
time undergraduate
students; 80% of
undergrads live on
campus



THE DEPARTMENT

14 full-time members

Bachelors degrees, Master of Arts in
Mathematics for Teachers

Services the Colleges of Arts and
Sciences, Business, Engineering, and
Pharmacy





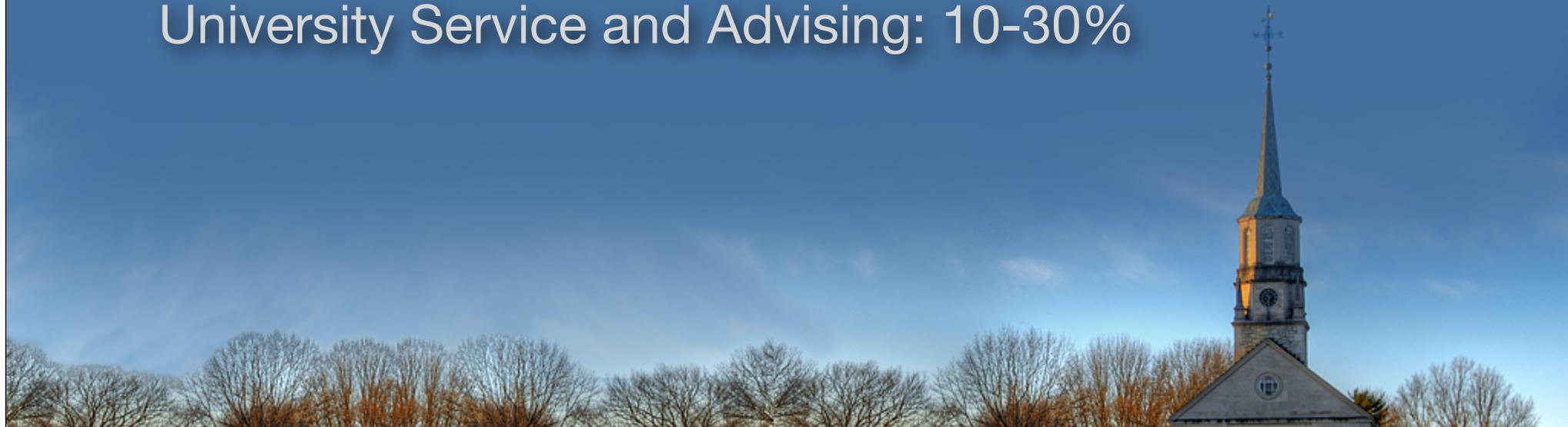
THE DEPARTMENT

Percentages for Annual Review, Tenure,
and Promotion:

Teaching: 55-65%

Scholarship: 15-35%

University Service and Advising: 10-30%



THE DEPARTMENT

Have served on five departmental hiring committees, as well as one for Dean of Engineering, and outside member of four other committees

Hiring again this year for a tenure-track position...!



APPLICATION PROCESS

Start early in the fall (or earlier, if possible)

Ask references for letters

Materials: Cover letter, teaching letter, research letter, CV, letters of reference

Get registered for [MathJobs.org](https://www.mathjobs.org)

MathJobs.Org



OUR RECENT SEARCHES

Before MathJobs: (2005) 129 applications
for tenure-track

After MathJobs:

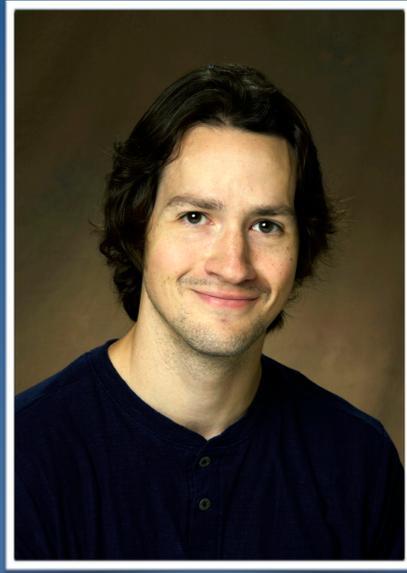
(2011) 550 applications for tenure-track

(May-June of 2013) 150 applications for
one-year visiting, teaching four courses
per semester



RECENT SEARCHES

Our #2:



WAYS TO STAND OUT

APPLY EARLY

Our deadline is November 10

Posted three weeks ago, have 40 applicants

More eyes will see your application earlier, and you can float to the top earlier



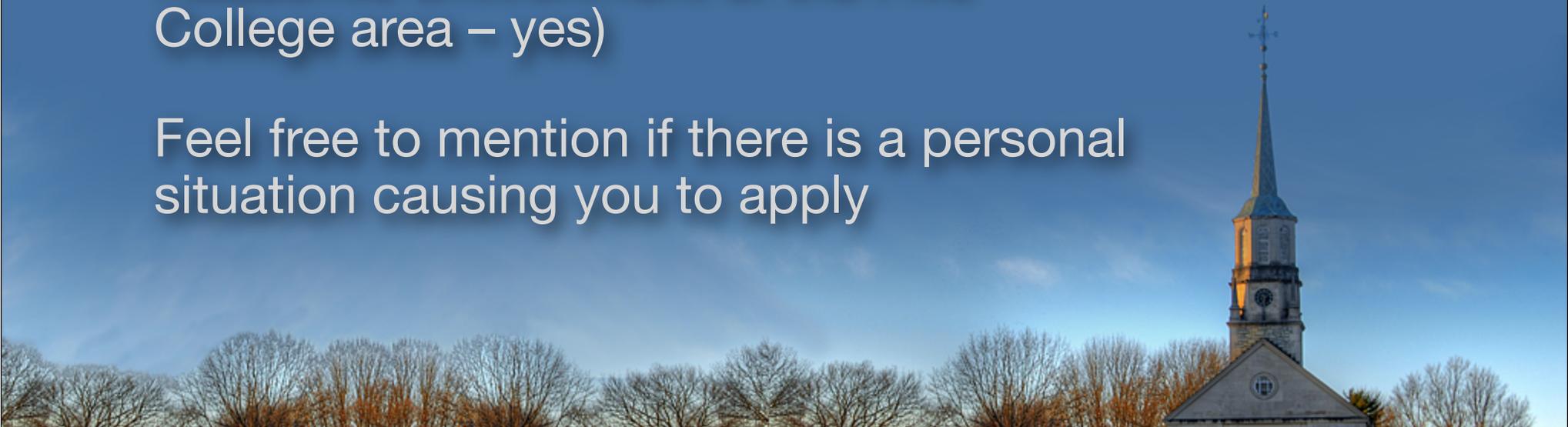
WAYS TO STAND OUT: COVER LETTER

Personalize your cover letter!!!

If possible, show genuine familiarity with the geographical area or department

(Shopping in Northampton – no;
Academic environment of the Five
College area – yes)

Feel free to mention if there is a personal situation causing you to apply



COVER LETTER:

Emphasize awards, number of courses taught

Emphasize website, blog, technology

Attending the Joint Meetings

Interest in Project NExT



COVER LETTER:

YOU WANT TO BE REMEMBERED AS
“THE ONE WHO...”



TEACHING STATEMENT

We want to see:

Awards

Experience in the classroom

Anecdotes

Technology

You would be comfortable with a small class size (25-30 students per class)



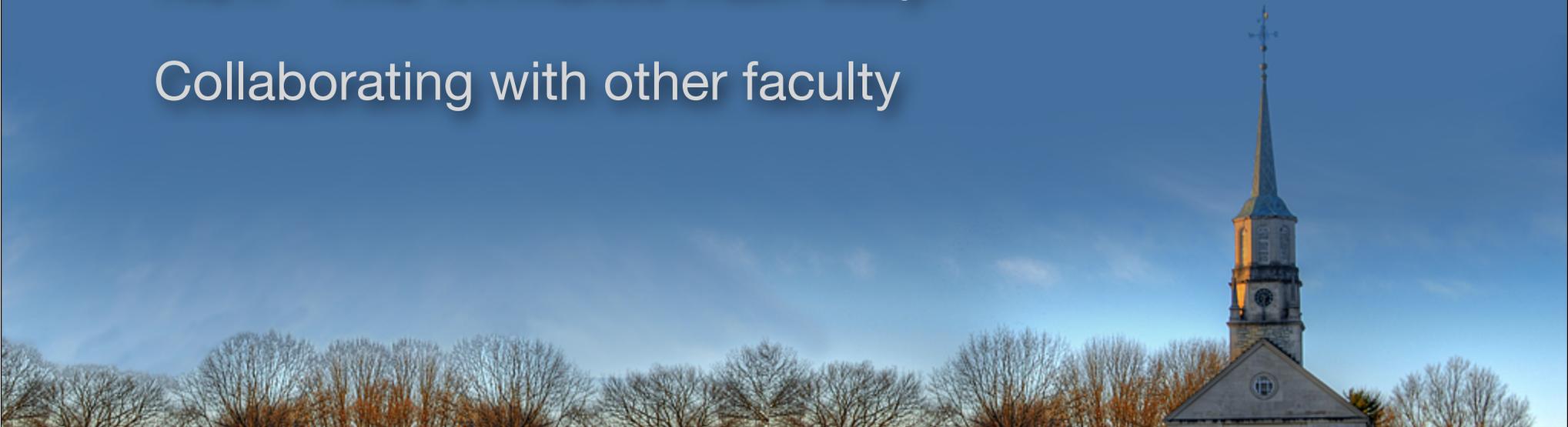
TEACHING STATEMENT

Grading open-answer homework instead of web-based homework

How you would work with smaller classes (e.g. activities in Intro Stats)

NOT: “The TA makes math easy!”

Collaborating with other faculty



RESEARCH STATEMENT

May want a couple versions—one for research institutions, one for teaching institutions

Your chance to show you can communicate mathematics effectively

For us: Research Plan—How will you continue your research at an institution such as ours?



CV

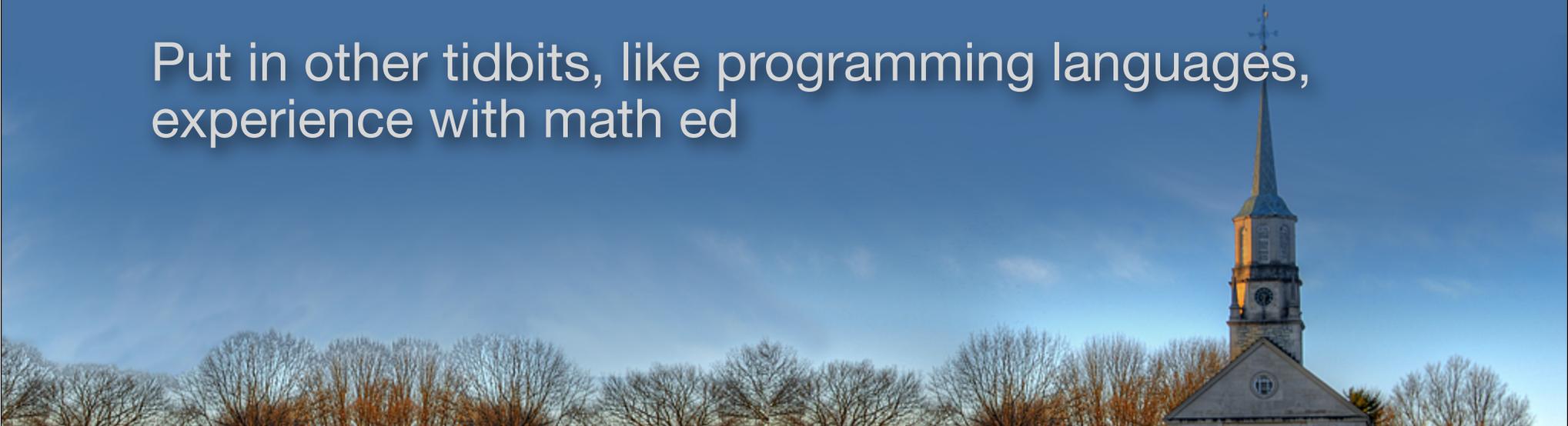
Easy to read

Cell phone number easy to find!

Emphasize AWARDS, publications and teaching experience

Member of AMS, MAA, SIAM, AWM...?

Put in other tidbits, like programming languages, experience with math ed



LETTERS

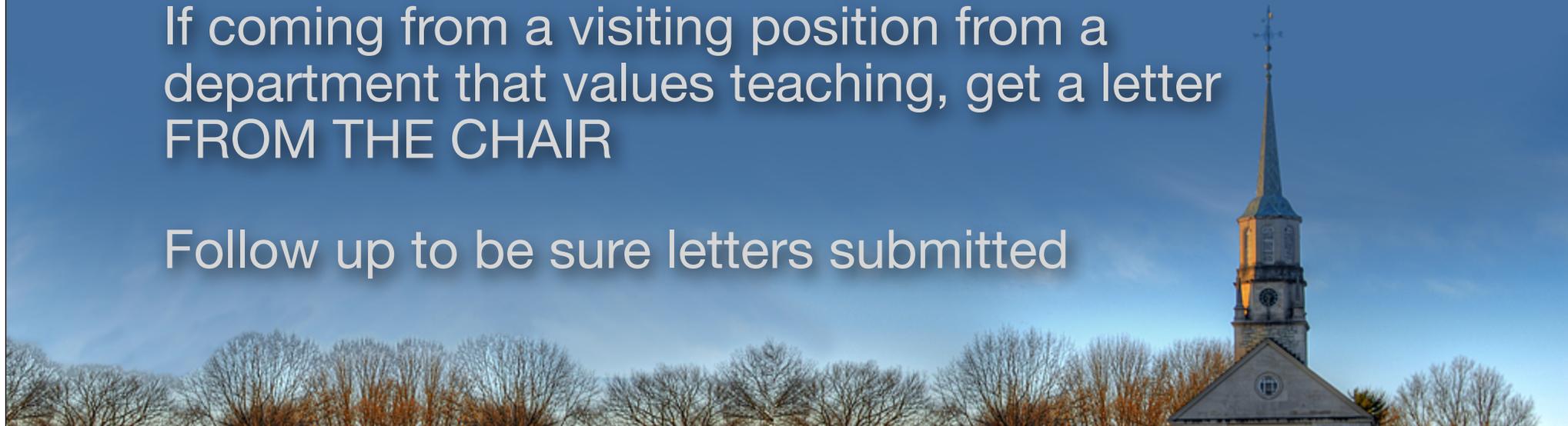
Don't stick with three

Try to make sure someone can comment in detail on your teaching

Especially if English is not your native language, try to have a reference comment on how well you communicate in English

If coming from a visiting position from a department that values teaching, get a letter FROM THE CHAIR

Follow up to be sure letters submitted



PROOFREAD x100 !

HAVE 100 OF YOUR FRIENDS AND COLLEAGUES PROOFREAD YOUR DOCUMENTS

HAVE YOUR PARENTS PROOFREAD YOUR DOCUMENTS

HAVE YOUR PETS PROOFREAD YOUR DOCUMENTS

Be open to suggestions and criticisms!



GRAD SCHOOL (EARLY YEARS)

Of course, the thesis comes first

Keep file of activities, experiences, anecdotes, evaluations

Have faculty start observing your classes

Get involved in situations where you can show leadership (Remember “Service” at WNE is 10-30%!)

Give talks, and NETWORK, NETWORK, NETWORK!!!



GRAD SCHOOL (EARLY YEARS)

Assist in REUs

Attend Joint Mathematics Meetings

Of course, the thesis comes first

Publish as early as possible



JOINT MATH MEETINGS

Largest mathematics meeting in the world (6600 at the JMM in San Diego last year)

Plan to stay the entire time – schools may want to do second interviews with you or have other members of the department meet you

Give a talk



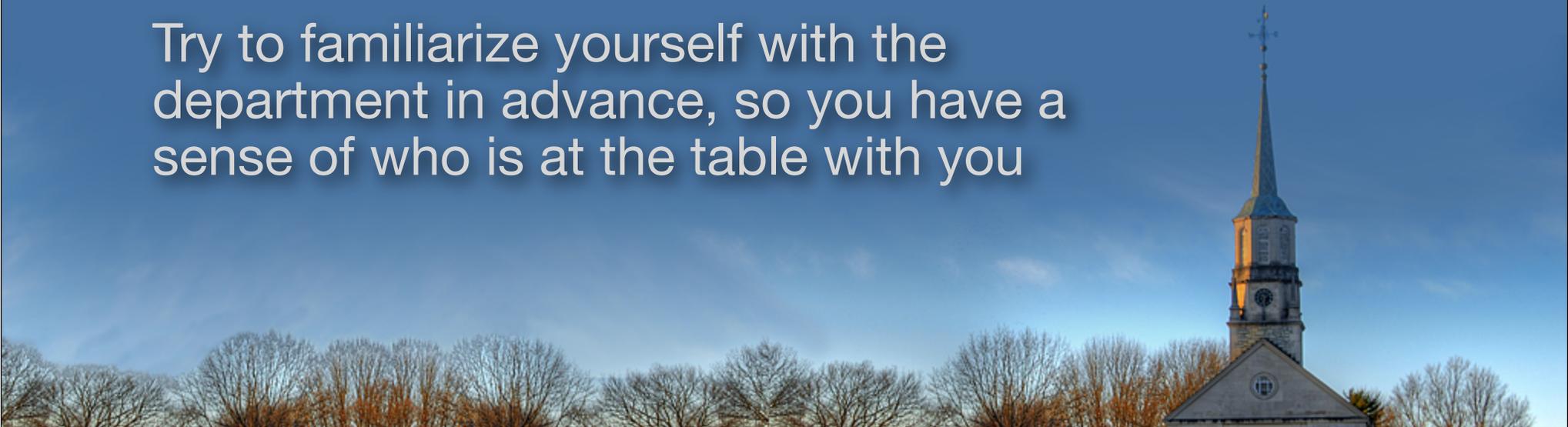
JMM INTERVIEW PROCESS

Set up interviews in advance – length will depend on the school

WNE – The Department Chair calls those we're interested in

We use the Employment Center

Try to familiarize yourself with the department in advance, so you have a sense of who is at the table with you



Mathematical Sciences Employment Center

<http://www.ams.org/meetings/national/jmm13-highlights>



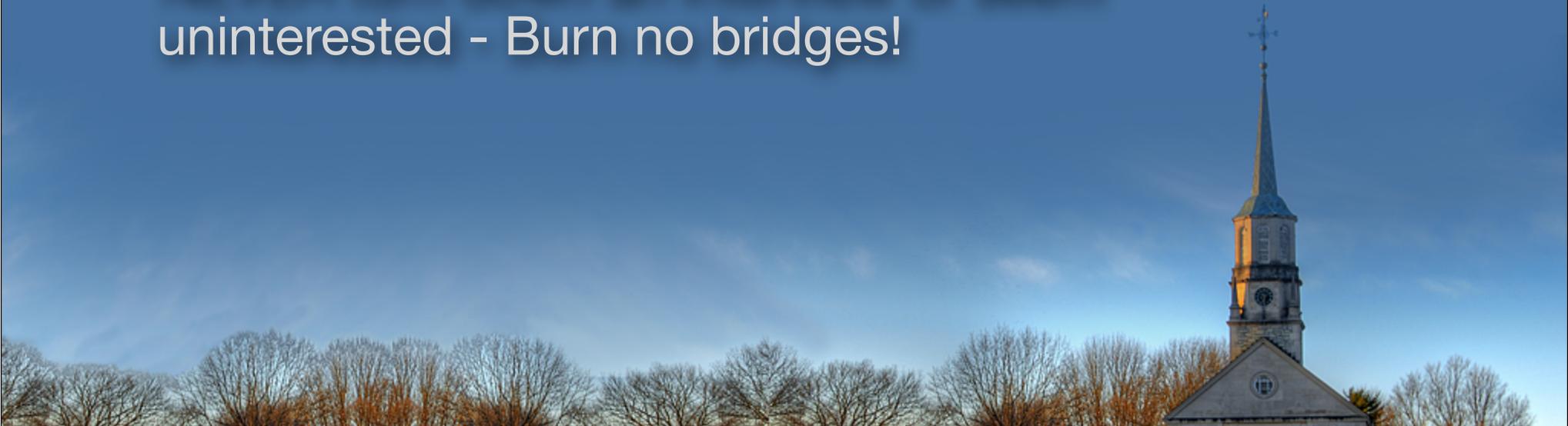
The **2013 Employment Center** was held at the San Diego Convention Center. Communications now occur through Mathjobs.org accounts, and most interview invitations were issued by employers prior to arriving in San Diego. The interviews occurred over three and one half days and included about 100 employers and 800 applicants. The numbers are similar to last year's numbers. A new Employment Center layout provided additional privacy during interviews and the applicant waiting area, with a more relaxed and open feel, offered a quiet place to wait and check Mathjobs.org accounts until the scheduled interview time. Employers also utilized their own private lounge area with internet and printer access. While many job candidates were hoping that more employers would be present, all in all, those participating found it to be a quiet and centrally located setting to hold interviews. Reactions to this new layout were positive, and many noticed that the tension level throughout the area seemed diminished. A [video](#) was posted the day before the Employment Center opened to orient participants. (Photos by Sandy Huffaker.) --- *Colleen Rose, Membership and Programs*

JOINT MATH MEETINGS

Practice interviewing with your friends
(Session at Mathfest 2013)

The earlier you reply, the more interested
you seem

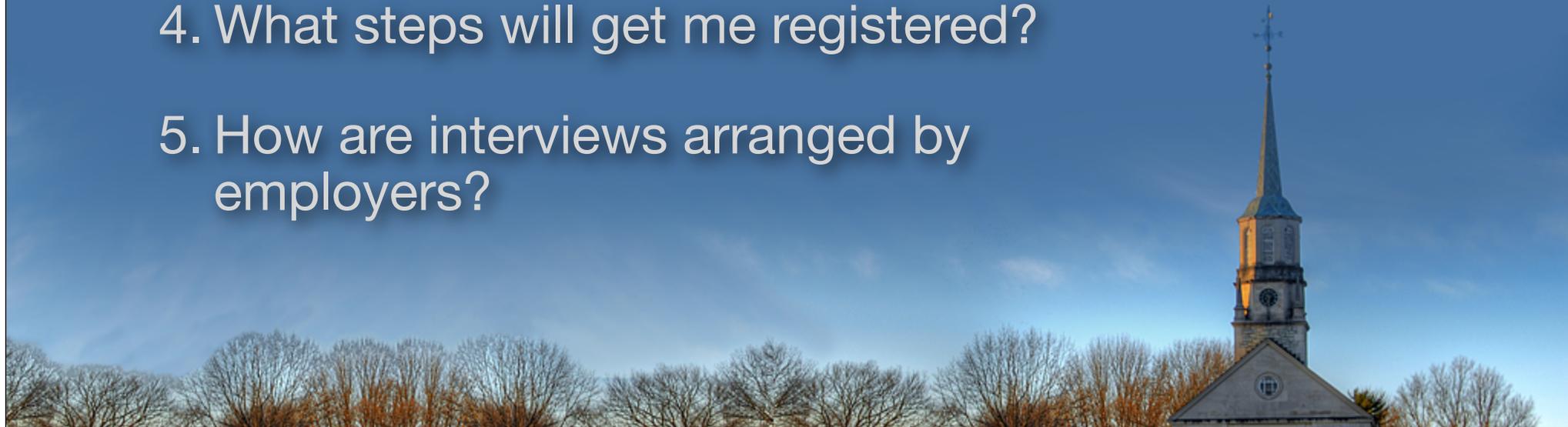
NEVER turn down an interview or seem
uninterested - Burn no bridges!



JMM INTERVIEW PROCESS

<http://www.ams.org/profession/employment-services/employment-center/app-info>

1. Should I participate?
2. What kind of employers are there?
3. What are my chances of getting interviews?
4. What steps will get me registered?
5. How are interviews arranged by employers?



JMM INTERVIEW PROCESS

<http://www.ams.org/profession/employment-services/employment-center/app-info>

6. When can I see which employers are interviewing there?

7. Is there a deadline?



JMM INTERVIEW PROCESS

<http://www.ams.org/profession/employment-services/employment-center/app-info>

8. What happens on site in Baltimore?

When you arrive before an interview you will need to wait in the Applicant Waiting Area at the Employment Center, Baltimore Convention Center, Baltimore.

When the employer is ready, he or she will come to the door, call your name, and lead you to the interview table.

The Employment Center also provides computer access to Mathjobs.org at stations located in the entryway.

JMM INTERVIEW PROCESS

<http://www.ams.org/profession/employment-services/employment-center/app-info>

9. What new info will I find at the Employment Center that I didn't see on Mathjobs.org?

None. But staff will be available to answer any questions.

Also, the Joint Committee on Employment Opportunities (JCEO) offers appointments for interview coaching.

Applicants are invited to use the sign-up sheet located at that table to schedule a one-on-one career consultation.

JMM INTERVIEW PROCESS

<http://www.ams.org/profession/employment-services/employment-center/app-info>

10. What should I bring to the Employment Center?

Pack suitable clothing for job interviews; these could occur over a period of 3 - 4 days.

It is always polite to have a brief version of your resume in hand to give to interviewers who may not have a paper copy. Copying is expensive at a convention, so bring those from home.

There are no printers at the Employment Center.

JMM WNE INTERVIEW

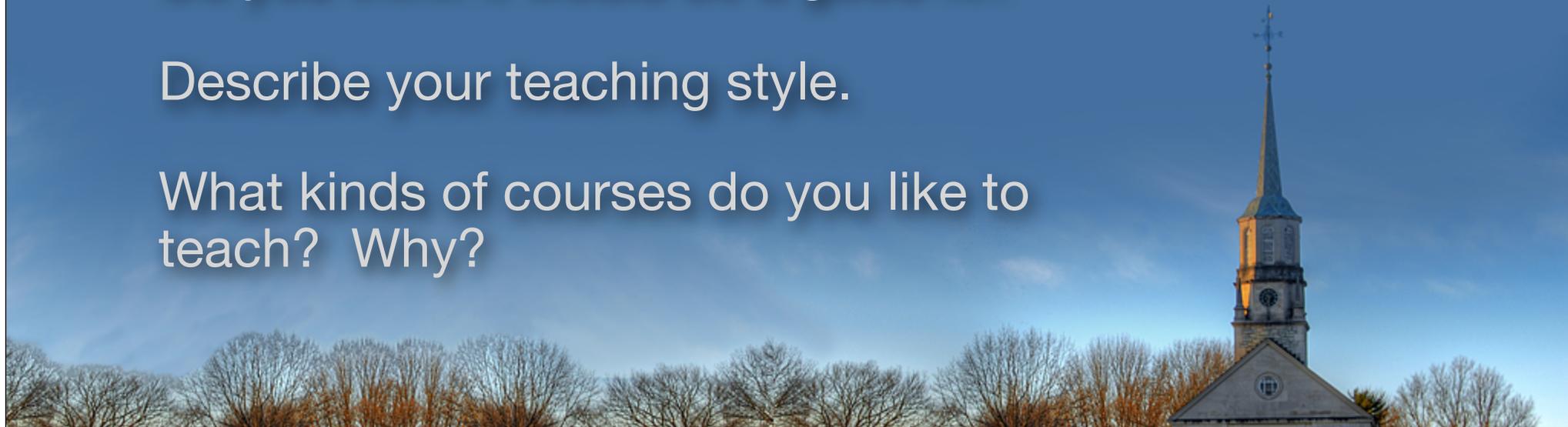
We usually start with a description of the university, then ask general questions

Examples:

Why are you interested in our institution?
Do you think it would be a good fit?

Describe your teaching style.

What kinds of courses do you like to teach? Why?



JMM WNE INTERVIEW

Tell us a little about your research.

Do you have a plan for how you would continue your research at our institution?

All the graduating seniors have to complete a senior project. Do you have ideas for projects you might like to do with the students?



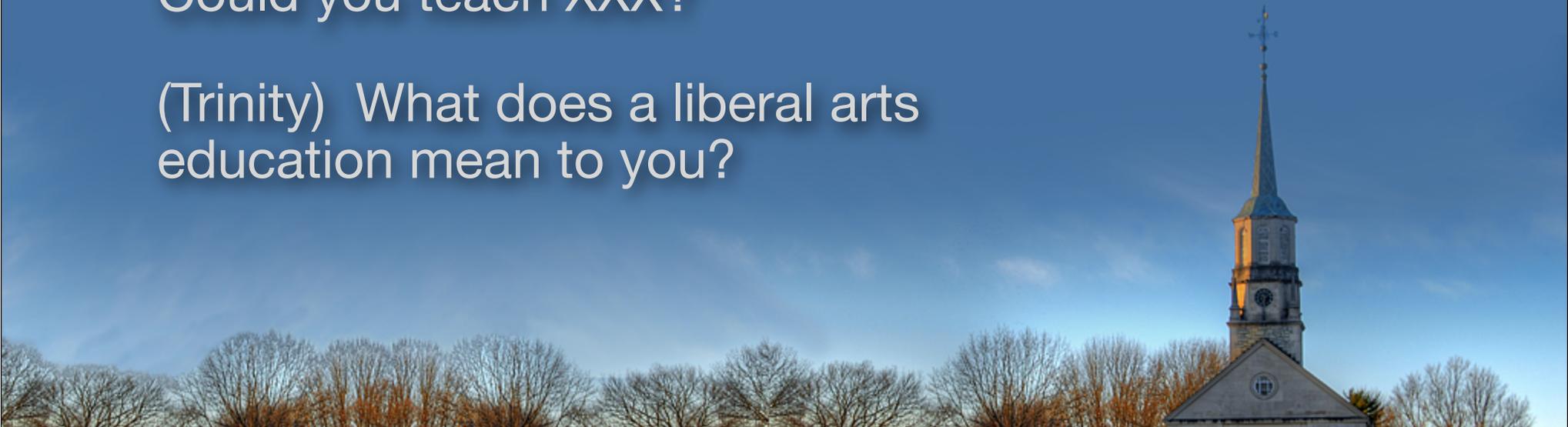
JMM WNE INTERVIEW

Do you have interest in participating in the Math Club? What kinds of activities or talks might you suggest?

Would you be interested in teaching in our Master's program in Mathematics for Teachers? What course ideas?

Could you teach XXX?

(Trinity) What does a liberal arts education mean to you?



QUESTIONS YOU MIGHT ASK

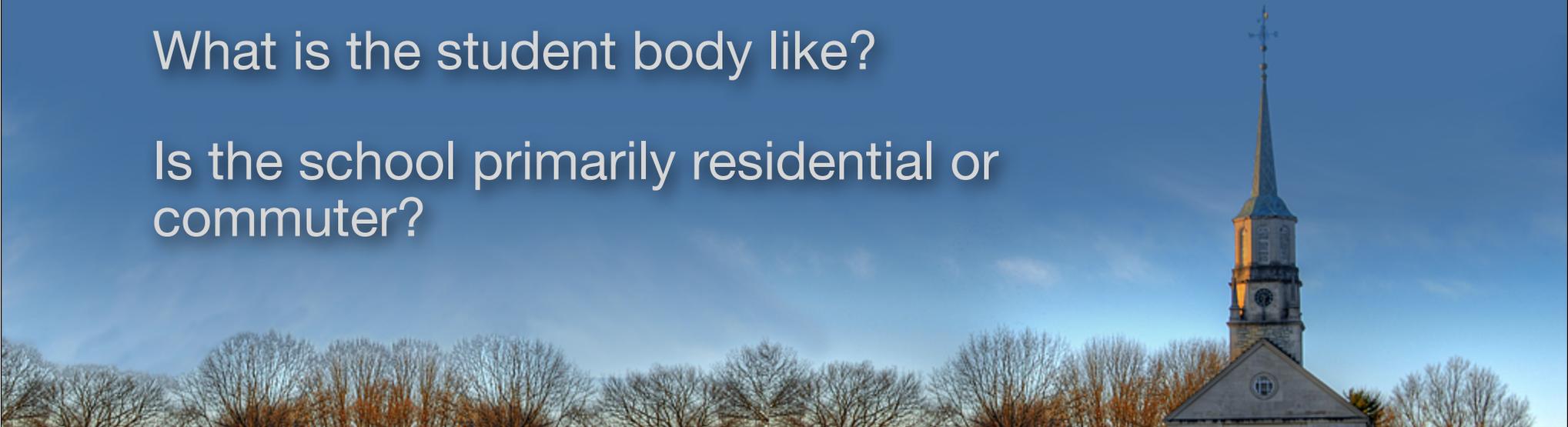
How large is the department? Is there much interaction with other departments?

What are the research expectations?

What is a typical teaching load and course schedule like? How many preps do most department members have?

What is the student body like?

Is the school primarily residential or commuter?



QUESTIONS YOU MIGHT ASK

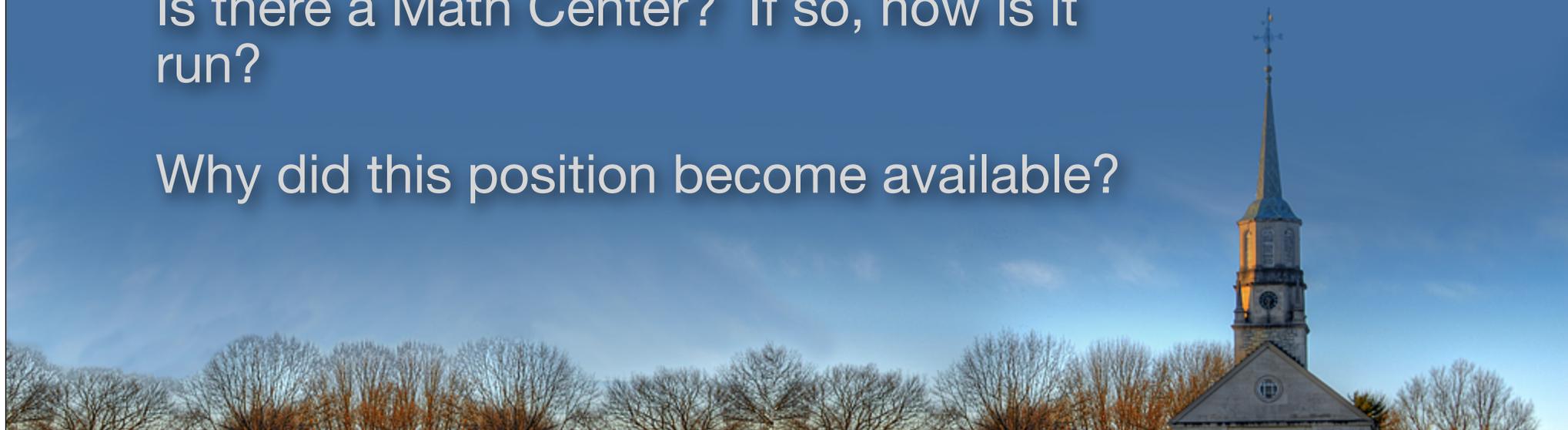
What is the geographical area like? How far away is XXX?

What are the math majors like? Are there separate tracks for the math majors?

Is there a Math Club, and how active is it?

Is there a Math Center? If so, how is it run?

Why did this position become available?



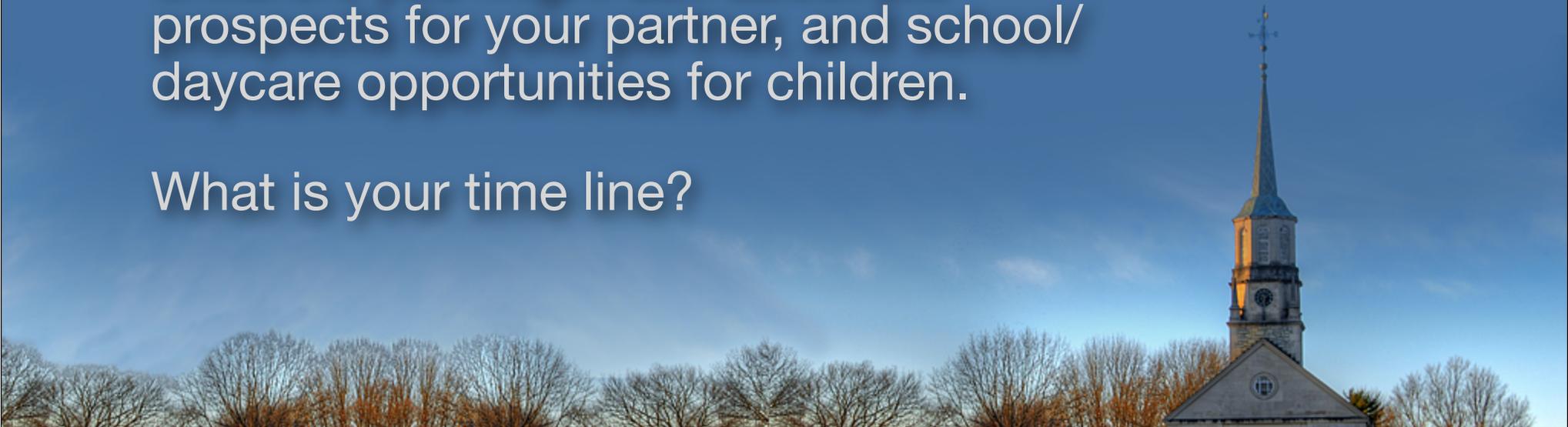
QUESTIONS YOU MIGHT ASK

Is there department support for travel?
For summer research?

Do faculty members teaching the same course collaborate much? Is there freedom to select textbooks?

If you have a significant other and/or children, you might ask about job prospects for your partner, and school/daycare opportunities for children.

What is your time line?



INTERVIEW STYLE

Try to fit in as much about yourself as you can

You may want to take notes, but don't overdo it—keep eye contact as best you can

The room is big—speak clearly and loudly. Remember that you are being hired for your skills presenting information. Don't be a “low talker.”

Let your personality come through!

Send thank-yous



SKYPE INTERVIEW

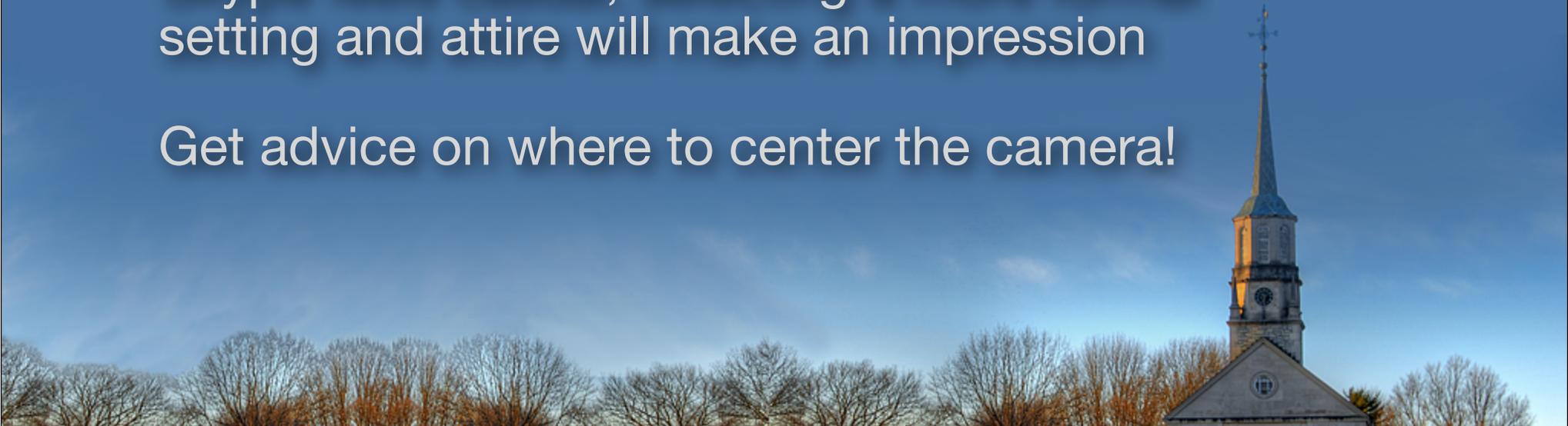
Did our first Skype interviews this past June

The speed of the connection can make all the difference—try to get as fast a connection as possible

Test connection before scheduled interview

Skype feels casual; selecting a more formal setting and attire will make an impression

Get advice on where to center the camera!



SKYPE INTERVIEW

You probably want to keep kids and pets out of the room.

If university students are participating in the interview, include them too!

For fun, perhaps you want to ask to see the office/building/window where the interviewers are?

Send thank-yous



ON-CAMPUS INTERVIEW

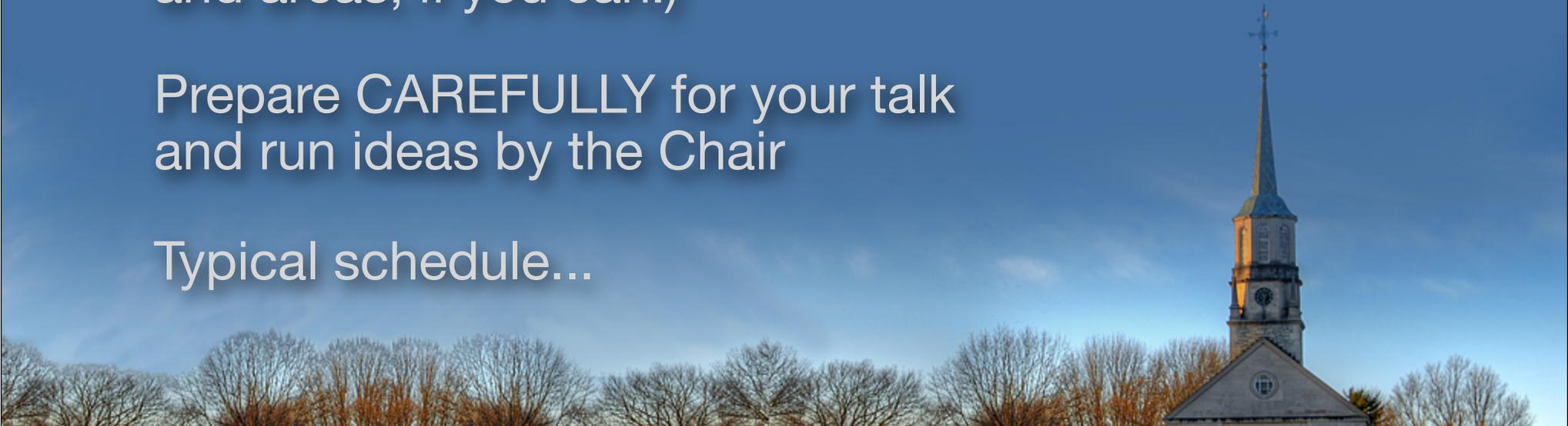
We move quickly!

Exciting, but draining—be prepared to be “on” for 24-48 hours

Come to campus having done your research on the institution, the area, and the faculty (memorize names and areas, if you can!)

Prepare CAREFULLY for your talk and run ideas by the Chair

Typical schedule...



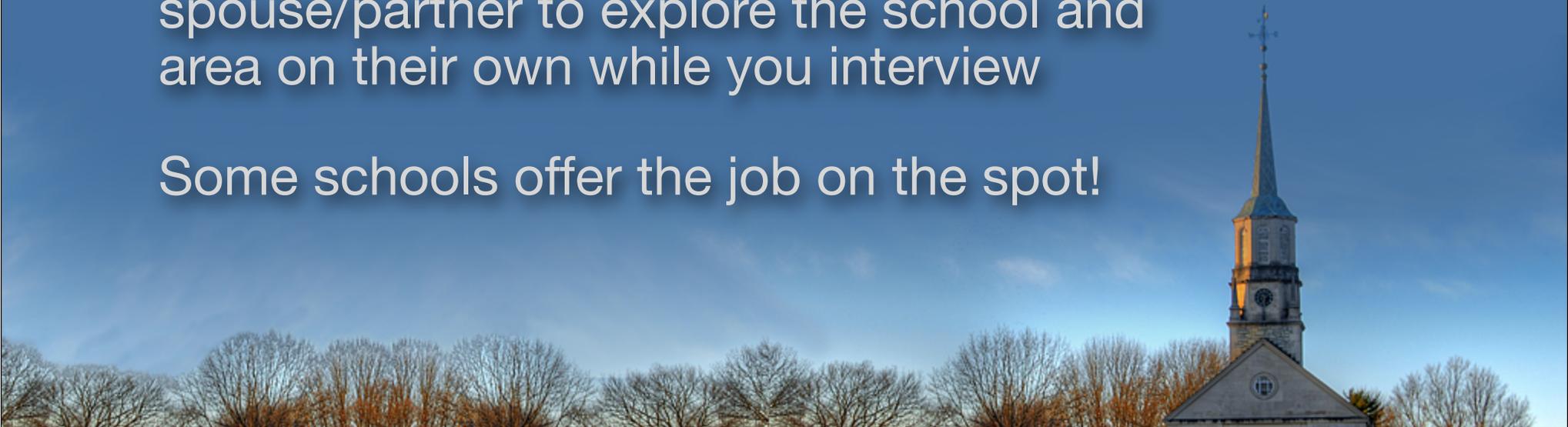
ON-CAMPUS INTERVIEW

If you are in an interdisciplinary field, feel free to ask to meet with members of another department

Be prepared for weather delays at either end!

Might want to consider bringing your spouse/partner to explore the school and area on their own while you interview

Some schools offer the job on the spot!



FURTHER (MORE PRECISE) QUESTIONS TO ASK

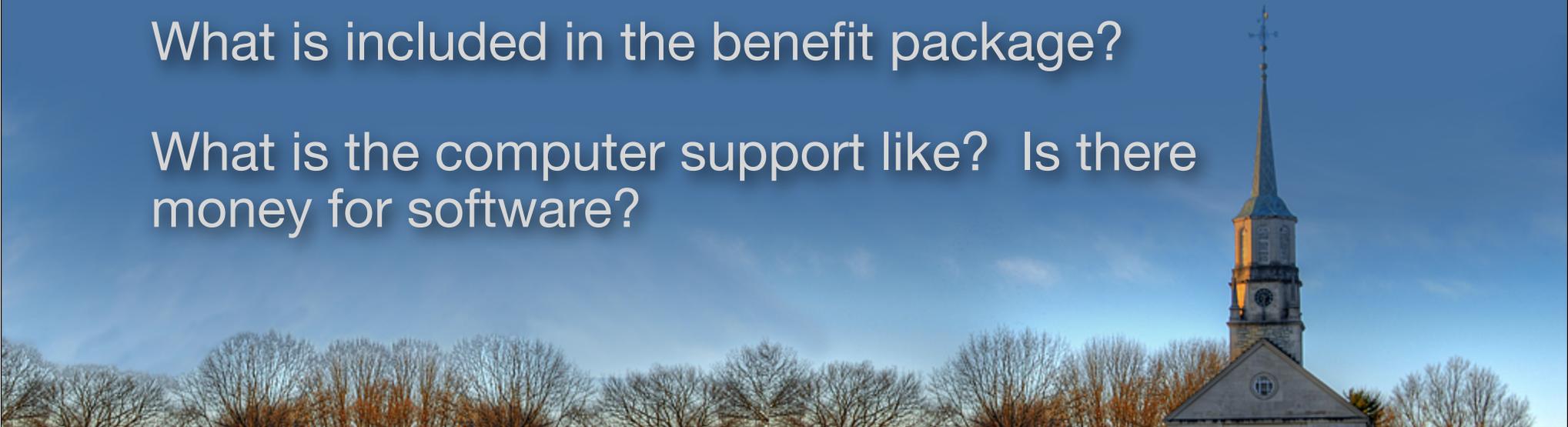
How is teaching evaluated?

What percent of the faculty receive tenure?

Is there support for research leave?
Summer research? Professional
development grants?

What is included in the benefit package?

What is the computer support like? Is there
money for software?



FURTHER (MORE PRECISE) QUESTIONS TO ASK

Is there mentoring within the department?

How helpful is the grants office? Do many of the faculty members on campus have outside grants?

(The Chair) Is there support for Project NExT?

How is the library collection? Does the library provide good support?

Are there colloquia?



FURTHER (MORE PRECISE) QUESTIONS TO ASK

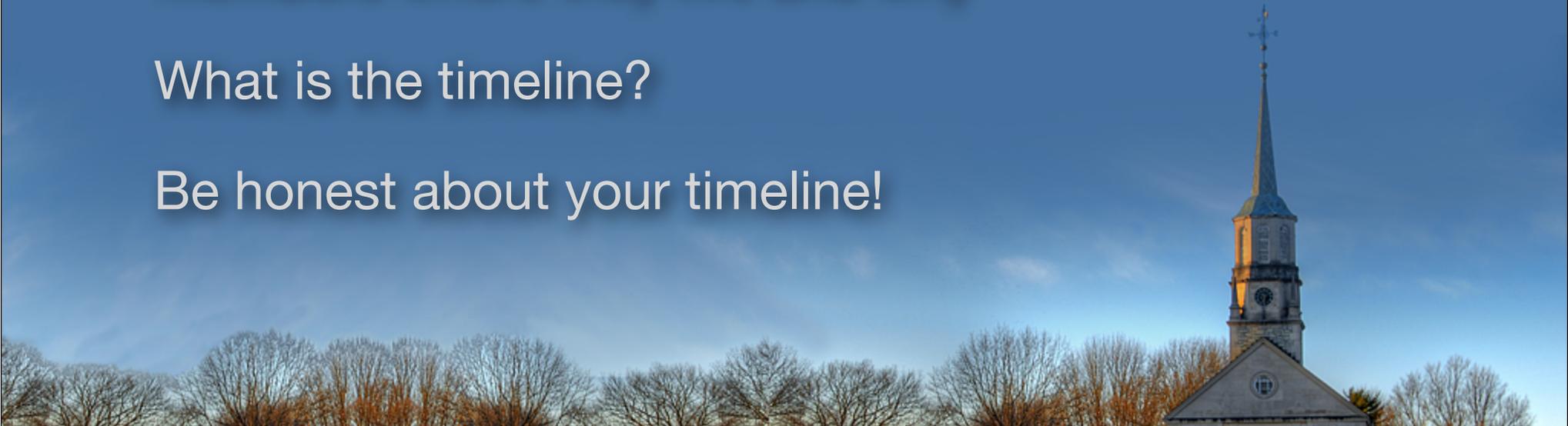
Are there research opportunities with the students?

What is the economic status of the institution?

You might want to ask individual faculty members where they live and why

What is the timeline?

Be honest about your timeline!



QUESTIONS TO ASK THE DEAN/PROVOST

WNE Dean: Ask about mathematics!

Any institution: Be prepared to discuss your research and plan

Economic status of the institution?

How is the math department viewed on campus?

How has the student profile changed over time?

What percent of faculty receive tenure?



AFTER THE INTERVIEW

Keep in touch with the Department Chair, to get a sense of your status

Write thank-you notes

Feel free to e-mail follow-up questions to the committee



THE DEAN CALLED

Hallelujah!!! You've been offered the job!!!



NEGOTIATING

Handle it with respect and honesty

You typically have a week to decide

Ideally, you would have more than one offer, so you have more firm footing for negotiating a salary with the Dean

Ask the Chair for advice (reasonable or not?)



NEGOTIATING

If you have been out of grad school for several years, consider asking for time off the tenure clock (but probably not promotion)

Might also ask for some extra start-up funds, computer technology, software... However, don't push it! You want to be a collegial member of the department.



GOOD LUCK TO YOU ALL!

Feel free to contact me with further questions:

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