

## Advice for PhD students meeting with visiting seminar speakers

### How do I decide whether to meet with a visiting speaker?

- Meet with speakers, especially if you **share an area of interest** or related work.
  - The definition of "related work" is pretty broad, e.g. within applied micro.
- Sign up if you're at all close to the margin.
- It's *especially* important as you move into your own dissertation research (**G3+**)

### What are these meetings useful for?

- Defining **new projects**
- Evaluating **early-stage ideas**
- Impressing people who **might consider hiring you**
- Introducing you to the **academic profession**
  - Speakers will be your *future colleagues*
  - They are folks you'll meet again and again
  - Faculty recognize or remember grad students they met with 2-3 years later.
- *For the seminar organizers*: putting together a full and balanced schedule for the speaker

### How do I prepare for a meeting with a visiting speaker?

- **Google the speaker** to get to know their work
  - Should go without saying but just in case: Google the speaker before you meet with them! Know something about their backgrounds and their other papers (not just what they presented). Do not ask them questions that you could find out by googling them.
- **Find some connection** between the speaker's recent work and your own work or interests.
  - "Recent work" for the speaker could be either the paper they are presenting that day, or something else fairly recent
  - Know their work and ask questions about your work that are related to it.
- Discuss a **research idea or project**
  - The topic should be a research idea -- it can be very preliminary or more advanced depending on the stage of the PhD.
  - Sending a good signal means showing that you have creative and interesting ideas and you are working hard to provide credible evidence on your research questions.
  - A good signal is not necessarily a completed or polished paper. One faculty member says they've had a lot of interesting conversations when visiting other departments with PhD students with early stage ideas.
- Possibly **prepare slides**
  - If you are close to going on the market, you can even have a slide deck ready.

- Bonus if you come with slides (5-6 slides)
- Focus on easy-to-digest results such as one or two graphs that illustrate the main point you are trying to make.
- OR ***practice your elevator pitch***
  - If you don't have slides, practice your elevator pitch: "I am a XYZ type of economist, currently working on XYZ. I'm doing an analysis right now using X data and I find Y."

### How should I organize the meeting itself?

- Important to note that these are folks you'll meet again and again, so ***being polite and prepared and on time*** is usually a good strategy.
- Start the conversation with something like "I read your paper on XYZ, and I noticed that you said ABC. This is closely related to something I've been working on/thinking about..."
- Obviously *don't fake it* if there's no overlap at all. But it's worth trying to find some in advance.
- Come to meetings with *something*. Put differently: ***assume it is your job to lead the meeting***. So come with something to say that isn't "I want to hear about your work".

### How should I think about this overall?

- It is a valuable part of the *PhD student training*
- There is ***almost no downside***. If it goes well, great! If it goes just okay, it doesn't really matter.
- See this as a ***win-win***: both for the organizers trying to fill a speaker's schedule and for PhD students.