

CAREER WATCH

The Complete Biographical Wardrobe— What Every Faculty Member Needs

BY PAGE S. MORAHAN, PhD

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What should be in the “essential wardrobe” of biographical information for professionals? So many different biographical informational documents appear to be needed. It can seem to be a daunting task to sort through and develop them.

The wardrobe should include your basic essential elements from which you “mix and match.”

❖ **Raw Data** This is similar to the data you collect from patients or obtain in research experiments. As with them, include everything that you might need later—student evaluations, notices of seminars you have given, letters of appreciation, papers you have written, the guest lecture you gave for a colleague’s class, and so forth. Keep it in whatever organizational

style best suits you: all in a box, separate folders, or notebook.

❖ **Institutional Annual Report.** This may be considered your first level of organization, listing all your activities in various categories in the format prescribed by your institution. This should be as comprehensive and complete as your institution allows. If a category exists, someone views it as worth measuring—and you should too! Complete it if at all appropriate.

The workhorse wardrobe piece is the:

❖ **Traditional Curriculum Vitae (CV).** This format varies with different schools, so there are no hard and fast rules beyond putting in more rather than less of your activities and achievements. Academia is the only profession in which the long CV is still the “coin of the realm.” Keep it up to date on your word processor, and add in the new material (from your Raw Data or Institutional Annual Report) on at least a semiannual basis. Be consistent with whatever format you use—citation order or grant awards, etc. This attention to detail is one way in which readers assess you.

If possible, give the most information you can, even if your school does not require it. For publications, give all authors, full title, full journal name, and full pages. For grants, give the official number and year of the award and awarding unit, title, total direct costs or total costs (indicate which), your role, percent effort, and the principal investigator. Consider creative ways to highlight special issues, so they will stand out. You might want to indicate that you have



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mentored students (and this is why you’re not first author on many of your papers), by placing an asterisk beside their names. If

you want to highlight your authorship position, you might boldface your name. If you want to distinguish among visiting professorships, keynote speeches, seminar speeches, and concurrent platform talks, you can indicate these by an asterisk or other marking system. If you want to emphasize that your work in a committee or task force was special, consider adding a few lines to explain the special accomplishment. The general rule is the same as in any research grant or paper: Help the reader understand what you view as important. Don’t make them have to “dig” to find this out.

There are some situations in which you may want to pare down your CV slightly. For instance, if you have given the same talk at the same CME event for many years, consider listing it with the dates following. Or, if you have many presentations or papers in one field, and you’ve now moved into another, you might consider stating at

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You can find more information on preparing a Resume, Executive Summary or Prospectus in: Morahan PS and Katz J. Converting a CV to an executive summary or prospectus. SELAM News 5:17-19, July 2002.

Other good sources of information are:

- ❖ Hirsch G. Strategic Career Management for the 21st Century Physician. Chicago, IL: American Medical Association, 2000.
- ❖ American College of Physician Executives: www.acpe.org/Career/ResumeReview.htm. This is an excellent website on writing a powerful resume and the differences between functional and chronological resumes.

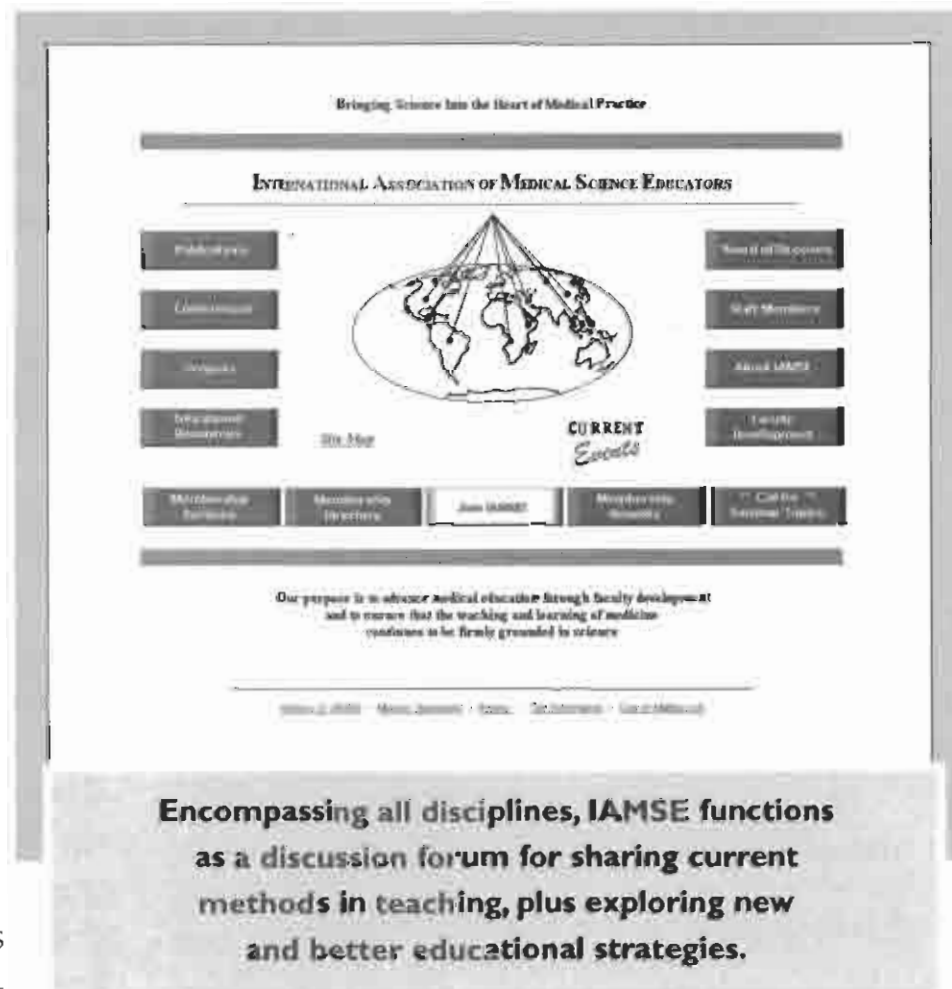
ONLINE CONNECTIONS

The IAMSE Website—A Forum for Basic Science Educators

BY ROGER W. KOMENT, PhD

The International Association of Medical Science Educators (IAMSE) is a nonprofit professional development society dedicated to enhancing the skills of those who teach the basic sciences of medicine. Encompassing all disciplines, IAMSE functions as a discussion forum for sharing current methods in teaching, plus exploring new and better educational strategies. The website, located at www.iamse.org, has important support functions for four major initiatives in addressing the mission statement. Although special sections are accessible only by member password, much information is available to all.

Annual Association Meetings is first of the four means for disse-



nating information. Clicking on "Conferences" leads the visitor to complete information on past, present, and future events. Online registration, abstract submission forms, and abstracts accepted for publication are publicly available. In addition, electronic Proceedings following each meeting provide written summaries of small group sessions, slides, and downloadable handouts. The most unique feature of these Proceedings is full-length audio recordings of invited plenary speakers—archived complete with slides.

Clicking on "Publications" brings the visitor to the second supporting pillar, the peer-reviewed *Journal*

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the beginning of the section, something like, "selected lectures or publications presented in the past 5 years, out of a total of 75 since 1992."

Besides the workhouse CV biographical piece, you probably need several "special occasion" pieces that contain the best of your complete biographical information.

❖ **Biographical Sketch.** This is a very abbreviated form of your CV. A good format is that required for NIH grant applications, and is generally less than three pages. It emphasizes your publications, grants, and special honors. When you update your CV, take the new material from it to add as needed to the shorter Biographical Sketch. Choose and highlight the most pertinent by saying, Publications or Grants (from the last...years, out

of...total). Again, spend time organizing it to make it easy for the reader to see what you view as most important.

❖ **Biographical Paragraph.** This is a descriptive paragraph that describes your current position, experience, and major accomplishments. It can be tailored to meet the specific needs of the audience. You might have a Research, or an Educational, or a Clinical Biographical Paragraph. If you have a website, you might add it at the end. This is the typical information you see in the list of speakers at meetings and workshops.

Finally, there is a special "stand-out" biographical piece to use when you apply for administrative or leadership positions.

❖ **Executive Summary, Prospectus, or Resume.** This is the "coin of the realm" outside academia, and is common in the pharmaceutical and health care industries. It is just beginning to come into use in

academia, and is especially recommended when you apply for administrative and leadership positions. It is guaranteed to make you stand out from all of the applicants with their 30- to 50-page CVs! The purpose is to give the reader—in 60 seconds or less—a comprehensive view of your desired career objective, your qualifications for the position, your accomplishments that support this, and your job history, education, and special honors. It's generally very short: one or two pages. It is often helpful to build it directly into the Traditional CV, as the first page.

A useful by-product of preparing this type of biographical document is that it forces you to clarify your career objectives; identify your key successful skills, especially those that are transferable from one professional setting to another; and develop examples to document your skills when you interview with potential employers. ❖