Academic Job Offer and Salary Negotiations

Some graduate students may fear the negotiation process because they have little or no experience negotiating a job offer. Here are tips for negotiating a starting package that can maximize your personal and professional satisfaction as a future faculty member.

Collect information

- Ask faculty in your department what they think would be a fair package.
- Research average faculty salaries online by state and institution.
- Check the websites of professional associations in your field for academic salary information.

Always negotiate

- When you’re offered a position, the balance of power shifts in your favor. As a result, you will likely never be in a better position to get what you want.
- Departments expect you to negotiate.
- Do not assume anything. Ask questions.

Maintain a positive attitude

- The way you negotiate sets the stage for future interactions with your colleagues.
- Strive for a win-win situation.
- The hiring committee and your supervisor want you to be happy with your starting package.
- Be professional, courteous, appreciative, ethical—and firm.
- Be willing to compromise and accept “no” as an answer.

Frame your requests appropriately

- Frame your requests in terms of what you need to be optimally successful and productive at the institution.
- Focus on the value you will bring to the department.

Think broadly

- Always ask for a higher salary! Your starting salary has a big impact on your overall lifetime earnings because raises are calculated from your base (starting) salary.

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Evaluate other aspects of an offer so you know what you’re getting yourself into: relocation expenses, conference money, office space, lab equipment, job responsibilities, student and staff support, healthcare, retirement, family benefits, etc.

Try not to get so excited about having a job offer that you forget to think about the future.

**Prioritize**

- Pick your battles—prioritize what’s important to you and then only negotiate the things about which you feel strongly.
- Ask yourself “What do I need to be happy, be productive—and get tenure?”
- Distinguish between what is absolutely necessary for you and what would be nice to have, but extra.

**Get it in writing**

- When you receive the official offer letter, make sure it agrees with what was discussed during the negotiation process.
- If the letter contains inaccurate information or is missing vital items, ask for an updated letter.
- If you agree to the terms, sign the letter, make a copy of it, and promptly return the original.
- Do not consider yourself hired until you and your employer have both signed a written document.

**Resources**