

Academic Job Negotiation

Liz Stuart, PhD

Elizabeth Letourneau, PhD

Department of Mental Health

JHSPH

Big thanks to Pat Phelps from the Professional Development and Career Office for a start on the slides!

Key Message

Approach the negotiation as a collaborative process. The institution has chosen you to join their faculty and want you to succeed in both the short term and over the long term. The person(s) you are negotiating with will be your future colleagues and most likely your Chair or Dean.

Respect that each institution has limitations on what they can offer and need to maintain equity with other faculty. Your perception of what may be easy or hard for the Dean/Chair to provide may be incorrect.

Key Messages (cont.)

- Each job is different
- Don't judge or make expectations about a job based on the title (e.g., "hard" vs. "soft" money)
- What that means, though, is that you need to do your homework: ask around, network, etc., to figure out what might be possible

The dimensions of a job offer...

- Verbal offer with a few details followed by written offer with full details.
- Details might include salary, research funding, teaching load, relocation allowance, short term housing allowance.
- Letters may also include term of appointment, e.g., tenure schedule and scheme.
- Faculty benefits, restrictions on income sources etc. will be in the faculty handbook or a link to human resources.
- Ideally you will be given a trip to visit the institution again to meet colleagues, learn about unwritten norms and rules, and look at housing.
- Some institutions *may* offer a one-time cash supplement ranging from \$7,500 to over \$100,000 to assist with housing. The University of California system has a mortgage program that provides a low-cost loan with a salary supplement.
- Do not be taken back by language about criminal background check, disclosure of outside employment activities, offer contingency upon approval by appropriate institutional officers and committees. These are standard clauses in employment contracts.

Salary Data

- State university faculty salaries are available to the public. These are base salaries and may be nine month or twelve month. Your offer may have supplements/add ons to the base salary.
- Salary data can vary widely within the same institution. Salaries within a Medical School department may be higher than salaries in the Arts and Sciences departments at the same institution.
- Salaries vary by Carnegie Classification ([what is Carnegie classification](#))
- Chronicle of Higher Education/AAUP survey - [Link](#)
- Medical School faculty salaries – AAMC faculty salary survey - [Link](#)
- Higher Ed Jobs - [Link](#)
- American Statistical Association – example of professional society w/detailed salary data published annually
- Association Schools of Public Health 2010/2011 salary report - [Link](#)

Salary Negotiation if Offer is Below Published Data

“I read in chronicles of higher education that typical starting salaries in my field are about X. Are there some factors that make the range different at this institution?”

% Effort covered by institution is not optimal

The NIH R01 environment is extremely competitive in my field with only x% payline in 2018. Instead of 100% salary in Y1 and 50% in Y3 and 20% thereafter, 100% for Y1 and Y2 and 50% Y3 and 20% thereafter would be better aligned with the current funding environment for my discipline.

What else is negotiable?

- Teaching load (e.g., how many different courses in first 3 years)
- Discretionary funds (and how long you can keep them; in perpetuity?)
- Lab equipment/space/research funds
- Research assistants
- Ability to work from home or other non-monetary factors
- Computer set up

....

Key: Articulate what is needed for you to be successful

Questions to ask in a “soft money” environment

- What happens if you do not garner funds to support your salary as expected?
- What happens if you garner extra funding to support your salary and do not need the salary coverage they have offered.
 - Do you get some % of indirect costs back into your research funds?

Negotiation

- Request a time to discuss your offer over the phone or in person. Do not counter in a written document or email (Liz note)
- Start with a Thank You and share your excitement about the position
- It can be helpful to let the other side know what you would like to discuss e.g. staff support, your salary
- Introduce the item you would like to discuss and respectfully provide your rationale. Be clear about needs versus wants.
- Get to each point quickly and professionally. Do not drag out the conversation.
- Listen carefully to the response and ask for clarification when needed.
- Take notes during the discussion documenting what is offered. Restate positions and agreements after each negotiation point.
- Be gracious whether the answer is yes or no.
- End with a thank you and some indication of your enthusiasm.

“In order for me to generate data to support my R01 submission, I feel I need a Postdoctoral Fellow. Are there any T32s that could support a fellow in my lab?”

“The confocal microscope will be critical to my research. I think faculty x, y and z research would benefit from the equipment. I would be willing to maintain the microscope and manage the scheduling if the department could find the funds to purchase it outside of my start-up package.”

No Competing Offers

- This is great news. I felt like the department was a great fit and am excited to receive this offer. It would be really helpful to have everything you have just described in writing. Would it be possible for you to send me the basics of what you just offered in an email.
- Do not tip your hand or mention anything that was not included in the offer - YET
- Next, Think about the two or three things that would make you successful in the position.
- Be mature, open, reasonable – Ask if they have room to move on those two or three items.
- Frame the request in a way that is in everyone's interests.

“My research can be expensive and extra research funds would really let me seed new projects in my first couple of years, meaning I’ll have a better tenure packet”.

Competing Offers

- Narrow the offers to your top 2 or 3 and quickly decline the other offers.
- Decline not only politely, but also thank them profusely and emphasize how much you liked the department, hope for future interaction, and so forth, but you think that either school X or Y will be the best fit for where you want to be personally and professionally.
- Create a spreadsheet with the competing offers and share with the school or share competitive offer letters. The chairs need something to show the dean to request additional funds.

“If you do A, B and C then I will sign immediately”

If You Are Not Interested In Pursuing the Offer

- Decline as soon as you decide not to accept the offer.
- Be respectful and keep explanation brief
 - I don't believe this is a good fit for me
 - This is not a good move for my family
 - My partner was not able to find a suitable position
 - I have other offers that provide better opportunities
 - The balance of teaching and research was not what I was looking for

Additional Thoughts

- Try to figure out what the Department/School has flexibility on
- Anything you really care about, get written in the offer letter
- Dual career issues – Perhaps a whole other talk! 😊

- Pay attention to the culture of the department
 - Do people seem happy?
 - How were the negotiations? Were you treated fairly?
 - That matters for a lot!