Negotiating for Novices: A Guide to Negotiating Faculty Positions and Postdocs

Dianne Hull, Associate Director
dhull@upenn.edu
http://www.vpul.upenn.edu/careerservices

Agenda

• Negotiating basics
• Components of a job offer & what can be negotiated
• Research
• Negotiating well
• Role playing & discussion

• Things to do (& not to do)
• Non-academic offers
• Scenarios
• Postdocs
• Resources at Career Services
• Practicing negotiation
Negotiating basics

• Why should you negotiate?
  • Future annual pay raises depend on your base salary
  • Retirement benefits depend on your base salary
  • Best environment for your tenure success
    • More time and resources for research and writing and/or teaching

• Most institutions expect you to negotiate (even if you don’t have another offer)
• The best time to negotiate is after an offer is made but before you have accepted it
• Wait until you have an offer to negotiate
• Negotiate with the mission, resources, culture, and needs of the institution in mind
• Structure: Win Win – not adversarial
  • Get into the mindset of the department chair or dean
  • Whether you accept or decline the offer, you are a colleague
Negotiating basics

Factors affecting negotiations:

• Institution type
  • Private vs. public
  • Large vs. small private college/university
  • Research-intensive vs. teaching intensive
  • Flagship campus vs. branch campus
  • Non-union campus vs. unionized campus

• External and internal pressures for institution or a department
  • External offers/peer benchmarking
  • Internal equity/structure of compensation/salary compression
  • Budget constraints/resources

• Your value to the institution
• The value of the position to you

Components of a Tenure-Track Assistant Professor Job Offer

• Start date*
• Title
• Salary*
• Relocation reimbursement*
• Conference travel/professional development*
• Lab start-up package*
• Teaching and advising load and preps*
• Summer salary/teaching opportunities*
• Maternity/family leave*
• General benefits (health, retirement, etc.)
• Performance, tenure & salary review
• Intellectual property
• Visa assistance
• Thesis completion*
• Dual career issues*
• Decision date*

* Can be negotiated depending on the institution
Terms of the Offer

• Salary
  • Amount of your base pay
  • 9 months vs. 12 months; if 9 months, opportunities for summer salary?
  • How long is your salary guaranteed?
  • How your salary is funded (research grants, teaching, etc.)?
  • Any policies on outside consulting?

• Appointment
  • Full-time tenure track
  • Length of the initial contract
  • When is it renewable after successful reappointment review?
  • If joint appointment, which is your “tenure home”? What is tenure criteria for each department?

Research – preparing for negotiations

Research yourself and your priorities

• How does this institution compare to the others you interviewed with?
• Which institution will allow you to do your best work and be most successful?
• Where do you want to live? Where will you be happy?
• What is your financial “bottom line”? (if relocating, factor in cost of living changes)
• Is there a partner, or other family member who will be affected by your decisions?
Research – preparing for negotiations

Research the position and institution

• What is the rank and type of institution? What are their resources? How big is your department?
  • Review the institution’s website: FAQs, history, mission statement, points of pride, etc.
  • Webpage for the Office of the Provost, including information for prospective faculty and faculty handbook
  • Department website; course listings; faculty profiles
  • Google the institution to see if there’s been any major news
• Consider the way the role contributes to the department or institution
Research – preparing for negotiations

Consider information you gathered during your interview process
- How faculty have started up their labs and with what resources
- Ideas of what cannot be negotiated
- Information on the following:
  - Standard teaching load/different preps
  - Resources for first-year faculty
  - Summer/overload teaching
  - Sabbaticals
  - TENURE PROCESS AND SUCCESS

Research continued...

- **Connect with your networks.** Ask advice from mentors, alumni, and colleagues
  - “Does X range seem in line with what an assistant professor in this field makes at your institution?”
  - “What resources were helpful to you when you were preparing for interviews and negotiating offers for assistant professor positions?”
  - “How did you assemble and negotiate your start-up budget for your current lab?”

- **Connect with postdocs or faculty recently affiliated with the institution**
Resources for researching faculty salaries

• Chronicle of Higher Education Faculty Salary Information: https://data.chronicle.com/

Resources for researching faculty salaries

• American Association of University Professors (AAUP) Faculty Compensation Survey: https://www.insidehighered.com/aaup-compensation-survey

*Remember that these figures are averages*
Resources for researching faculty salaries

- Salaries of faculty at public universities are public record; published online often through a university system or through a major state newspaper
  - Examples: University of California Office of the President; The Texas Tribune
- Other general salary resources such as glassdoor.com, payscale.com, and salary.com

Understanding start-up packages

- Start-up packages differ widely across different types of institutions and vary depending on policies (i.e. external grants)
- Determines how long you can do research before you have to secure additional grants
- Institutions have set number of years your funding covers, but you can negotiate what your funding pays for

Components of a start-up budget:
- Lab space and location
- Personnel/staff salaries (postdocs, grad students, technicians)
- Lab and computer equipment
- Research support
Negotiating a start-up budget

- Understand the structure of start-up funds
- Lab space and location can be a sensitive issue
- Be ready to share equipment
- Personnel (including lab technician, postdoc, grad student) and salaries are recurring costs and crucial for lab success
- Suggest win-win solutions: propose sharing equipment, grad students, etc.
- Explain why your requests are necessary for you to do your research
- Create a detailed start-up budget and a brief 1-page summary of equipment needs
- More information on websites of professional associations and journals: ASCB, AAS, Nature, Science, etc.

Negotiating for partner hires

- A complex and significant request that requires a lot of work and negotiation among the department chair, dean’s/provost’s office, and other department chair
  - Institution’s resources and ranking should be taken into consideration
- Approach the request delicately and after offer has been made
  - Exceptions to the timing
- Consider limiting other requests
Pre-offer negotiations
Keep in mind you want to avoid negotiations until you have an offer

Application Forms
• Try to write in “negotiable” or fill in the text field with a “0”

During Interviews
Your goal is to delay discussion of compensation and specifics of your research/lab budget until after an offer is made.
• “Salary is not the most important issue to me. What is more important to me is the (role, institution, etc.)”
• “I am open to any reasonable start-up package, and I’m sure that the institution provides sufficient resources for tenure success.”

Post-offer negotiations
The moment you have waited for has arrived!

• An offer is usually given via phone, and sometimes by email
  • You will be contacted by the department chair/search committee chair
• Confirm it’s really an offer - a job offer has a salary figure attached to it. Until an employer gives you an exact figure, keep looking at other opportunities
  • “If I made you an offer, would you take it?” is not an offer
• Indicate how pleased you are but don’t accept immediately
  • Don’t negotiate on the spot
  • “I’d like several days to think about this.”
  • Think about questions you want to ask
  • How long you have to make the decision will vary and can be negotiated
Negotiating well

• **Be sure to get the offer in writing.** Some employers prefer to finalize the offer before formally writing an official offer letter that you sign
  • You should request and receive a letter/email that includes the salary, start date, and the date by which they want a decision from you, and all other details
  • If during negotiations the salary and conditions of employment change, get another letter
• **Prepare to negotiate before you do it.**
  • Understand the terms of the offer
  • Think about your priorities
  • Some institutions won’t move much from the original offer
  • Have a rationale for your requests, and avoid confrontational tones

Negotiating well

• When possible, negotiate by phone and follow up with a summary of what was discussed by email
  • Take your time to negotiate; don’t rush to sign the offer
  • Negotiate all your requests at the same time
  • Be intentional with professional reasons for what you seek
  • Don’t ask for everything
  • Express/reiterate enthusiasm for the job
I have never done this before, do I have to negotiate? Yes!

But first...role play!
Negotiating Don’ts

• Give personal explanations of why you’d like a salary increase
• Negotiate without considering the mission and needs of the institution
• Assume that there is a “normal” for offers in your field
• Make a list of demands
• Negotiate one thing at a time
• Negotiate every small thing
• Negotiate quickly to close the deal
• Be confrontational

Negotiating Do’s

• Do involve your advisors and mentors to seek their advice
• Express gratitude for the opportunity
• Research available data before negotiating
• Be polite, enthusiastic, and kind throughout the negotiation process
• Understand the institution
• Prioritize the requests that are most important to you
• Frame requests as questions, not statements; adopt an open tone
• Be reasonable in your requests
• Know what you need to carry out your research
• Consider the big picture and the whole package
Negotiation beyond the academy—public, private, nonprofit settings

Non-salary forms of compensation/benefits –

• Bonuses
• Long-term incentives (options, stock, equity)
• 401K
• Job title, reporting structure
• Health Insurance, Life Insurance
• Holidays
• Relocation costs
• Start date
• Certain kinds of work conditions/flexibility (schedule, travel, extra vacation days)
• Professional support: continuing education (tuition benefit), conference attendance,
• Computers/phones for use at home
• Earlier evaluation for promotion

What can be negotiated in a non-academic offer?

Salary

• Discussing salary usually comes before negotiating other benefits or conditions
• Express your enthusiasm again for the job and ask “if there's any flexibility in determining salary?”
• Your best arguments are based on what you can contribute and what comparable employers are paying for comparable work
Scenarios

When the first offer isn’t your first choice:
• If you are offered job A, but prefer job B, let job B institution (if you’ve interviewed there) know as soon as you get the first offer
• Ask for their search timeline and when they might be able to make a decision
• Always tell the truth- don’t invent job offers for negotiating purposes

When you have multiple offers:
• Try to prioritize your top two offers and decline the rest
• You can use your offers as leverage, but remember that department chairs want to know you’re serious about working at their institution

Wrapping up your negotiations

Accepting an offer
• If terms of the offer changed during negotiating, get a new offer letter in writing
  • Send a written confirmation, even if you accept verbally over the phone.
• Thank everyone who helped you
• Notify other institutions who interviewed you that you have accepted a job, thank them for their interest, and withdraw from the search
• When you accept a job, you’re making a commitment. Keep it.

Declining an offer
• Be very gracious! Thank them (again) for their interest and time spent considering your candidacy.
Negotiating for Postdocs

• Less opportunity as stipend/benefits are often determined by university
• Brainstorm areas of personal/professional development that you might be able to negotiate
• Ideas (address BEFORE accepting postdoc!)
  • Access to research experiences you would not get otherwise
  • Additional technical training
  • Opportunities to teach or mentor
  • Expenses related to conferences/travel
Career Services can help...

See a Career Advisor if you want help with:

- Preparing your application materials
- Practicing your interview and negotiation skills
- Evaluating offers and making decisions
- Writing thank you letters (and helping to phrase a “no thank you” response)
  - [www.vpul.penn.edu/careerservices](http://www.vpul.penn.edu/careerservices)
  - Call 215-898-7530 or login to Handshake to make an appointment.
    - Walk-in hours every day--check our website for details

Take a few minutes to write down what you’d like to negotiate and take turns playing the candidate and the dean/department chair

- Adopt the mindset of the dean/department chair and of the candidate
- Try to negotiate at least 3 things
Career Services programs

Academic Job Search Series:

PANEL: Finding the Right Postdoc (STEM)
• Thursday, February 22, 5-6:30 PM, Houston Hall, Ben Franklin Room

FACULTY PANEL: Preparing for your First Year as a New Faculty Member or Postdoc
• Tuesday, April 10, 4:30-6 pm, Houston Hall, Golkin Room 223

WORKSHOP: Preparing for the Academic Job Market
• April date and location TBD