

Negotiating an Academic Job Offer:

Why, What, When, How

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Why



The Purpose of an Ideal Offer Package:

To obtain a foundation to ensure success
Interest of institution, department and you.

Not confrontational, but no gifts

What (Overview)

Labs: Funds for equipment, supplies, reagents, computers

Personnel: Salaries, access

Space: Laboratory, office

Facilities: Shared centers

Travel: Collaborations, conferences

Salary: 9/12 month



What - Specifics

Get advice from colleagues, mentors, new faculty in your department.



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Ask:

Range of start up package funds offered?
Salary and teaching loads discussed?

What - Specifics

Labs: Walls. Maybe benches, sinks, cabinets, hoods. What else?

Equipment, supplies, reagents, computers

Needs vs. Wants

Own vs. Shared



What - Specifics

Lists:

Get others' lists

Make two lists:

1. For you:

Minimal requirements. Be thorough.

2. For negotiating:

Best-case scenario.

Be thorough, but be flexible.



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What - Specifics

Personnel: Salaries, Access

Technician

Graduate Students – Program?

Postdocs – Program?

Undergraduates

Dishwasher?

Flexibility – who and for how long?





What - Specifics

Facilities: Shared centers, animal care, cold/warm rooms, microscope centers, sequencing/synthesis, -omics analyses, analytical and fabrication services, etc.



What - Specifics

Not an Experimentalist?

Computer resources

Remote facility access

Technical support



What - Specifics

Salary: 9 vs. 12 month; “soft” vs. “hard” salary

Salaries vary a lot by discipline

Specific and averages of public university professors available on line

Online sites compare cost-of-living

Less flexibility at publics than privates



What - Specifics

Salary: Can be most sensitive issue

Your salary impacts the salary ladder in the department

Issue arises if new hires are given higher salaries than previously hired assistant professors.

However – time of highest leverage



What - Specifics

Salary vs. Start-up Funds

Salary and start-up funds are almost always separate negotiations. Funds often come from different sources, so there are different levels of flexibility.



What - Specifics

Teaching:

What and when and how often
TA support

Appointment:

How long, how renewed, tenure
Typically 3 or 4 year, with renewal
Tenure decision at 6 – 8 years



What - Specifics

Understand that personal needs are different than professional needs.

Personal needs can be considered (carefully) if they affect the professional career.



When

Do not negotiate until you have an offer

When

Before the first interview:

Know your needs and wants, in case asked

At the first visit, ask for information about:

Grad student/postdoc costs

Resources available on campus, in department

Typical teaching/service loads



When

When you have an offer and have not yet accepted, you have greatest leverage.

Now negotiate.

The more offers you have, the more leverage

Before the second visit:

Have lists, general costs

Find out costs of others' packages



How

Be consistent

Be truthful

Stick to generalities with people without
negotiation authority

Only negotiate with the one with authority

Know there are no secrets

Do tell about competing offers

***This is your first interaction with future
colleagues***



How

If you know there that there will be important specifics or difficult points, practice your conversation with colleagues before the second visit.



How

Be creative and collaborative

Think about shared resources, give and take

Delay in receiving some funds?

Get commitments from authority person, in writing



Don't Keep Them Waiting

- Once you have been asked for information or a decision, provide it promptly
- Don't play games
 - Be smart, be clear, but don't try to 'fake them out' in some way
 - Remember you will, if successful, be colleagues with the folks with whom you are negotiating



Questions to Answer (or not...)

- Where are you interviewing?
 - You can tell them, or you can simply say that you have several interviews in X time frame (which can be helpful)
 - Know that if someone wants to know, they can search your name and find the seminar schedules elsewhere
- Do you have other offers/second interviews?
 - Do what feels most comfortable to you, but knowing that you have options may be helpful in getting an offer



When to Respond to an Offer

- If you know your response, respond to the offer as quickly as possible
- If you need longer to give an answer, formulate a response quickly (within a day) that conveys your interest and your need for time
- Non-responsiveness will be interpreted, perhaps erroneously



Two Body Issue

- When to raise issue of “two bodies”?
 - Definitely when you have an offer and terms are under discussion
 - Helpful to let Chair know at some point in the process where the discussion is more serious
 - During the interview process — gives lots of time to find potential placement but may dissuade
 - No “right” answer – you have to judge the situation
 - Reality – the sooner this situation is known, the greater possibility for partner placement



What Happens....

- If I get an offer, but it's not really the one I want
 - If you are interested in another place and have been interviewed (or have an interview scheduled), let that Chair know that you have this offer and your deadline. Let the offering department know that you need time to make a decision.
 - If you have no other prospects, you'll have to decide whether to take it or wait



Remember....

- You are unique, what you need is unique
- The institution will have a limited set of resources spread in different places
- Together you have to find the best mutual path forward — don't forget the nature of the colleagues and the environment for your work and teaching in the equation
- Be professional but strategic (don't play games) — you want to leave a good impression everywhere you interview



From the Front

- Outrageously short deadlines?
- A better offer after an accepted offer?
- Offer not in writing?
- No attractive offers?

