

## Topics for Negotiation

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Based on my previous experiences crafting faculty offers for the University of Michigan, here are some tips for negotiating your offer.

### **Salary.**

Salary is the number one thing applicants negotiate, yet a negotiation that focuses only on salary will not be nearly as effective as one that considers all possible options. Always ask if salary is negotiable. Many universities have a salary range for the position being offered, but offer letters usually will not offer a salary at the top of this range. As a result, it is often possible for the department to move a little bit within this range, especially if you are in a high demand field. Salary negotiation is very important because, for tenure track positions, most future salary raises are derived from your starting value. Salary increases are normally awarded annually, based on cost-of-living adjustments (and sometimes with small merit increases), and as a *percentage* of your salary, rather than a fixed dollar amount. Larger lump sum increases to your base pay do not occur unless you achieve tenure or commence another job search and receive an offer from another institution. The higher salary you start with, the more significant each salary increase will be. Because of equity issues relating to other assistant professors in a department, departments are often unable to accommodate a request for a slightly higher salary. In these instances, job seekers should focus their negotiations on other issues.

### **Moving expenses, it all adds up.**

Institutions may reimburse you for some or all of your moving expenses. Before negotiating, educate yourself about moving costs—either moving yourself or hiring a moving company. Having some idea of the costs will aid your negotiation. Save all receipts related to your move—your moving expenses may also be tax deductible.

### **Spousal or partner assistance.**

Dual career can sometimes be requested, especially if the job being offered is in a remote location. This assistance can range from the institution providing the applicant's partner with resources for embarking on their own job hunt to actually locating a job for the spouse on campus. Generally a department will locate jobs only for the partners of highly recruited applicants, but if an applicant's partner is qualified for a campus position that becomes available, the partner candidate may receive some advantage. Investigate the programs available at the institutions you are considering. Spousal assistance initiatives are usually housed in the provost's office or academic affairs, and you should do preliminary Internet research on the institution's Web site using the keywords "spousal hiring," "dual career" or "dual career academic couple." Representative programs exist at the University of Michigan, [www.provost.umich.edu/programs/pfip.html](http://www.provost.umich.edu/programs/pfip.html), and the University of Illinois, [www.provost.uiuc.edu/provost/appointments/recruit.html](http://www.provost.uiuc.edu/provost/appointments/recruit.html).

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## **Benefits and health insurance.**

Benefits packages are often non-negotiable, as many universities have standardized (and comprehensive) benefits policies. However, take time to learn more about the benefits package being offered. You may have bargaining points, particularly if you have multiple offers.

## **Housing.**

Request for the institution to pay for a second trip to the community to search for housing. Some institutions, especially those located in communities with a shortage of affordable housing, have on-campus facilities to temporarily house faculty or feature programs to help faculty members locate and purchase homes. You may wish to inquire about a campus's temporary housing provisions.

## **Start date.**

If you are ABD and working to complete your dissertation, you may consider negotiating your start date. Sometimes you can delay the start date by a semester or two. If you begin work without your doctorate complete, clarify when the tenure clock officially begins. Consider delaying teaching until the second semester if possible.

## **Teaching load and service, a plan full approach.**

You should discuss how many classes you will have to teach per semester, since a lighter teaching load will enable you to spend more time on research and writing, and possibly improve your prospects for tenure. Think in terms of both your teaching load and the number of class preparations you will have. You might also have some flexibility with your teaching schedule.

If you are negotiating a joint appointment keep in mind that departments may have different policies and expectations on the relative time spent on research, teaching and service; and different policies and practices on start-up funds, administrative and technical support, teaching loads, and so on; clarify on both fronts.

When a joint appointment is created, request a Memo of Understanding (MOU) between the two units; signatories should include the heads of the units involved as well as yourself. This will detail how key procedures related to your academic career will be carried out. Details should include procedures for academic case review, teaching load, and assignment of campus service. In addition, the MOU may address issues pertaining to the "startup package," space, compensation (e.g., summer ninths), leave practices and policies (e.g., sabbaticals; teaching buy-out policies); and retreat rights. The goal should be that your obligations across the two units are not greater than those of others who are full-time in their unit.

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## **Start-up package, create what you need.**

Research tools such as office space, laboratory facilities, computer(s) and software, secretarial or research assistant support, funds for research and conference travel, time off for research during the first year or two, sabbatical leave and funding for copies, books, and other materials should be negotiated ( and stated in your offer letter).

## **Negotiation Strategies**

### **Look before you leap.**

When you receive a job offer, ask for time to consider it and do not make an impulsive or hasty decision. Take time to decide whether you want to negotiate and develop your action plan before actually beginning the negotiation process.

### **Do some research.**

You will need information to decide how to conduct your negotiation, since having data to corroborate and justify your request is also important in establishing credibility. Public universities publish their salaries, so look at entry level salaries at these institutions to ensure that you are trying to negotiate within the appropriate ranges. Cost of living expenses are also very important to consider, since these greatly impact the value of the salary you are being offered. See [www.homefair.com/homefair/calc/salcalc.html](http://www.homefair.com/homefair/calc/salcalc.html) for estimates.

Be certain to also find out what benefits are automatically provided to you (such as travel funds or sabbatical leave) and what benefits might be fixed and non-negotiable (such as the health care and retirement benefits package) as an employee of the institution. Don't waste your time attempting to negotiate the latter.

### **Don't hesitate to ask!**

Many applicants are reluctant to even attempt negotiation. Some feel so grateful to have a job that they fear losing it, and others feel timid or guilty at the prospect of negotiation. Remember that you are not taking anything away from anyone else and that the department obviously really does want you (or else they would not have extended the offer in the first place). The worst answer you can receive during a negotiation is "no," and as long as you conduct yourself professionally, negotiating will not negatively impact your future with the department.

It's important to negotiate for what you need to be successful within the institution. Start with the end in mind.

### **Negotiate professionally.**

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You always want to be polite and professional in your negotiations, since the people with whom you negotiate may be your colleagues for a long time. It is preferable to negotiate verbally, either in person or on the phone, but if you are more comfortable, you might inquire about negotiation possibilities in writing. Your tone must always be collegial and collaborative; you want the person you're negotiating with to understand that you are working *with* them to find the best possible solution. You never want to appear combative or hostile.

### **Don't fixate on one aspect of a negotiation.**

Many job applicants make the mistake of negotiating only for an increased salary. In reality, there are many other aspects of a job offer to negotiate, and while salary is the most obvious one, it might actually be the least successful. You may have much more room to negotiate for other terms, like office space, computer support, and leave time, and it's even possible that these aspects will make the job even more attractive than a slight increase in salary. Do not feel that your negotiation failed if the institution cannot increase your salary; sometimes it simply is not possible, especially if you are negotiating with a unionized campus or if budgets are tight. You must be willing to accept that the employer cannot honor your request.

### **Always have negotiated terms put in writing.**

Keep in mind that Deans retire, Chairs get recruited away and colleagues change. Verbal agreements mean little to nothing. Following negotiation and the verbal agreement of terms, ask the institution to put these in writing. Review the revised terms carefully before accepting/declining the job offer.

### **Accepting and Rejecting Jobs**

Ultimately, you will have to either accept or reject every job offer that you receive. The best way to do this is to first call the department, since that will allow them to know of your answer in a timely manner, and then to follow up with a written letter of acceptance or rejection. Write with the full intent of having ongoing professional relationships and future collaborations with the readers.

*For confidential assistance in negotiating your next offer feel free to contact me for an appointment [sallyschmall@academycoaching.com](mailto:sallyschmall@academycoaching.com)*