

Negotiating Offers for Faculty Positions

Congratulations! You are now in the exciting and often challenging position of considering an offer (maybe multiple offers!) for a faculty appointment at an academic institution. This task may be a daunting one for those who have had little exposure or practice in reviewing and negotiating job offers. However, with preparation and an awareness of the process, you can be successful in negotiating terms that match both your professional and personal needs.

Once an offer has been extended, you are in a position of power! The power differential between a search committee and a candidate changes once an offer has been extended. However, it is important that you do not overestimate this power. Try instead to think of this process as the beginning of what might be a lifelong employment relationship. Take steps to ensure your own success while maintaining rapport—you may be working with these people for years to come!

Five Steps to Successful Negotiations

STEP 1: Do your homework and know your worth.

Collect information on the job market in your discipline to determine what constitutes a reasonable offer. To evaluate job offers effectively, you will need comparative data on starting faculty salaries at the institution(s) offering you a job, data on offers in your field at other institutions, and data on cost of living in the geographic areas you are considering. Use the following resources to find this information:

Results of the 2015-16 [Faculty Salary](#) Survey for Four-Year Colleges and Universities by Discipline, Rank, and Tenure Status conducted by The College and University Professional Association for Human Resources (CUPA-HR) - www.higheredjobs.com/salary/salaryDisplay.cfm?SurveyID=37

Check for salary data at the institutions to which you are applying. Public universities track specific salary data on current faculty members. For example, information on faculty salaries here at [UNC Chapel Hill](#) can be found here - www.newsobserver.com/news/databases/public-salaries/

If you are in the natural and life sciences, it is important for you to understand the start-up costs associated with setting up a lab. Work closely with your PI or other mentors to make a list of equipment and resources that are critical to your work and the costs associated with these.

STEP 2: Get details in writing, if possible.

Before considering an offer, it is important to know that you actually have an offer! After an oral offer is extended, request a copy of it in writing. In some cases, department heads or deans may insist on negotiating before printing an offer letter, so getting the offer in writing before negotiations begin may not be possible.

STEP 3: Develop (or review/update) your list of priorities.

Some candidates go through this exercise prior to applying for positions, and some before attending campus interviews. At the point an offer is made, it is critical to have your priorities identified and to understand clearly which points are, and which are not negotiable.

Use the following table to consider and rank your priorities. Some points may be negotiable, others may not, but all represent value to you.

ISSUE	RANK ORDER
Salary	
Benefits (medical, dental, retirement, life insurance)	
Startup funds	
Teaching load	
Technician/support personnel	
Summer support	
Graduate assistants	
Lab supplies/yearly budget	
Tenure clock	
Grant writing expectations	
Vacation time	
Start date	
Travel support (conferences, etc.)	
Administrative support	
Moving (relocation) expenses	
Length of contract	
Computing needs	

STEP 4: Review the offer and decide where to negotiate.

As you consider an offer, it is important to go back to your priority list above and determine where to make concessions and where to hold firm. Take this information to the appropriate institutional representative (typically the department head) and begin negotiating the terms of the offer.

STEP 5: Negotiate effectively!

- Discuss multiple issues simultaneously. Avoid going back and forth, issue by issue.
- Be willing to trade off across issues.
- Be creative in generating solutions that will benefit both you and the institution.
- Present requests that focus on value added to the school. Resources that improve your productivity (e.g. equipment, computers, lab space) also benefit the school.
- Get the final offer (details on all terms) in writing.

FINAL THOUGHTS

- Find out how much time you have to consider the final offer. It is appropriate to ask for an extension...but do not miss that deadline.
- If you decide to decline the final offer, call the person with whom you negotiated to inform him/her, and follow up with a letter.
- If considering multiple offers, keep all parties informed on the status of other applications; use your leverage to ask an institution to match an offer, but only if you intend to accept the offer.

Individual career coaching, job search and interviewing assistance is available to all UNC postdocs through the Office of Postdoctoral Affairs

