Negotiating the Academia Job

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Agenda for Today

Salary negotiation

Other areas of negotiation

Questions
When to Negotiate?

You are really not in a position to negotiate until the institution makes an offer.
How can I handle questions about salary during an interview?

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If asked: “Do you have a salary in mind?” Tell the interviewer that you would prefer learning more about the current position before you discuss compensation, and that you are confident you will be able to reach a mutual agreement about salary at that time.
Appropriate questions to ask if salary is brought during an interview

• What is the salary range for this position?
• Does the institution ever pay higher than the starting salary? If so in what circumstances?
• What is the average salary increase for the position?
Are salaries really negotiable?

Yes, and no.

Department chair may have little discretion in some of these areas: salary, benefits, and housing.

Department chair has some flexibility in the use of department funds to cover:
- summer research
- conference funds
- extra TA(s) or RA(s)
- secretarial help
- lightened teaching loads

Department chair has some control over:
- computer access and office space
- lab facilities
- parking
If offer is non-negotiable

- Some universities have a “one price” hiring process
- Best possible deal is calculated within current budget
- Most will discuss with you (if finalist) the package in depth, so that you know expectations before an offer is made
- Is transparent for candidates and candidates can withdraw
if offer is negotiable

• After on-campus interviews, job candidate have been ranked and have gone to the dean and HR for backgrounds check
• Department chair calls you with an offer
• Job offer is usually made by phone, but sometimes e-mail
• Ok to say this isn’t a good time to talk
• Institution makes an offer and goes into detail
• Make sure you can take notes
• Ask them to e-mail you the details after they’ve gone through it all

• You can’t always get what you want Cheryl Ball (insidehighered.com)
The Negotiation

“Thank you so much for your offer. I’m very pleased with the opportunity presented. Could you send your proposal on writing? I look forward to learning the details. I will be in touch after I study them.”
How is the Process?

• Yes, you have power!
• Don’t let it go to your head and ask for the moon and stars
• Don’t accept the job as-is because you are excited

• Show enthusiasm and appreciation.

• They will send an informal e-mail or HR will e-mail you a contract. This take days. The written contract is negotiable

• You have two weeks, generally speaking, to hash out details and give the college an answer

• Counter offer on phone or e-mail. Typically within 24 hrs.

• Your requests need to be reasonable and in line with the job ad and tenure expectations, type of university, and your credentials
What do you need to know in order to negotiate?

• Negotiating must be done with a careful eye to:
  • Size
  • Type
  • Rank of institution
  • Size and rank of department
  • Overall comparative wealth and endowment of the institution
  • Its local culture (i.e unionized)
  • Historical conditions of salary compression (offer cannot be higher than tenured colleagues who have been working for years with minimal or no raise)
What do you need to know in order to negotiate?

• It will be a mistake to dictate to any department what a “normal offer” is or should be with regard to salary. AVOID:

  • “I’d like to request a salary of XXXX which is in line with norms of the field, and reflective of the experience and potential I bring to the position”

• Keep this in mind: Wealthy R1s and Ivy Leagues offer the greatest scope for negotiating; small regional teaching colleges the least room for maneuvering. Never attempt an R1 negotiation at a small regional college and vice versa.

• Well-connected advisors can assist you to assess appropriate scale of negotiating requests
The Negotiation

• In general, ask for a 10% raise
• They will typically come back with less. How much less depends on the institution
• Relying on aggregate salary scales from the *The Chronicle* or the *American Association of University Professors* may do more harm. (no control for size, scales and endowments)
• Resist the craven urge to say, “any salary is fine, I’m grateful just to have a job” (all future institutional raises are calculated on initial salary)
if Prepared

Do not press on matters beyond their control, though you can certainly ask for some commitment to intervene with the responsible agency (i.e. child-care center, housing authority, partner benefit)

You can use any leverage you actually have: “I really want to come here, but _____ has offered me x, y, and z. Is there anything you can do to assist me in making a commitment to you?

How far you want to go? Depends on you, bluffing always carries risks

Silence can be an effective tool, especially in face-to-face negotiations
Rule of thumb

Ask yourself:

How will you use what you gain through negotiations to do the work (and usually gain tenure) that this university is hiring you to do? If you can't answer that question, then you shouldn't be asking for it.
How can I handle questions about salary?

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If told: "The salary range for this position is $XXXX to $XXXX, is this what you were expecting?" Tell the interviewer that it does come near what you were expecting, and then offer a range which places the top of the employer's range into the bottom of your range (i.e., I was thinking in terms of $XXXX to $XXXX). Remember: be sure that the range you were thinking about is consistent with what you learned about that position in the institution.
If offer is unacceptable

I am very interested in working for your institution; however, at this point I am not able to accept the offer because ___ (state specifically what is missing: is it the amount? Teaching load? Equipment? Travel requirements? I will be happy to accept this position if ______. Are you in the position to meet my request?

Or if really want the job:
What can I do to become more valuable?
Areas of Negotiation

The amount of time you’ll have to decide on this offer
Your starting date (including deferment in order to take a postdoc)
Reduced teaching load (common for first year)
Lab facilities and equipment
Your own computer or easy computer access
Money for new libraries resources (including files, slides, CD’s)
Summer research support
Travel funds for conferences
Early (or extended) sabbatical or leave (including parenting, if relevant)
Early (or delayed) tenure review
Extra T.A (s) or R.A (s)
Extra secretarial assistance
Office space/location
Parking
Moving Expenses
Benefit package: health, life, disability, tuition, and retirement (available for spouse and dependents), on-site day-care, spouse employment assistance, pharmaceutical plan
Assistance in finding and sometimes financing housing
Assistance in finding spouse employment
Look for mutual gain, common interests
Chair is sympathetic to your need to publish but has no money for course reductions this year. How about:
- More T.A.(s)?
- Less demanding courses?
- More summer research money?
- Reduction of administrative or departmental duties?

Suppose you know you will not have time to prepare courses for fall (e.g. you’ll be too busy finishing dissertation, or perhaps you are expecting a baby). Can you work out a semester’s maternity leave? Find a substitute? Schedule all your courses or better— a reduced load in the 2nd semester?
Last thoughts…

Get offer on writing
If you are not going to accept, explain why as tactfully and honestly
Reiterate your positive impressions and your regret that the job didn’t work out
Write a follow-up letter as well