

ACADEMIC CAREERS: SALARY NEGOTIATIONS

After the interview

You may hear back quite soon if you were the final interview candidate, but as in all things related to the academic job search process, “soon” is a relative term. Some candidates might hear within a week of the interview while others will hear several weeks after their last point of contact. Search committees often encounter delays in the process such as a key member falling ill, an initial offer package taking time to get approved, or committee members having to decide between two strong candidates.

If you haven't heard from a committee and several weeks have passed since the interview it is possible that the committee has offered the position to another candidate but is waiting on their reply. You might still be in the running. Rejections usually come in email or mail rather than via phone. Most departments will not give a reason why you have not received an offer. It can be helpful to plan in advance what you will do when you receive one (most applicants will receive at least one if not many rejections) whether it will be calling up a friend or heading out for a walk, or something else. Remember to take care of yourself.

When you receive an offer

Offers will come in a phone call or email. If you receive an offer through a phone call, make sure to express appreciation and enthusiasm (save the scream/happy dance/crazy jumping for after), inquire as to what the offer generally includes and ask for some time to review the offer. Don't accept on the spot.

If possible, request an email or written version of the offer so you can review it. Most departments will give you a few weeks to make a decision. If you need additional time it is often possible to ask for it, but realize that this is not always possible for departments to grant.

When you receive multiple offers

If you receive an offer from a university that isn't your top choice but you have interviewed at the top choice already, reach back out to the chair of the search committee to inquire as to the status of the selection process. Mention that you have received another offer, but highlight your continued interest in the position. If your top choice asks for details about the other offer, be honest, ethical and professional. You don't have to share every detail of the offer.

Having an offer sometimes makes you more desirable to other schools and may enable you to negotiate a better package. Be careful in trying to play one institution against one another, especially if you have no interest in one of the positions. Never fake an offer or exaggerate the terms of the offer.

If you do not intend to accept an offer let the search chair know as soon as possible so that the chair can offer the position to the runner-up. Be sure to thank all departments for their time, interest, and offer.

Planning for a good starting package

Collect information from multiple sources. Ask faculty members in your UW department about what they think would be a fair package. Check the websites of academic professional associations to see if they post salary information. Research average salaries by state (<https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/index.asp>) and by school (<http://data.chronicle.com/>) to determine general ranges. Factor in the size and scope of the university's mission as well as the location's cost of living. Smaller, private, teaching-focused colleges in rural areas are likely to offer lower starting salaries than larger, urban, research-intensive universities.

What can be negotiated?

Salary may be a primary consideration, but there are many other elements to consider for what would make you successful in your new role. You may be able to find some information available online in the HR section of a university's website, particularly at public universities.

Salary. After living the graduate student life, you will probably be happy to get an offer that pushes you above the poverty line. Even so, you should always ask for more money than is originally offered to you. Some departments offer a lower salary because they expect candidates to negotiate and they want candidates to feel successful in the negotiation process. Keep in mind that your starting salary has a big impact on your overall lifetime earnings because raises are calculated from your base salary. Because of this, an extra thousand dollars in permanent salary will mean more to you in the long run than an extra month of summer salary for one year only. On the flip side, you should realize that salaries are sometimes fixed within a university and beyond the control of the department chairs or deans. Some questions to consider:

- > What is the starting salary?
- > Can you have a higher starting salary? (perhaps 5% - 20% higher than the original offer)
- > What is the length of the contract?
- > Can the paychecks be spread over twelve months?
- > What is the recent history of annual salary increases?
- > What is the likelihood of summer support through teaching, university grants, etc?

Relocation & Housing

- > Will the university pay for a moving company? How about a temporary storage facility?
- > What are the procedures for getting your moving expenses reimbursed?
- > Can the institution pay for you (and your partner) to make a house-hunting visit?
- > Are there any university-subsidized housing developments?
- > Is temporary housing available to new faculty?
- > Can your department recommend realtors?

Healthcare & Retirement

- > What are the premiums, deductibles, and co-pays?
- > Does health insurance include eye care and mental health care?

- > What dental and orthodontia benefits are provided and what do they cost?
- > Are your dependents eligible for health insurance?
- > Does the university's insurance carrier cover same sex domestic partners?
- > When does the health plan take effect and is this negotiable?
- > What are the long-term disability policies?
- > What type of retirement and life insurance plans are available? When do these benefits begin?

Office & Supplies

- > Do you have a private office? Where is the office located?
- > What size is your office? Do you have a window?
- > Can you order new furniture, carpet, paint?
- > What computer equipment is included in your office?
- > Can you order a new computer, printer, software, etc? How often can you get new equipment?
- > What office supplies are provided by the department?
- > What access will you have to photocopiers, web-conferencing privileges, etc?

Research & Lab

- > What start-up funds are available for research programs?
- > How many years are new faculty eligible for start-up funds?
- > How soon does the institution expect you to fund your own lab?
- > What campus resources are available to help you apply for grants?
- > What lab space is available?
- > What equipment, furniture, utilities, computers, etc. come with the lab space?
- > Are you guaranteed the lab space for an indefinite amount of time?

Teaching & Advising

- > How long do new faculty members get a course reduction?
- > How many new course preparations will you have the first few years?
- > How many courses and credits will you be teaching each term?
- > Is your teaching load subject to change or fixed over time?
- > Will you have the opportunity to develop new courses?
- > Under what circumstances are teaching loads reduced?
- > Can you stack your teaching load so you have terms with no teaching?
- > Can you buy out of teaching if you secure grants?
- > Are teaching loads reduced the year before tenure review?
- > How will your teaching be evaluated?
- > How many office hours do faculty members hold?
- > How many theses and dissertations might you supervise?
- > How many students will you advise and how quickly must you reach a full advising load?

Service

- > What type of service is valued?
- > How many committees and projects are you expected to be involved with?
- > Can you get credit, relief, or a shift in assignments for taking on significant service responsibilities?
- > How do different types of service activities count in the tenure process?
- > How do service requirements differ between untenured and tenured faculty?

Staff Support

- > Are departmental funds available to hire teaching and/or research assistants?
- > Are you guaranteed funds to hire teaching and/or research assistants or do you have to compete with other faculty members for these resources?
- > How soon will you be expected to pay for your own research assistants out of grant money?
- > Are teaching and research assistants assigned or do you select them?
- > What responsibilities do teaching and research assistants usually assume?
- > Will you have a formal mentor? If so, who will it be?

Professional Development

- > How much money can you spend on books for your office?
- > Will the library purchase books or subscribe to journals at your request?
- > How much money is available for you to attend conferences?
- > Is conference money dependent on whether you present?
- > If you serve on the board of an organization, will travel expenses to board meetings be covered?
- > Are sabbaticals available and are there restrictions on how sabbaticals can be used?
- > If you will be finishing your dissertation during the first few months, what kind of support will you receive to ensure its completion?

Partner & Family

- > Will the institution find a job for your academic partner?
- > What job-seeking assistance is available for your non-academic partner?
- > Will your partner or children receive tuition support?
- > Does the institution have a "domestic partner" policy?
- > Can your family access campus facilities such as libraries and fitness centers?
- > Does the university provide on-site daycare or subsidize daycare in the community?
- > What are the family-leave policies? Do they include men, adoption, and elder care?
- > How long does the tenure clock stop for pregnancy and childbirth (or adoption)?

Timing

- > When does your contract begin?
- > When are you expected to arrive on campus?
- > Will your office be ready when you arrive?
- > Can you delay your start date for one term?
- > What is the schedule for the academic year?
- > When are faculty members expected to be available on campus?

Other Logistics

If your appointment is split between two departments or involves other responsibilities such as administration or clinic coordination, have the details of your appointment specified in writing.

- > What department is your home in terms of tenure?
- > How will you be evaluated?
- > How will your teaching, service, and research requirements be adjusted?
- > Where will your office be or will you have more than one office?

Strategies for negotiating

Always negotiate. If a search committee extends you an offer, committee members consider you to be the best candidate and they want you. The balance of power shifts in your favor and you will likely never be in a better position to get what you want. If you don't negotiate now, the opportunity is lost. If you are anxious about the negotiation process, realize that departments expect you to negotiate and they often craft their offers on the assumption that you will negotiate. Do not assume anything. Ask questions. Requesting information indicates confidence, professionalism, and thoroughness. State your requests explicitly, concretely, and concisely.

Maintain a positive attitude. Remember that the way you negotiate sets the stage for future interactions with your colleagues – you do not want them to think you are a pushover or a bully. Strive for a win-win situation. Recognize that the committee is not going to try to cheat you because it's in everybody's best interest for you to be happy with your starting package. Be professional, courteous, appreciative, ethical, and firm. Be willing to compromise and accept no as an answer. Frame your requests appropriately.

Think broadly. Evaluate many aspects of an offer so you know what you're getting yourself into. Try not to get so excited about having a job offer that you forget to think about the future.

Prioritize. Pick your battles – prioritize what's important to you and then only negotiate the things about which you feel strongly. The overarching question you should ask yourself is, "What do I need to be happy, be productive, and get tenure?" Distinguish between what is absolutely necessary for you, and what is nice but extra. Try to limit the number of counteroffers and requests for information you make so the department chair doesn't have to repeatedly approach the dean.

Get it in writing. When you receive the official offer letter, make sure it agrees with what was discussed during the negotiation process. Make sure the letter describes the review cycle and states the year of your tenure review. If the department has promised to help your partner find a job, make sure the specific types of help are written in your contract or delay signing your contract until your partner has an offer. If the letter contains inaccurate information or is missing vital items, ask for an updated letter. If you agree to the terms, sign the letter, make a copy of it, and promptly return the original. Do not consider yourself hired until you and your employer have signed a written document.

More information

- > Chronicle of Higher Education, <http://chronicle.com/>
- > Kelsky, K. (2015). *The professor is in: The essential guide to turning your PhD into a job*. New York: Three Rivers Press.
- > Vick, J. M., Furlong, J. S., & Lurie, R. (2016). *The academic job search handbook* (5th ed.). Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- > Women Don't Ask, <http://www.womendontask.com>