

U-M Preparing Future Faculty (PFF) Conference
October 10, 2012
Strategies/Tips for Negotiating a Job Offer

Collected advice from 2010 PFF conference panelists Regina McClinton, Biology, Grand Valley State University; Pamela Raymond, Biology, U-M; Steven Volk, History, Oberlin College; Linda Tesar, Economics, U-M; as well as from: 2008 panelists Lisa Lewis, Chemistry, Albion College; Mark Wicks, Computer Science Engineering, Kettering University; Linda Tesar, Economics, U-M; and Ron Woods, African American Studies, Eastern Michigan University), 2007 panelists Howard Matthew, Professor of Chemical Engineering & Materials Science, Wayne State University and Alane Starko, Professor of Teacher Education, Eastern Michigan University; 2006 panelists Laura Morgan Roberts, Organizational Behavior, Harvard University and Cathy Bach, Biology, Eastern Michigan University; 2005 panelists Kingsley Reeves, Industrial & Management Systems Engineering, University of South Florida and Jeffrey Bernstein, Political Science, Eastern Michigan University; and 2004 panelists Kiran Cunningham, Anthropology, Kalamazoo College; Gersham Nelson, History, Eastern Michigan University; and Janet Brelin-Fornari, Mechanical Engineering, Kettering University.

The negotiation stage is the time to ask for what you need to be successful: salary, load, release time, space, support, etc. The elements of start up packages for new faculty in STEM fields vary substantially depending on the institution and the department/school/college. This variation is largely correlated by the specific expectations of the position related to amount of grant funding expected, size of research group, type of research questions, amount of teaching. However, you can be certain that you will not get what you need if you do not ask.

ITEMS TO NEGOTIATE

- **Salary:** To many people, the most important item to negotiate is salary. Your starting salary is certainly important, especially at schools that don't have merit pay increases. But for scientists, set-up funds and space can be even more important than salary, because they determine how quickly and how well they can establish their research program, which eventually will impact whether they receive tenure. Know what pay range is reasonable for the type of institution and your field.
- **Institutional support to advance your research or teaching agenda:** Such support could come by way of decreased workload during the first year, extra financial support to attend a teaching or grant writing workshop, and/or assignment of student support. For scientific disciplines, set-up funds mean laboratory/field equipment and computer equipment. Have an equipment list that is generous, but realistic. To strengthen your request, emphasize how many other people in the department could use the equipment you are requesting, but also be careful about “shared lab space.” Find out what other people have received at similar universities and at your university. At research universities, you can also request postdocs and/or research technicians as part of set-up funds.
- **Teaching load:** Negotiate for a lower teaching load at the beginning (at least for 1 year). If the university doesn't allow a reduction in teaching load, then at least negotiate for smaller classes and a teaching schedule that leaves large blocks of time available for research. Make sure the number of different preparations is reasonable. Discuss whether you will be expected to teach at night (important at a commuter university) and how often you will be able to offer upper-level courses in your area of specialization.
- **Housing:** Explore the possibility of getting free or discounted campus housing until you are able to locate suitable accommodation. There could be substantial savings in housing if the university happens to have excess capacity in housing that is suitable. Some colleges may also pay for an

extra trip to campus to look for housing.

Other Topics for Negotiation*

1. Moving expenses
2. Assistance in finding housing
3. The benefits package (Besides health, life, disability and retirement packages, institutions offer many other things such as day care facilities and tuition for children. Gather information on what is available before you enter into negotiations.)
4. Office space
5. Travel funds for conferences and presentations
6. Your own computer in the office and a laptop for home or travel
7. Summer research support
8. Internal grants opportunities
9. Secretarial assistance
10. Funds for academics resources such as books, videos, slides, etc.
11. Assistance in finding employment for your significant other
12. Early or delayed tenure opportunities
13. Early or extended sabbatical opportunities

*Garcia, M. (2000). *Succeeding in an academic career: A guide for faculty of color* (pp.21-22). Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.

THE NEGOTIATION PROCESS

Before You Start Negotiating

- Do your homework before your interview: scour the institution's website for all the information you can get; get salary information from the Chronicle of Higher Education (www.chronicle.com); learn about the town by reading the local paper online and by checking out the chamber of commerce.
- On your interview, ask other recently hired faculty what they negotiated for when they were hired. The questions can be couched in the language of, "What can I expect from the school in terms of support for new faculty?" This information helps you establish your baseline for what you might be able to get.
- Your bargaining position will never be better than it is now. Ask now; this is likely to be the best shot you'll have for a while.
- Give serious thought to what you desire— increased salary is not the only option. Think about what YOU need to get your work off to a good start – travel money, release time from teaching, research assistant funds, etc. Ask for that. No need to ask for things that really won't help you. You won't get everything you want, so prioritize well.
- Have an idea about what is reasonable, feasible, and appropriate for the department/college. A college may not have flexibility in some areas at some times (e.g., financial requests at times of budgetary tightness), or it may send the wrong signal to ask for certain things (e.g., a reduced teaching load at a teaching college, particularly if you frame it so that teaching is seen as an unwanted burden, or where it is already standard practice to give incoming faculty reduced loads). However, there may be more flexibility in some areas (e.g., what the faculty would like to teach, library allowances, research support, reduced teaching load in the first year) than others (salary). Also, one-time expenses may be easier to cover than continuing expenses.
- Before initiating any negotiations with the chair, ask current faculty in the department, especially junior faculty, what are reasonable expectations for start up.

Negotiating a Good Start

- Negotiations do not commence in earnest until the chair tells a candidate that they intend to make an offer. This news is typically communicated in a phone call, and in many cases, this is followed by a second recruitment visit to the campus.
- Negotiate with purpose by properly framing the issues (i.e., Why do you NEED what is requested and why is in the best interest of the university of give it to you?). Provide the reasoning for your request. In the event the administration or department cannot provide what you requested, you may be offered an alternate solution to support your need(s).
 - Negotiate verbally, but document everything in writing.
 - Consider asking for release time in your second year, or second semester. First semester at a new place will be so hectic, you're unlikely to get much research done anyway. By the second semester, when you're all settled in, the time off might be spent more productively.
- Do not take anything for granted. Ask! If you don't ask, they will not offer.
- For start-up money, start with a generous but realistic list and emphasize the utility of what you are requesting to others in the department.
- Don't forget that the university who has made you an offer wants you and likely won't rescind their offer at this stage. But it's important to remember that how you ask for something can be just as important as what you ask for. Be sure to use work productivity as the rationale for all your requests.
- If possible, find an ally within the institution whom you can ask specific questions about typical support for junior faculty *after* you have received the job offer. They tend to ask you what you want right away, but it is somewhat awkward to get all of the information you need on a job interview. Even if you asked the questions already during the interview, ask again. Once you have the job offer on the table, you will have a wider range of options than when you are a candidate.
- It is okay to let the institution know that/if you have offers from other institutions, but don't give them the sense that you are trying to "play them" off of one another. Be respectful and discrete in your negotiations. It's not necessary to tell them the nuts and bolts of your offer from another institution. Focus on what you need to be successful at that institution, and what it will cost for you to live in that location. Even though you have the offer, you still want them to be excited about your joining their group.
- Remember to be professional in your negotiations and interactions with all staff, including administrative assistants. This will be your first impression as an employee; first impressions are lasting ones.
- Don't be afraid to be direct: you only get one shot here, so you need to know what you need to know, and it is their job [unit head, dean] to tell it to you. But they won't tell you if you don't ask.
- Be honest about your needs: if that place is not a good fit, then should you really take that job?