

Negotiating Academic Job Offers

PDCO Career Resources

Getting the Offer

The offer tends to come verbally over the phone with few details. Later, a full written offer with further details will be sent. If you do not receive a written offer, request a paper copy of the offer for your records.

- Never accept a job offer on the spot; ask for some time to consider the offer.
- Most departments will give you a few weeks to make a decision. If you need more time, you can try to negotiate a few additional weeks.

Evaluating the Offer

- Research the position and understand what terms are being offered in your contract.
- Ask yourself: Does my start-up package cover my needs in terms of equipment, supplies, and staffing?
 - If you are not satisfied with the offer, try to negotiate better terms.
- Remember, you are negotiating for the job you were offered, not the job you necessarily wanted. Make sure to tailor your negotiations to the specific job offered.

What is negotiable?

- **Salary.** Utilize resources such as [The Chronicle of Higher Education](#) to research academic salaries at various institutions. Faculty salaries at state-funded institutions are publicly available. How much of your salary do you need to support yourself through research grants and when?
- **Start-Up Package.** Find out what resources the university will make available to support your research until you can obtain grant support. Will they provide appropriate office space for you? What supplies will be available? Will you have access to a lab space, equipment, and core facility? What does funding look like for this? Can you transition successfully to funding your own research with this start-up package?
- **Student and Staff Support.** Are departmental funds available to hire teaching or research assistants? Is there a fund for graduate students and/or postdoctoral fellows? Will you have funding for lab staff? What type of lab staff do you need to lessen your load? This is a critical part of your start-up package.
- **Teaching.** Will you be expected to teach courses? Can you have a course reduction or exemption in your first year as you settle in? What is the teaching load? Will you be expected to act as an advisor to undergraduate or graduate students? Can you buy

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yourself out of teaching responsibilities if you secure grant funding? Are teaching loads reduced the year before tenure?

- **Service.** How many committees and service programs are you expected to be involved with? Can this service be reduced the first year? How does service count in the tenure process? You might also wish to ask what types of service are valued by the department.
- **Relocation.** Research the cost of living in the area. Will they pay for relocation and/or moving expenses? Will they offer temporary housing, home buying assistance, or university housing? Will they pay for a trip for you to find housing? Will they pay for a storage unit during your move?
- **Professional Development.** Will they be providing funding for conference travel? Will they pay for professional society fees? Do you have the option to have the library order journals you request?
- **Family.** Does the institution provide spouse/partner employment support? By working for the university, will tuition be provided for your children? Is there any sort of child care support or will they help subsidize the cost? Will your family have access to university facilities? How long does the tenure clock stop for pregnancy, child care, or elder care? Does the university offer family leave policies for adoption?
- **Timing.** It is important to know when you are expected to be on campus. When does your contract begin? If needed, can you delay one semester? Will your office and lab be ready when you arrive?
- **Benefits.** Benefits are traditionally not negotiable but standardized for all employees. This includes health care coverage and when it takes effect. What are the premiums, deductibles, and copays? Will you have dependent and spousal coverage? Is dental, eye, and mental health included? What are plans for retirement, life insurance, and disability? What about transportation options?

How to Negotiate

- Negotiate politely and with respect. Go in to the meeting well versed on your proposal.
- Communicate with the person who provided the offer; it may feel difficult to bring up certain topics, but in the long run, it will make your life and employment a lot easier.
- Focus on what you can bring to the department and what you need to successfully transition to independent funding.
- Choose three to six items that are most important and critical for your future success.

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- Explain why you are asking for a particular item, and why it is a plus both for you and the institution.
- After initially discussing your negotiations, be patient, and get the new offer (if one is made) in writing.
- Don't decide between departments based on offered dollar amounts and don't pad your requests. But do be sure that you will be able to do the research you plan to do.

Burroughs Wellcome Fund Survey of Salary and Start-up Packages:

Recent beginning 12-month salaries for Ph.D.s ranged from \$78,000 to \$135,000 (average = \$102,153 and median = \$100,000). For physician-scientists with an M.D. or M.D./Ph.D., salaries ranged from \$92,304 to \$145,000 (average = \$121,058 and median = \$120,000). Salaries are normally for a nine- or 12-month year, and the letter should clearly make this distinction. Typically, salaries at schools of arts and sciences are for a nine-month academic year and salaries at medical schools are for 12 months. The salary is usually fully paid by the institution for the first three years or so of an appointment; however, in some cases the institution pays 100 percent the first year and successive lower percentages for succeeding years.

Recent institutional offers of start-up support (excluding salary) for Ph.D.s averaged \$800,000 (range \$500,000 to \$1,400,000), with a median of \$750,000. Start-up offers for physician-scientists averaged \$800,000 (range \$100,000 to \$2,110,250), with a median of \$710,000. This money can be used for equipment, consumables, personnel costs, and professional travel. In many cases, the funds are made available for the first three years and normally (but not in all cases) may be carried forward if not spent. A few institutions may allow money that is not being used to be placed in an interest-bearing account with the interest added to the total start-up support.

Additional Resources

- [Academic Offer Letters, Burroughs Wellcome Foundation](#)
- [Search and explore faculty, staff, and adjunct salary data at thousands of colleges](#)
- [Cost of Living: Housing, Food, and Lifestyle](#)
- [UCSF Office of Career and Professional Development Negotiating your Start Up Package](#)
- [How to be honorable and strategic when negotiating an academic job](#)

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