Evaluating Academic Job Offers & Negotiating Positions

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You will typically be asked to provide information regarding your needs before an offer is made. It may be verbal first and then in writing. Occasionally from HR but typically from the department chair, etc. It is not a done-deal until it is put in writing, the papers are signed, and all of the paperwork is completed.
Your Deliberations Really Boil Down to Three Main Issues:

- Quality of the fit
  - Professional and personal
- Quality of the offer
- Other offers and options
  - If you are waiting to hear about other positions, email them with “the good news”
With Four Options

- BAD FIT - BAD OFFER
- BAD FIT - GREAT OFFER
- GREAT FIT - GREAT OFFER
- GREAT FIT - BAD OFFER
If You Are Not Interested in Pursuing the Offer

- Decline as soon as you decide that you are not interested in talking further
- Be respectful and keep explanations brief and general
  - I don’t believe there is a good fit for me
  - The balance of clinical duties and research is not what I was looking for
  - This is not a good move for me [and my family]
  - My partner was unable to find a suitable position
  - I have other offers that provide better opportunities
General Strategy for All Negotiations

- Prepare
- Act
- Respond
Factors To Consider (no special order)

- The nature of the job
- Support to establish your research, teaching, and/or clinical program
- Salary
- Benefits
- Your boss(es)
- Your co-workers
- Location & lifestyle
The Nature of the Job

- Is it what you want to do?
- Is it the right balance of teaching, research, clinical duties, and service?
- Will it help you achieve your career goals?
Support to Establish Your Research, Teaching, and/or Clinical Program

- Will you have access to the right resources?
  - Ample space to do your work
  - Appropriate office space
  - Access to critical equipment and core facilities

- Will you have access to enough resources?
  - Money
  - Students
  - Clinical samples
  - Teaching assistants and lab prep assistance

- Will you receive appropriate mentorship and guidance?
Considerations (I)

- **Amount of office and research space**
  - Will there be funds for renovations and furniture if needed?
  - Is the layout of the space appropriate?
  - Is your office close to your research group?
  - If wet lab, expect 600 – 1000 sq. ft. of lab space starting out

- **Amount of start-up**
  - Generally to cover equipment, supplies, staff, students, travel, computer support
  - Can be negotiated as a lump sum to use as you wish or with each category clearly defined
  - Often spread over 2 or three years
  - Expensive equipment may be negotiated separately
  - Your goal is to have enough resources (money, staff and equipment) to establish and run your program for two years
Considerations (II)

- Teaching, clinical and/or service responsibilities
  - Optimal if none at first and then increased over time (one year ramp-up is the norm)
  - How much input will you have as the exact duties are established?
  - For teaching positions: load, lab vs lecture, repeat classes or new, ways to “buy out” if research program expands
Understanding the Tenure Process

- Be clear on the expectations
  - Typically research, teaching, clinical practice and/or service

- Be clear on the timeline
  - Can you defer or go up early?

- Be clear on the process
  - First the department, then the School, and then the University
  - Know what they will be asking for
  - Listen to success stories and learn from prior problems

- Know what tenure means at that institution
When negotiating lead with…

- In order for me to be productive and do my research I need…..
- In order for me to be the best teacher/clinician possible, I need…
- And remember
  - Be clear about the difference between needs and wants
  - Knowledge is power
Salary

- Is it what you feel you are worth? Or close to it?
- Is it a 9 month or 12 month appointment?
  - Are you expected to work 12 months regardless?
  - Are there realistic ways to find support for the summer months?
- Is it a base + bonus system?
- How much will be you be expected to provide from grants and when?
  - What happens when faculty don’t meet these expectations?
  - If you provide more, will some funds be returned to you for other uses?
Knowing Your Value

- Find “real-world”data
  - Use more than one on-line database
  - AAMC salary survey for academic positions
  - Many state universities publish salaries of current faculty
  - Use your NIH and university networks

- Account for geographic area
  - Use two different cost-of-living calculators
  - Factor in personal needs

- Establish three important numbers:
  - “No go”
  - “Ideal”
  - “Acceptable”
Benefits (I)

- Health insurance
  - Types of plans
  - Percentage covered by the employer
  - Cost of adding spouse and family
  - Coverage for domestic partners
  - Availability of vision and/or dental plans

- Other types of insurance
  - Life insurance (basic often provided at no cost)
  - Disability (is often not sufficient)

- Retirement
  - You need to know the specific vehicles used
  - Time to vest varies
  - Percentage of employer match varies
  - Additional voluntary plans can supplement
Other Benefits (II)

- Vacation and sick leave
  - Starting amount and rate of increase
  - Paid or unpaid at end of service

- Holidays
  - Can be as many as 10 paid holidays per year

- Help with relocation
  - All expenses paid or a moving allowance?
  - Assistance with housing - finding it or paying for it?
  - Help with job for your spouse or partner?
Other Benefits (III)

- Tuition assistance
  - Specifics vary: job-related only, only at your university, limit to number per year
  - Some universities also include spouse, partners and children

- Child care subsidies
  - On or off-site
  - May have waiting lists and salary guidelines

- Bonuses
  - At signing, annual, on-the-spot, or a combination?
  - Much more common in government and private sector

- Paid sabbaticals
Multiple Offers

- Be clear and willing to share information with all parties
- Know timelines for each and appreciate that they may differ
- You can ask for more time to decide, but you may not get it
Three Responses to Any Offer

- **Stall**
  - Express enthusiasm; ask for time to carefully consider the offer
  - Factor in other “irons in the fire”
  - Take time to prepare for any negotiation you decide is important

- **Accept**
  - Not before you have an offer in writing; accept in writing
  - Address start dates or any previously planned commitments up-front
  - You must then reject other offers and withdraw other applications

- **Reject**
  - Respectfully - no need to burn bridges
  - Be prepared to explain why
Prepare

- Research what a typical offer looks like
  - Generally and at the specific institution
- Clearly distinguish your WANTS and your NEEDS
- Consider your reasons for asking for more money, space, resources, etc.
- Consider your boss’ perspective
- Consider possible questions and responses you may hear during the negotiation
- Practice; confirm that you sound professional and courteous (verbally or in writing)
  - Take advantage of IC and OITE resources
Act

- Start by conveying your enthusiasm for the position and summarize elements of the offer that you find acceptable
- Introduce the area you would like to negotiate about
- Listen carefully to the response; ask for clarification if needed
- Take notes; stress may make it difficult to remember what was said
- Restate positions and agreements
- End with a thank you and some indication of your level of enthusiasm
Respond

- Talking is often better than writing
- Start with a thank you for their consideration
- Get to the point quickly
  - Make a counter-offer
  - accept
  - reject
- Be gracious - in victory or defeat
- Finalize in writing
Negotiating Salary: Be prepared for these responses

- What salary are you willing to work for?
  - Best to put your optimal salary in the mid-range of the scale
- If I pay you what you are asking for, you will earn more than other recent hires
- I don’t have any flexibility in this regard - salary ranges are set by my boss, HR, the college, etc.
- We are offering all of our new hires the same non-negotiable salary