

Postdoc Academic Chat #3

Getting the Right Start-up Package to Enhance Your Success as a New Professor: Learning how to negotiate effectively

Wednesday, November 13, 2019

Negotiating for an academic position is not like buying a car or a house where you will have little or no contact with the seller afterwards. You may well end up in a significant long-term professional relationship with many of the people you will be taking to so you want to get what you need while setting the stage for long-term success. We will discuss how to make this happen while having everyone on-board afterwards.

Readings

#1 Negotiating for What You Need to be Successful

#2 Top 10 Tips on Negotiating Start-up Packages

#3 Joining Your Department and Discipline - Negotiating Tips

1. Negotiating for What You Need to be Successful

From: On the Cutting Edge - Professional Development for Geoscience Faculty Preparing for an Academic Career in the Geosciences
<http://serc.carleton.edu/NAGTWorkshops/index.html>

Oh lucky day, you've got a job offer (or more than one). Now you need to negotiate salary, start-up funds, lab space, teaching duties, and perhaps a job for your spouse or partner. How do you get what you need, without creating tensions before you even start your new job?

Tips from Early Career Geoscience Faculty Workshop Alums

- ☐ Ask for things that will make your] first year easier and more productive.

The first include salary and start-up funds. I didn't have much to go on in terms of what type of salary to ask other than what my friends were making at other universities. I have since found out there are lists compiling salaries by discipline and years of experience. I was told early on in my interview process to have a list of start-up equipment and their costs, and then to double it. This advice was very helpful in securing more dollars in start-up than I originally anticipated. Other advice I wish I had, was to request no teaching assignment your first year or at least your first semester in an attempt to get settled into your new office and lab space. I have seen a couple of new hires ask for a post-doc for one or two years as included as their start-up funds.

- ☐ Make sure you negotiate everything you need to be successful in your new position: that is what your department should want for you as well. Ask for what you need, no more, no less; and be ready to justify each request in terms of an interest rather than a position (See Fisher and Ury, *Getting to Yes: Negotiating Agreement Without Giving In*). [<http://serc.carleton.edu/resources/20948.html>]. Get as much of this explicitly stated in your offer letter as possible.

- ☐ Starting pay is everything: You don't get a big bonus for doing well in academia. Don't think you'll get a raise beyond cost of living. Don't go along with the old line: "Well, you can apply for an equipment grant when you get here to buy X. I understand that they are not that hard to get." Make the university provide you with what you need to get your program started. You don't have a lot of time before the tenure clock is up. If you spend three years getting the equipment you need to get tenure, you're likely to be doing another job search soon.

- ☐ Everyone told me to ask for what I needed during negotiations. This is important and it is better to ask for more because it will make succeeding more likely. I suggest polling others who were recently hired. The worst

- ☐ they can do is refuse to give information. I didn't see much wiggle room with negotiations until I had multiple offers. Then the rules seemed to change. The issues include: Reduced teaching for first year or two, laboratory renovations (are they being paid for out of start-up, or done by the

university and guaranteed to a certain level), safety issues, equipment matching funds (at least at 35% level, better if at 40% level), lab set up start up, lab running start up, student or post doc salaries or TA's, starting salary, summer salary, moving expenses.

- ☐ Read the fantastic book titled something like "How to Negotiate and Make \$1,000/minute". [Chapman, Jack. 2000. Negotiating Your Salary: How to Make \$1,000/minute. Wilmette, IL: Jack Chapman.] It makes you think and write about what sorts of things you want to negotiate for and gives you some advice on how to do it.
- ☐ Talk to peers at similar type institutions to see what is "normal" for starting out (salary, start up funds, etc.) Use the Chronicle of Higher Education to get the average salary for your institution and for similar institutions. Both are great benchmarks [on which] to base your negotiations.
- ☐ Make a list of all of the equipment that [you will] need in order to conduct [your] research, complete with prices and models. While on interviews, I was asked point blank what I needed and how much it would cost to get me to the schools. Having this information on hand also made the negotiation process go faster.
- ☐ You won't get it if you don't ask. This is your only time to get everything you need so be thorough. Get everything in writing (including room numbers for the space you will be assigned, amount of startup funds separate from any renovation costs, number of student support packages if any, number of months of summer support, and no [time] limit to spending out your startup). Two months summer support for the first two summers. Don't worry if the negotiations take a while and go back and forth a few times. Once the search committee has selected you, they are not going to renege on the offer. Other things that I did that I thought was useful: follow-up, go through your offer line by line, call on colleagues/mentors to go over the offer with you; expect your lab/equipment to not be ready by the specified date...it always takes longer than it should; update all of the institutions where you have applied of any new funding or offers that you get during the process. This will work in your favor because any interested institution is usually impressed by new funding and/or other offers.
- ☐ I wish I would have asked for a 10 hr/week administrative assistant for my first year.

- □ Be very clear about what you need. (For my lab, I wrote a sort of mini proposal to explain the features I required and the type of work that

would go on in it.) Get every detail (that you think might be important) in writing. Part of the administration changed between the time I accepted my offer and started the job. I was surprised to see that I was given different, smaller lab space than promised. This is in the process of being fixed, but it is only because I insisted on a relatively detailed description of the lab in my offer letter (room numbers or some quantitative measure is advisable).

- □ The most helpful thing I found when considering a job offer was to contact the union representing professors on campus. They provided my with salary information for recent hires and helped me evaluate whether I was getting a good deal. I felt like I could bargain with authority.

#2. Top 10 Tips on Negotiating Stat-up Packages

<http://blogs.nature.com/naturejobs/2015/11/16/the-faculty-series-top-10-tips-on-negotiating-start-up-packages/>

16 Nov 2015 | 12:00 BST | Posted by [Jack Leeming](#) | Category: [Academia](#), [Faculty](#), [Funding](#)

Negotiating the best deal for your research is something few junior faculty members are prepared for. Here's some friendly advice.

New faculty are often given a start-up fund by their new department, which is designed to be enough to cover equipment costs and other expenses before the grants start knocking on the door. The sum of the start-up isn't set in stone, and this leads to a dreaded period of negotiation; the difficult and lengthy process that few junior faculty members are prepared for.

Here, *Naturejobs* offers help and advice that any new faculty member should bear in mind when trying to get the best deal to carry out their research.

1. Know what you need before beginning any dialogue

Before beginning any negotiation, make sure to know what you absolutely need to carry out your research. Whether this is a telescope, the latest interactive graphics package, a peptide sequencer or a good old-fashioned centrifuge, getting your essentials right will put you in the right position to begin negotiating.

2. There's no point having equipment if you don't have any hands to use it

One of the largest costs you can expect to come out of your start-up fund are the salaries of PhD students and postdocs. They're **the** most crucial components of the lab for almost all researchers. These are also expensive and, unlike equipment, you have to keep paying for them. If you don't have the hands available to do the science, all of the new shiny equipment in the world isn't going to make a difference. Factor trainee costs into your budget.

3. Keep a detailed and prioritised inventory

You don't have to list every pipette and syringe you expect to use in one year's worth of research, but make sure to have an idea about how much these consumables cost, and summarise them as part of your budget. The more detailed your budget is, the better you'll look.

4. Remember the little things

Remember the personal details like parking, or covering a house-hunting visit, or moving expenses, or day care, or holiday time, or teaching requirements. All of these can be discussed as part of the negotiation process, and if you feel you need something extra to carry out your research, you shouldn't shy away from mentioning it. These should come into the negotiation process later, after the larger issues have been largely ironed out.

5. Take your time

The whole process takes a lot of time, and this is not a bad thing. Use that time to prioritise your request list, and to go through each iteration of an offer thoroughly (see **get everything in writing**). Be patient – even if this is your only offer, the people you're negotiating with don't know that.

6. The process is a partnership

Walk into the negotiation process with this in mind – both you and the board you're negotiating with are trying to get the best deal to carry out your research, and wherever you're applying, they won't have an unlimited amount of money. Everyone wants to see you succeed.

7. Stay grounded

Don't have an ego when applying for start-up funds. Think objectively about what you do and don't need, and remember that there are more likely than not other people who will also need start-up funds soon. Give on some things. The people you're talking to will be much more experienced than you in negotiating, and will know an ego when they see it.

8. Get everything in writing

This can be harder than it sounds – often people will call to let you know their latest offer, and whilst you should of course be appreciative, getting the details in writing is the only way to guarantee that offer. Just send a quick email to the person who made a verbal offer to confirm what was discussed. It also means you can take your time, and check over the paperwork for anything you might have missed.

9. Be genuine

Negotiating is not a battle over the money available. Remember that both parties want your research to succeed and build that into your negotiations. Be genuine and honest and people will be grateful for it. Who knows – they may well give you a little more than they were intending to. Make sure to explain why you need everything you need, as opposed to just saying that you do – transparency is key.

10. Be positive

Always approach every step with enthusiasm, and try to suggest win-wins. Perhaps you could share some of the equipment you need with other members of the group, or maybe the cost of a PhD student could be split collaboratively with another member of the department. If all goes well, you're going to be working with the people you're negotiating with for a long time; make sure to start off on the right foot.

Negotiation can be a painful process, but with the right attitude and skill set, you can turn it into a genuine tool to help you and your new department find the right way to help you succeed in your research. Good luck out there, and check out next week's post on how to set up your brand new, freshly-negotiated lab. Stay tuned.

#3. Joining Your Department and Discipline - Negotiating Tips

The posting below gives some good tips on negotiating once you have an academic offer. It is from Chapter 2, Joining Your Department and Discipline in the book *Survive and Thrive: A Guide for Untenured Faculty*, by Wendy C. Crone, University of Wisconsin-Madison. Copyright © 2010 by Morgan & Claypool, a Publication in the Morgan & Claypool Publishers series Lecture #11 Series ISSN. Print 1939-5221 Electronic 1939-523X. All rights reserved. Reprinted with permission.

The first steps to achieving tenure can occur well before you take up residence at your new institution. Much of this part of the process will put you in fact finding mode - starting when you begin looking at ads for positions and continuing through the untenured years.

To be successful in your new position, you will need the right tools. If you are very lucky, someone will tell you what these tools are and they will help you to obtain them. Unfortunately, most young faculty I have talked with did not have this experience. Often, it is not for lack of good intentions on the part of senior colleagues and mentors. The rules change over the years and the emphasis within the tenure committee may change as the committee members change. So, the onus is on the junior folks. You must ask questions, search for information, and negotiate for what you need. Some of us feel more comfortable with some of these tasks than with others, but you must persist with them all!

Now that you have made the decision to join the academy in your particular discipline and profession, you will want to consider the following questions.

2.1 Negotiating the Terms of Your Appointment

2.1.1 Overarching Questions to Consider

- Have you sought out advice or guidance that would help you enter into a successful negotiation?
- What aspects of your position and duties are negotiable?
- Can you do background research that will support your request?

2.1.2 Mentoring Conversation: On Negotiating An Offer

Several years ago, one of the post docs in my group was offered an academic position. I encouraged her to negotiate the terms of the offer. This was not something she had intended to do. As a rule, I encourage everyone to

negotiate, even if just a little, so that they can start to learn the art of negotiation and, hopefully, obtain the most optimal situation possible in the position they have been offered. I also believe the opportunity for negotiation can also help to set the tone in your new position, showing that you are a professional who knows what you need to be successful. The other point to remember is that you will very seldom have something given to you that you did not ask for. So, you must ask!

However, I should caution that you must ask for things that are reasonable, and you must ask in a professional and collegial way. There are a number of items that are negotiable, but two common topics are salary and teaching load. For both, a little research on the topic can go a long way. You can use your network to find out an amazing amount of information. This gives you information about the bounds and a strong foundation for negotiation. The post doc I mentioned earlier found out information about similar positions and had very good grounds for negotiation on several points. Although she was not able to directly negotiate her salary, the process was valuable because she found out that she was able to negotiate the amount of prior teaching experience counted towards her seniority, which ultimately set her pay rate. The process also helped her to decide if this was the right place for her.

Sometimes negotiation can get you more than what was initially offered, helping you to obtain things that will make you happier and more effective in your position. There are some choices you have concerning who to approach about negotiation. I usually suggest that one begin with the chair of the search committee or the chair of the department. Choose someone who can act as an advocate for you with the people who actually control the decisions (and the purse strings). The committee and/or department decided that you were the best person for the job, they want you to come to their institution, and they want you to succeed in the position.

2.1.3 Detailed Questions And Suggestions To Consider:

What approach to negotiation will achieve the best outcome? How will your approach depend on the situation? Consider the strategies of approaching negotiation as:

- one event in a long term relationship that you want to foster.
- an opportunity for relationship building.
- a collaborative undertaking.
- an opportunity to promote and open discussion that maximizes information

flow in both directions.

- away to assess the needs of both parties.

2. Much negotiation of the terms of your appointment takes place before you accept an offer. The things that are negotiable depend on the type of institution and the department, but the primary concern should be to get what you need to enable you to be successful in the position. Items to consider at that time, or in the first year, include the following:

- Start-up package (including money for your summer salary, graduate assistant's salary, postdoc funding, computers, equipment, conferences, and flexible funds for other costs)

- Time limits on start-up package spending
- Salary
- Seniority granted for prior experience
- Moving expenses
- Teaching load (temporary reduction in teaching, semester off from teaching, choice of courses, control over when courses are taught)
 - Office space and office furniture
 - Laboratory, research or performance space renovated to your needs
 - Computing facilities
 - Job placement assistance for your spouse/partner

3. Your salary at the early stages of your career can have a dramatic impact on your lifetime earnings. Even a seemingly small dollar amount can grow to a large sum over the time frame of one's career. When approaching salary negotiation in an offer or at raise time:

- develop a strategy in advance for the best approach to take with salary decision maker(s).
- know what others in a similar field and at a similar level make. • set both a minimum and an upper goal.
- don't undersell yourself in your opening negotiation.
- don't concede to much too soon.
- reiterate your points while remaining flexible.

- conduct a mock negotiation with a friend to boost your confidence.

4. Have a frank discussion with your department chair about the following issues:

- The track record of your department in supporting junior faculty
- The availability of, and your eligibility for, financial support within the institution
- Conditions you must meet for your appointment to continue
- Teaching load and number of new preps each year
- Courses you would prefer to teach
- Release time for the development of new courses
- Teaching assistantship support for the classes you teach
- Teaching assistantships available for your graduate students
- Expectations to buy out of a portion of your academic year salary
- Vacation time and the amount of summer salary you are allowed to pay yourself
- Preparation of your tenure packet
- Provisions for maternity leave, parental leave, medical leave, and elder care leave
- Options for stopping the tenure clock for birth, adoption, elder care, or illness.

5. If you already have or plan to have a family, it is important to find out about how your department and institution supports family responsibilities. In addition to reading up on the Family Medical Leave Act, you should also consider:

- obtaining a copy of your institutions maternity, paternity, and adoption policy.
- finding out about prior practice in your department and other departments in your college.
- talking to other faculty with a similar family situation to your own. • discussing options for stopping the tenure clock with your chair.
- looking into how a change in family status will affect your benefits.

6. There is a long list of other items that you should ask about early on in the process. Some key issues in your field may include the following:

- Cost of a research assistant's salary and fringe benefits • Percentage of overhead taken on your grants
- Funds available as matching money for grant proposals
- Number of graduate student applications coming into the program each year • Quality of the graduate students in the program
- Office computer
- Computer networking infrastructure
- Support for technology enhanced learning
- Library services
- Shared facilities available for research
- Buyout policy
- Undergraduate advising load

7. There are a number of seemingly small issues revolving around departmental resource allocation that can affect how you are perceived in your department. Consider:

- What is viewed as a fair share of the office support for typing, photocopying, purchasing, etc.?

- Is there an established system for requesting library purchases?
- How will remodeling for your laboratory space be accomplished?

1J.C. Williams, "It's in Their Interest, Too," The Chronicle of Higher Education, August 31, 2006. [http://chronicle.com/article/Its-in-Their-Interest- Too/46751/](http://chronicle.com/article/Its-in-Their-Interest-Too/46751/) (Accessed 11/11/09).