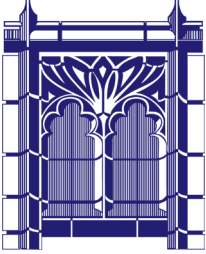


# Academic Job Offer and Salary Negotiations



## THE GRADUATE SCHOOL **mentor memo** AUTUMN QUARTER 2008

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This Mentor Memo, part of a series, responds to graduate students' requests for advice about navigating graduate studies successfully.

The series also addresses topics in career preparation and professional development. For more information and to suggest topics, contact Graduate School Interim Dean Jerry Baldasty at [baldasty@u.washington.edu](mailto:baldasty@u.washington.edu).

Some graduate students may fear the negotiation process because they have little or no experience negotiating a job offer. Here are tips for negotiating a starting package that can maximize your personal and professional satisfaction as a future faculty member.

### Collect information

- Ask faculty in your department what they think would be a fair package.
- Research average faculty salaries online by state and institution.
- Check the websites of professional associations in your field for academic salary information.

### Always negotiate

- When you're offered a position, the balance of power shifts in your favor. As a result, you will likely never be in a better position to get what you want.
- Departments expect you to negotiate.
- Do not assume anything. Ask questions.

### Maintain a positive attitude

- The way you negotiate sets the stage for future interactions with your colleagues.
- Strive for a win-win situation.
- The hiring committee and your supervisor want 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

- Frame your requests in terms of what you need to be optimally successful and productive at the institution.
- Focus on the value you will bring to the department.

### Think broadly

- Always ask for a higher salary! Your starting salary has a big impact on your overall lifetime earnings because raises are calculated from your base (starting) salary.

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- Evaluate other aspects of an offer so you know what you're getting yourself into: relocation expenses, conference money, office space, lab equipment, job responsibilities, student and staff support, healthcare, retirement, family benefits, etc.
- 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.
- Ask yourself “What do I need to be happy, be productive—and get tenure?”
- Distinguish between what is absolutely necessary for you and what would be nice to have, but extra.

## Get it in writing

- When you receive the official offer letter, make sure it agrees with what was discussed during the negotiation process.
- 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 both signed a written document.

## Resources

- Golde, C. (2001). Be honorable and strategic. *Science Careers*. <http://sciencecareers.sciencemag.org/>
- Heiberger, M. M., & Vick, J. M. (2001). *The academic job search handbook*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Reis, R. (1999). The right start-up package for beginning science professors. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. <http://chronicle.com/jobs/99/08/99082702c.htm>

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