

Postdoc Academic Chat #3

Negotiating Strategies to Get the Resources You Need as a New Faculty Member

Tuesday, November 18, 2014

Questions/Discussion Items to Consider

- **How do you identify the research resources you will need if you are still uncertain about your specific research agenda?**
- **How do you develop the justifications you need to support your start-up requests?**
- **How do you distinguish between must-have items and items you would like to have but could live without?**

Readings

- 1. Negotiating for What You Need to be Successful**
- 2. The Right Start-Up Package for Beginning Science Professors**
- 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 me 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. The Right Start-Up Package for Beginning Science Professors

From: The Chronicle of Higher Education, August 27, 1999,
Richard M. Reis

"Remember, what you are negotiating is the start-up package, not just the start-up salary. How you start out can make all the difference in how well you do, how successful you will be, so be sure you get the resources you need at the beginning. -- Assistant professor of chemistry, University of Michigan.

Congratulations, you have just been offered a tenure-track assistant professorship at your first-choice institution. Now, however, your real work begins. You are entering the critical negotiation stage that may, or may not, bring you the resources you need for a successful academic career.

To thrive as a beginning science or engineering professor you are going to need more than a good starting salary. Of course, such a salary is important. Not only does it help provide you with a needed standard of living, it establishes the base line for future raises and reduces the need for you to look for other, career-diverting ways to earn additional income.

Yet many beginning faculty members think it's their job to hit the dean up for an extra \$1,000 to \$2,000 before accepting an academic offer. Such an approach not only creates resentment, it can make it more difficult for you to get the other things you must have to begin your tenure journey.

As was noted by Eve Riskin, an associate professor of electrical engineering at

the University of Washington:

"Most faculty don't realize they can negotiate their start-up conditions in a way that will help them be more successful, as well as happy. My goal was to make my life easier, not richer. It wasn't the start-up salary, but the start-up resources I really cared about."

Negotiating an academic job offer is about becoming part of an organization and a group of people with which you will have a significant relationship. You want to get the things you need to increase your chances of success, while remembering that you are going to work with these people for years to come.

What else besides salary should you look for in a start-up package? For science and engineering professors, the main things are graduate-student support, summer salary support, laboratory and computer equipment, manageable teaching responsibilities, particularly in the first three years, and a small amount of unrestricted funds that you can use in any appropriate way without prior approval.

Before discussing these resources in more detail, let's make sure that you begin the negotiating process with the right mindset. To do so, you need to see yourself not as an applicant who is still seeking a job offer, but as a person who has received one. Most people never make this critical shift, and it can cost them dearly.

You need to be forthright in your approach and not worry that the school is going to withdraw its offer because of it. How you ask for something is often as important as what you ask for. As Martin Ford, associate dean of the graduate school of education at George Mason University, says, "Always try to use work quality or productivity as the rationale in your negotiations. Align your goals with those of your employer."

Let's first look at the issue of graduate-student support. Sometimes you can negotiate trade-offs that get you what you need while at the same time making a very positive impression. The case of an assistant professor in the mechanical-engineering department at the University of Massachusetts is an example.

In his first round of negotiations the department offered to cover his salary for two summers so he could continue to do research. He countered with a request for salary support for the first summer, but in exchange for the second summer's compensation, he asked for summer support for two graduate

students. He was confident that he could generate support on his own, and consequently the department was delighted to make the requested trade-off. What about laboratory equipment and computer support?

The key, as always, is to try to make it a win-win arrangement for both you and the department. Shon Pulley, associate professor of chemistry at the University of Missouri at Columbia, points to this example: "In explaining to the department why I needed a particular piece of equipment, I also pointed out how other faculty members could benefit from its use and how its acquisition would count as a matching contribution toward additional grant support." Keep in mind that your idea and the department's idea of what you need may differ simply out of misunderstanding or ignorance. You are in the best position to know your needs, but in trying to meet them, be open to approaches that you might not have thought about. The department may not have the computer you need, but may be willing to work with you on obtaining it as a gift from a local technology company.

Now let's take a look at what is often the trickiest element in the negotiation: your beginning teaching assignment. On one hand you want to make clear that you take your teaching responsibility very seriously, yet in order to do so you need to reduce or simplify such responsibility in your first few years on the job. Most departments will agree in principle with this goal. But what if the department says it is sympathetic to your request for a reduced teaching commitment in your first year, but is unable to honor it? They say you will be replacing someone who taught a regular number of classes each semester, so that is what you are going to have to do.

Don't give up too easily. You might respond by asking if you can borrow ahead with another faculty member, who would take one of your classes the first semester in exchange for your teaching one of his or her classes later on.

Other ways of simplifying your initial teaching assignment might include:

- Teaching a course previously taught by someone who is willing to loan you copies of their lecture notes, exams, and homework assignments.
- Teaching two classes back to back or schedule days without classes so you can block off time to do other work.
- Distinguish between a class with 30 students and the same class with 60 students.

There is one more resource you should try to obtain before starting your employment. Ask your department to set up an unrestricted account in your name and to deposit a starting sum, say \$5,000 to \$10,000, in it.

Such an account allows you to cover relatively small expenses such as travel to conferences, computer and software purchases, book purchases, publication fees, and business lunches. This approach gives you freedom to deal with unanticipated expenses in a timely manner without having to constantly ask your chair for small amounts of money.

The above examples are the key things to keep in mind when negotiating a start-up package. There may be others, depending on a person's particular situation. I'd very much like to hear about interesting, difficult, or unusual situations you have encountered in your own negotiations. Please send your comments to catalyst@chronicle.com

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/> (Accessed 11/11/09).