

Welcome to Column 15 of Hey Jane! This is a project of the SWS Career Development Committee. Questions and answers are generated by the committee and SWS members. Answers are compiled from several anonymous sources. All columns are archived on our committee's page on the SWS website <http://www.socwomen.org/about/career.html>

This volume of Hey Jane! was co-written by Denise Copelton, chair of the SWS Career Development Committee.

September 29, 2006
HEY JANE!

“I’ve just received a job offer – how do I negotiate?”

JANE SAYS:

The types of things you can negotiate after a job offer will vary quite a bit depending on the rank, type, and nature of the position as well as on the hiring institution. Our advice will focus on research, teaching and administrative positions within academic institutions. Because administrative positions have some unique negotiating elements to them, we will address them later.

Before we begin, we should note that some institutions simply WILL NOT negotiate. If you find yourself in this situation, you will have to decide whether to accept or decline based on what they’ve offered. However, the following advice might give you some ideas of the kinds of things you should be sure are clear in the offer.

1) First, never, never, never accept any position without first trying to negotiate. When the offer comes in on the telephone, get a notebook and pen and write down everything that offer includes. Then, tell them you need to think about it and you will call them back in the next day or two. Don't negotiate right away. You need time to formulate a strategy -- to consider what they've already offered and what else you can reasonably ask for and expect to get. So hang up the phone.

2) Find out exactly with whom you need to be negotiating. Most likely it is the Dean (who is probably also the person that called with the offer), but sometimes the department chair acts as a go-between and you forward all requests through him/her. This can be awkward because then your negotiating success really depends on the skills of the chair. But this can also be helpful if you're dealing with a strong chair. Sometimes it is crystal clear who you negotiate with, other times it is not. If it is unclear, it is okay to ask who you should speak with about the terms of the offer.

3) Make a list of everything and anything you want/need to do the job. If you don't ask for it, they probably won't offer it. If you don't ask NOW, you may never have another chance. Your wish list might be extensive. If it isn't, you probably haven't thought about

it long enough. There is ALWAYS something else you can request. You might want to include the following in your "wish list":

- * Salary -- this will typically be at the top of the list. This is usually what you will want to negotiate for the hardest.
- * Start-up funds for research
- * Computer equipment and software-- find out what they are initially offering you in terms of a computer. Sometimes what is offered is woefully inadequate. Find out about processor speed and memory (they may or may not be able to give you specifics). Don't forget about peripherals -- do you want a flat screen monitor? Extra hard drive? Flash drive? Laser printer? Find out what software the school already has that would be available to you and negotiate for anything they don't have that you need/want (SPSS, SAS, qualitative data analysis software, access to datasets -- do they belong to ICPSR? etc.)
- * Research and/or teaching assistants
- * Travel money -- for conference presentations and attendance, and for research.
- * Course reduction -- this is something that institutions that don't have much leeway in the budget can sometimes more readily offer (but they probably won't offer unless you ask). You can ask for a permanent course reduction or a course reduction for the first year or two.
- * Start date -- it IS sometimes possible to negotiate to start midyear instead of fall semester or to delay the start date for up to a year.
- * Spousal hires
- * Office space/lab space and furniture -- if your research involves content analysis of media coverage, you might request a television and cable service; if you analyze film, you might want a DVD and VCR player; if you do historical research, you might ask for a microfilm reader, etc.
- * Books, journal subscriptions, professional association fees, library resources (anything you can get the department or college to pay for is something you don't have to pay for).
- * Money for publication costs (photo permissions, submission fees, etc.).
- * Courses -- what courses do they want you to teach? What courses do YOU want to teach? Especially for newer teachers, you want to keep the number of courses you have to prepare each semester to a minimum. So, especially if you were not able to negotiate a course reduction, you might try hard to negotiate teaching multiple sections of the same course.
- * Teaching schedule -- is this already set or would you have some say for your first semester? How is this worked out for future semesters?
- * Summer teaching -- you could ask FOR summer teaching or perhaps to GET OUT of it.
- * Summer salary -- you might request that internal summer research grants be guaranteed for X number of years.
- * Health insurance -- may not be negotiable, but it is sometimes possible to negotiate coverage for a domestic partner, or other special circumstance.
- * Retirement benefits -- institutions may require a full year or two of employment before they begin to contribute to a retirement plan. It may be possible to negotiate for a reduction in the waiting period.

* Moving expenses – if you live locally and do not need moving expenses, you might use this to negotiate for something else.

* Signing bonus -- while more common outside of academia, people HAVE gotten these when they've asked. Some pay cycles are such that a first pay check may not be issued until a month or more after you begin working. Especially for people fresh out of graduate school, a signing bonus may hold you over until that first pay check arrives.

* Time towards tenure -- can time worked elsewhere count towards tenure at the new institution? But also consider if it is wise to count previous time given this institution's tenure requirements. Typically time needs to be negotiated NOW, rather than after you're on campus.

* Publications -- will publications count for tenure if they came out before taking this job? Sometimes the answer will be yes, sometimes no - depending on the school. So this may or may not be a negotiable point.

4) Do your research. Ideally, you do this both before and immediately after the interview so you are prepared when you receive the offer. The Chronicle of Higher Education and Academe (published by AAUP -- American Association of University Professors) both publish salary reports for specific schools. Find them online and read them so you know what others at this school and at similar schools have been getting in recent years in terms of salary. If the school is unionized, the union will typically publish very specific information on salaries. If that information is available, you can know how high the institution can go with a starting salary before they get into salary compression issues.

5) Rank order your wish list and start your negotiations at the top (again, usually salary). Once you get to the point where you don't think they can or will budge on salary, or if they tell you they will check into it further, then and only then should you move to the next item. Some strategies for negotiating salary include:

"The initial offer included a starting salary of XX, but I understand that other people with comparable experience have started at YYY."

"As you know, I bring considerable teaching/research/publication experience to this position - X years of full-time teaching. Based on this considerable experience I think a starting salary of XXX would be more appropriate."

6) When you move on to another negotiating point, use previous failed negotiation points to bolster your argument. This recognizes a Dean's limitations in what she or he can offer and provides alternatives.

"I understand that you cannot increase my starting salary beyond XXX, therefore I would like YYY included in my starting package."

"Given my considerable [experience, publication record, etc. - fill in as appropriate] and the limitations you face in raising my starting salary, I would like to see XXX included as well."

7) Ask for a signing bonus only AFTER you've negotiated salary and moving expenses. Sometimes if you can't get moving expenses, you can ask for a signing bonus to make up for it:

"I understand that state regulations prevent you from covering my moving expenses, however, a signing bonus would go a long way to help defray some of the personal costs of moving from a different state."

BUT - always settle salary before even mentioning signing bonuses. It is extremely important to get the salary as high as you can because any pay raises will typically be calculated as a percentage of your salary. Since signing bonuses are not salary, they will not add to your base pay.

8) Talk to other faculty in the department and to the chair to get a sense of what other items you could and should ask for. You might not realize that start-up funds for research are common at the hiring institution. Or you might assume that you will receive a computer and printer and not realize these items need to be negotiated.

9) So you've received two offers. Great! Figure out which offer you'd rather accept and then use the second offer to negotiate for a higher offer from your first choice institution. This can be tricky and you need to be up front that you have another attractive offer from school #2, but if the terms are right, you'd prefer to come to school #1. Most Deans will take the bait.

Some other things to consider:

* Find out what the raise structure at this institution is like and how it works. Once your salary negotiations are complete, it is helpful to know how to potentially increase that salary in the future. If their raise structure is abysmal, it might be worth taking a third stab at negotiating salary, OR it might lead you to reconsider the offer.

* Don't over look the important question - Do you really want to take the job? If so, then maybe if you don't get everything you ask for in the negotiations it won't matter too much. But just because you know you want to take the job doesn't mean you shouldn't negotiate for a better offer. On the other hand, if you KNOW you don't want the job, maybe you don't want to waste your time or theirs negotiating.

If you have been offered an administrative position, there are some additional things that can be negotiated. In this case, you will be negotiating both for yourself and for the unit (department or college).

1) At the personal level, all of the above mentioned negotiating points apply. In addition, administrators are typically expected to continue to produce scholarly work, yet their time to devote to scholarly pursuits is often quite limited by administrative duties. Negotiate for the resources you need to maintain your scholarly work: research funds, travel funds, research assistance, course reductions, research leave, sabbatical leave, office staff, etc. Aim high in salary negotiation. Call around and see what people at the

same kinds of institutions are making and ask for the very top. Some administrative positions are on a 9 month contract, yet expect 12 months of work. With this in mind, you might try to negotiate summer salary.

2) For the unit, hiring an external administrator is the one opportunity for a department or college to increase its resources. This is really important. Ask for a program development fund that significantly increases your operating budget for several years. Also, try to negotiate for as many future new positions as you can. You might also consider negotiating for the unit: additional teaching and research assistants; additional office space; additional travel money; additional funds for something like a colloquium series. You can point out that these things will increase the productivity and visibility of the members of your department/college. Increased visibility along with the ability to bring nationally and internationally renowned speakers to campus will enhance the reputation of the University.

Get everything in writing in your contract. And then, beware, there will always be the caveat "giving funding availability" and be ready to lose some of what you are promised because of that phrase.

Don't be intimidated by the negotiation process. It is expected that you will negotiate and the worst that can happen is they say no; they're not going to rescind the offer. So, good luck and happy negotiating!

CAVEAT to all professional advice: Always check with your departmental colleagues, chair, dean, etc. to find out what the norms and expectations are in your institution. And consult with your professional mentors to determine what is most appropriate in your specific situation.

I hope this helps! Stay tuned for next month's question on commuter relationships.

-- Jane

Do you have a question for Jane?

Do you have experience or "expertise" about an upcoming question?

E-mail lara-foley@utulsa.edu.