

**NCA 2022
Career Center Programs
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Now What?: Navigating the Faculty Position Offer Process

I have the happy task of talking about how to navigate the job offer process.

Successful job search processes (and this offer process) take time and preparation.

The process works quite differently at different institutions.

- It can be stressful for you (and for the department making the offer too).
- Do your best to stay calm and patient.

Make sure you have **trusted mentors lined up** to talk with.

- May be more than one person (and may be outside your department or university)
- It helps if at least one mentor has been a department chair who has been through this process as a chair

The rumor mill out there can be active (and sometimes wrong)—“they have already made offers or hired at U of X”

THE OFFER TIMELINE

You may ask the general search timeline during your interview

How long until offers are made?

- Departments may be able to make offers within days or it can take 1-2 weeks (or more)
- Waiting can make everyone crazy (Chairs and depts can be nervous too)

What is included in an offer?

Be ready to receive an offer any time/anywhere

Show enthusiasm

Listen carefully to the offer

Most offers will be verbal, so take good notes

Ask questions and perception-check.

If necessary schedule more time to be able to talk privately or have enough time

- Sometimes Department has made decisions re salary and start-up needs and other times they are asking for your input
(Smart department chairs have likely already gotten some of this information from you during the interview (so go to the interview with an idea and realistic

list of what you'd need regarding computer, software, research equipment, travel needs, etc.). Have a list ready for them.

WHAT DO I WANT/ NEED TO KNOW REGARDING THE OFFER

What information will I need to get/know?

- **Start preparing for a job offer before and during the interview.** I have a detailed outline on the job search and job offer process. Email me for this information: dbraithwaite@unl.edu
- **Braithwaite & Braithwaite have a handout on questions to ask during the interview (take notes) and/or at the job offer.** For example:
 - Research and teaching expectations
 - Annual promotion (and if relevant, tenure) evaluations and timeline
 - Start-up resources for research & teaching (office, travel funds, computer).
 - Service expectations and opportunities
 - Mentoring available?
 - Starting date

Ask lots of questions of the department

Make sure you are asking the right person (usually the Department Chair or a Dean).

TIMELINE FOR DECISION

- Ask about their timeline for a decision.
- They will not wait long in most cases (5-7 days in unusual)
- You may or may not be able to do all interviews you have lined up. That is always a tough decision, but not an uncommon one to have to make.

If you have done other interviews or have other offers, let the school making the offer know and give them a sense of where you are in the process.

If you have interviews scheduled and want to complete those, let the school making the offer know what the timeframe is (and they may or more not wait)

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

- If there are other contingencies (e.g., a partner consideration) be ready to talk about that as the offer is made (if this did not come up in the interview).
- Most of the time, Department Chairs only have flexibility to try and address your needs *before* offers are accepted.
- Surprising Chairs with requests late in the process or after the process will likely not work out for you or the department.

WORKING WITH THE OFFER/LETTERS

Contact the Chair or other official as more questions arise.

- Email is usually fine for simple questions.
- Make an appointment to talk when needed.

Details of the offer/letter

- You may or may not get anything in writing until negotiations are done and the offer letter is finalized (every school is different).
- Sometimes you will receive a draft letter to look at.
- It is not unusual that you'll be asked to give a conditional acceptance pending receipt of the letter. The offer letter is usually formulaic and has been vetted to university legal counsel. Don't be surprised that it is not warm and personal.
- The letter should detail rank, salary, when you come up for promotion, expected teaching load, other responsibilities, start date, start-up funds and/or funds to help with the move. Check the letter very carefully and make sure it conforms to your understanding.
- Have a mentor(s) review the letter.
- Ask questions!

What is the timeline for a decision?

- While most schools will want a quick answer, most of the time you will have 5-7 days to give them an answer.
- Sometimes you will get longer than this, but best not to count on it (another reason to have clear thoughts about what your needs will be and talk about those during the interview, especially if asked (I will mention partner accommodations briefly).

It is your right to take some time, think, call an advisor, etc. However, the reality is that decision time is usually limited.

- Go ahead and call the other schools you are waiting on and let them know you have an offer. Find out where they are at in the process.

Should I negotiate?

- You may want to negotiate once you have an offer.
- Do not undersell yourself, and at the same time, be reasonable.
- Take into account the school and locale, cost of living, and the salaries of similar others at the institution (salary information from public institutions should be in the university budget in the library or on the web).
- You may negotiate salary, and may be able to negotiate start-up costs, and issues such as first year teaching load or, at times, moving funds.
- Most people do not try and negotiate in too many of these categories, so choose wisely.
- Negotiate early in the process.
- Do your research and develop arguments (e.g., you may have an offer in City X and City Y has a cost of living that is higher).
- Mentors can be very helpful with this process.
- Do not negotiate unless you are serious about the job.

Chairs will often give you guidance during this process

- They may tell you when a salary is non-negotiable.

- While you may ask about this again, most Chairs will give you a straight answer (and if you don't think you trust their word, think carefully about whether this would be the place you'd want to work).

Should I let my home campus know (if already in a faculty line)?

- Yes, let your department chair know if you have gotten an interview (and earlier if you feel comfortable).
- Word gets out quickly even when it is not supposed to.
- You may ask the Chair where you applied to keep your application confidential, but honestly don't count on it.
- You may ask your current Chair to keep the information confidential and can hope they will honor that.

Should I expect a counter-offer from my current department?

- This is a tough one and there are many different possibilities.
- Do not ask your Chair to seek a counter-offer if you are not prepared to seriously consider staying.
- Some campuses do not negotiate; some do not negotiate with pre-promotion faculty.
- This is another reason to clue your Chair into the fact they may need to scramble on a counter-offer as this would need to be done within that short timeframe to make a job decision most of the time.
- Have an idea about what you want.
- In my experience, you will likely not be able to get a counter offer more than once for most positions, so think through this process carefully.

What if I take another position?

- If, during the interview and offer process, you take another position, let all of the other schools know immediately, especially when you are on a short list, or have an interview or offer pending.
- If during the job search process, you decide you are not interested in a particular school, let them know right away.
- It is better to cancel out of the process rather than use their time and money going on an interview (not to mention your own resources).
- If you know you will not accept an offer once you get home from the interview, let the school know right away and politely thank them for their interest and time.

Once you accept an offer, it is unethical to reverse that commitment (unless you are in a dire situation).

Get some advice from trusted mentors about how to proceed before you take any action. But generally, once you accept an offer, you need to be ready to follow through.

Treating others well is especially important and is, of course, the right thing to do.

- We are a small and tight-knot discipline with few secrets.
- Our advice is to get advice!

- Talk through the offer and process with your advisor, department chair, and/or close mentor(s) in the discipline.