

WHAT TO DO AND QUESTIONS TO ASK WHEN RECEIVING AN ACADEMIC POSITION OFFER

Once you start interviewing, keep this list with you. These are the kinds of questions you want to have answered during the interview and as you get ready for an offer/when an offer comes. Immediately following an interview, answer as many of these questions as you can from what you learned. Use that information to perception-check when you receive a verbal offer and get the other questions answered as you consider an offer.

What should I do when an offer comes? Most offers come via phone. Listen carefully to the offer, show enthusiasm, ask questions, and ask about their timeline for a decision. If you have done other interviews or have other offers, let this school 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. They will not wait long in most cases, and you may or may not be able to do all interviews. That is always a tough decision, but not an uncommon one to have to make.

What is included in an offer? Most offers will be verbal, so take good notes. You may or may not get a draft of the letter for information or consideration. Ask questions and perception-check. Sometimes they have made decisions re salary and start-up needs and other times they are asking for your input (wise department chairs have likely already gotten 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.).

If there are other contingencies (e.g., a partner consideration) be ready to talk about that as well. Most of the time, department chairs only have flexibility to try and address your needs *before* offers are accepted. Surprising department chairs with requests late in the process or after the process will likely not work out for you or the department.

Contact the school as more questions arise. Email is usually fine for simple questions. You may or may not get anything in writing until negotiations are done and the contract is finalized (every school is different). Sometimes you will receive a draft letter to look at and it is not unusual that you'll be asked to give a conditional acceptance pending receipt of the letter.

The Offer Letter. At the end of the process, you will receive a final offer letter that should detail salary, rank, when you come up for promotion, expected teaching load, 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.

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 a clear thoughts about what your needs will be and talk about those during the interview, especially if asked (see notes below on partner accommodations). You do not have to make snap decisions about anything 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.

Chairs will often give you guidance during this process, for example, 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).

****Do not negotiate unless you are serious about the job.**

Should I let my home campus know (if already in a faculty line). Our advice is 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 your 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. Some campuses do not negotiate, some do not negotiate with pre-tenure 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. And, at least in our 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, let the school know right away and thank them for their interest and time.

It is important to note that *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.

We are a tight-knit discipline. Treating others well is especially important and is, of course, the right thing to do. 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.

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ACADEMIC JOB OFFER QUESTIONS

Institution: _____

Rank

- What will be my academic rank when I begin?

Dissertation (if your dissertation is not complete)

- What are the expectations regarding completion of my dissertation before starting the job?

Salary

- How often are faculty members paid?
- Are faculty members paid 10 months, 12 months (nine month pay often spread over 12 months)?
- What have average raises been over the last five years?
- How are raises determined? (Is the university on a merit system? step system?)
- What are the dates of obligation (start date and period under contract)

Teaching

- How many courses will I teach per semester?
- What courses will I be teaching?
- What is the approximate size of each course I will be teaching?
- How does the department select who teaches what courses? Days/times I would teach?
- What is my schedule the first semester? First year?
- Is there any release time available the first semester/year?
- Is summer teaching available? Expected? How is summer teaching availability determined?
- What kind of flexibility is there in the teaching assignments and days/time I teach?
- Would the department be interested in new courses I might like to develop? What is the process?

Service

- What expectations and opportunities are there regarding departmental, college, and university service? (e.g., we are all assigned to at least number of committees each year)

- Are there service restrictions or recommendations for new faculty?
- What undergraduate student advising responsibilities and expectations will I have?
- What graduate student advising responsibilities and expectations will I have?
- How valued is disciplinary service? What is expected? Rewarded?
- How valued is community service? What is expected? Rewarded?

Promotion and Tenure (for tenure-leading lines)

- What kinds of annual reviews will be required of me pre-promotion? Post-promotion?
- How does the promotion (and tenure process) work?
- What year would I go up for promotion (and tenure)?
- If a tenure-leading line, will I go up for promotion and tenure at the same time?
- If this is a second job, will I be able to bring in years toward promotion (and tenure)?
- Are faculty able to go up for promotion early if they believe they are ready?
- What are the expectations for promotion at my rank?
 - Publications
 - Grants
 - Teaching-- how is teaching evaluated for promotion and tenure?
 - Service
 - Community Engagement
- Who is responsible for conducting my annual reviews and promotion review?

Support for research and teaching*

- What start up funds are available? (for equipment, travel, and other research-related needs):
 - Computer
 - Printers
 - Software for research and teaching
 - Research equipment needed
 - Assistance (e.g., research assistants, transcription)
- What research/lab space will be available for my work?
- Is there the possibility to release time from teaching in the pre-tenure period to make sure I get my research program developed? (this differs wildly and depends on what the role of research is in the institution. You might be able to get a course reduction the first semester and/or a semester or course reduction once before tenure, and/or some summer support for research. You'll just have to explore this with them).
- Other research support available? (Internal grants, travel)
- What kind of mentoring is available for research and teaching during my pre-promotion years?
- How is teaching evaluated at this university?

**Know what you need/want in advance; this is when to request things. This is when departments can get funds from the college and university for you. It is often much harder, if even possible, for them (and hence, you) to get resources later.*

Office space

- To which office will I be assigned?
- Is my office individual or shared space?
- What furnishings and equipment would be in my office when I arrive?

Travel funds

- What annual travel funding is available to support my work?
- Is there any extra support for travel available the first year?
- For those who travel to do research (e.g., internationally or need to visit archives), is there support available for travel?

Office & human support

- For teaching
- For research (e.g., grant administration, transcriptions, proofreading, etc.)
- What copying, printing, class management systems online are available for teaching and research?

Summer funding

- What sources of income are there during the summer months?
- Is there summer teaching available? Expected?
- What are my chances of receiving summer teaching should I want to teach?

Moving expenses

- What assistance with moving expenses is available?

Health plan

- Where do I get information on the health plan?

- What is my share of the cost for individual vs. family coverage?
- Is there a waiting period for pre-existing conditions?
- Partner benefits: What partner and family benefits are available?
- *Family leave*: If you are planning on having children, check out the university's Family Leave Policy (is there a "maternity" leave available; leave for partners (sometimes two weeks)? It is not available everywhere. Ask about this if necessary and you can contact the university HR department. Note: pay attention to how "family friendly" the department appears as you interview.

Retirement Benefits

- What retirement system does the university participate in?
- What is my contribution toward retirement; what does university contribute?
- What are the partner and family benefits available?
- When am I vested in the retirement plan? (how do I get information?)

Partner Accommodations:

This is complex and advice on how to deal with this varies greatly. Our advice is let the Chair know your situation (and bring a partner's CV) during the interview. Wise Chairs will ask if there is anything they need to know. At the latest, make sure the Chair knows as they make an offer, but honestly, as Chairs work with Deans to put together offers, knowing if they need to consider a partner accommodation should be happening as they prepare offers. Unfortunately, do not be surprised if the school will do little for partners, especially early in your career. However, other schools have more resources to address partner accommodations. Make sure you have mentors available and ready to give you advice about partner accommodations.

Timeline for A Decision

- What is the timeline for negotiation and a decision?
- To whom should I address my questions?
- To whom should I respond and how? (phone, email etc.)
- When would I expect to have the offer letter vs. a verbal offer?

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