Growing as a Research Professional

Obtaining and Negotiating a Faculty Position

Faculty Orientation

University of Tennessee

Adapted from Making the Right Moves: A Practical Guide to Scientific Management for Postdocs and New Faculty (2nd Edition)
Topics to be discussed:

• The Job Search
• The Job Application
• The Job Interview
• Negotiating Your Position
Obtaining a Faculty Position

“Well, your people heard wrong. We are not prepared to sweeten the deal.”
Obtaining a Faculty Position
The Job Search

• Make the search a concentrated effort
  – Most academic positions are advertised in the fall and start in the summer or fall of the following year

• Know what you want – know your wants and needs
  – Top-rated institution or less intense atmosphere?
  – Research only or a combination of research and teaching?
  – Do you want or need to be in a particular area of the country?
  – Will personal responsibilities set limits on the search?
The Job Search (cont.)

• Learning what is out there; use formal and informal sources of information
  – Formal – job announcements, publications and journals, web sites of academic institutions, professional associations, mail list servers
  – Informal – supervisor/mentor, colleagues, collaborators

• Narrow your search; measure opportunities against your list of priorities
  – Mission, values, political and social climate, quality of the institution
  – Mission, research activities, curriculum and collegiality of the department
  – Parameters / expectations of the position
  – Faculty policies
The Job Application

• Application to Invitation - Your application should stand out sufficiently so that you will be invited for an interview
  – Make sure it is in on time
  – Follow all instructions
  – Be sure it is concise and free of errors

• The Components of a Job Application
  – The Cover Letter
  – The CV
  – Reprints
  – Statement of Teaching
  – Reprints
  – Statement of Teaching
  – Letters of Recommendation
The Job Application (cont.)

- Cover Letter: 1-page; a quick, informative picture of your background relative to the job; written with great care and include:
  - Brief self-introduction
  - Statement specifying the position for which you are applying
  - A statement about your research accomplishments
  - Brief description of your research plans
  - Brief description of your teaching or clinical experience, if needed
  - Special circumstances you believe the committee should know
The Job Application (cont.)

- The CV: A career summary; should contain:
  - Name and address
  - All higher education, with degrees obtained and dates
  - Professional positions held, dates, and brief descriptions
  - Awards, honors, pre- and post-doctoral fellowships
  - Major sources of independent funding
  - Publications
    - Highlight your name in bold type
    - Use an asterisk to indicate equal authorship
    - Separate category for manuscripts in preparation
  - Teaching experience, awards, and interests
  - References (names, titles, and addresses)
  - Invited keynotes and presentations
The Research Proposal - the core of your application describing your research plans

Proposals should contain:

- A statement about the problem you intend to work on
- A description of your research plans (50-70% of the proposal); 3 or 4 specific aims addressing fundamental questions within your discipline
- Figures (if applicable)
- A detailed description of any postdoctoral research
- A list of references that includes publications and manuscripts (submitted or in press)
The Job Application (cont.)

• Reprints
  – Follow the directions for each application and include any important papers that are not yet published

• Statement of Teaching
  – If the job has a teaching component, add a separate section describing your interest in and approach to teaching and your experience

• Letters of Recommendation
  – Follow instructions in application
  – Give those writing letters plenty of time; provide stamped, addressed envelopes
  – Provide due dates and remind them until they send your letters
  – Check to verify that each letter has been received
The Job Interview

• A formal interview can be a daylong process; you may meet with several faculty members to talk about your research:
  – Convince the department that your work is exciting and you will be a leader in your field
  – Convince each member you will be a good colleague
  – Find out if the institution and the department are right for you

• The interview – beginning to end
  – Advance preparation
  – Preparing the job talk
  – Delivering the talk
  – Meeting potential colleagues
  – Concluding the visit
The Job Interview (cont.)

• Advance Preparation
  – Organize logistics of your trip and schedule of events
  – Research academic interests of people you will meet
  – Learn about the institution and the surrounding area
  – Dress neatly and professionally

• Prepare the Job Talk: 1-hour, formal presentation with 10-15 minutes for Q&A
  – Write out the entire talk; think of your audience as you write
  – Translate your talk into a presentation (if appropriate)
  – Practice your talk in front of a mirror
  – Give talk to your adviser, interested faculty, and graduate students as a “practice audience”
The Job Interview (cont.)

• Delivering the Talk
  – Arrive early, set up and become comfortable with the room
  – Exhibit self confidence through body language
    • Feet – hands – breathing – heart rate
  – Greet your audience, tell them you are glad to be with them, and make eye contact
  – Do not worry if some people seem disinterested; continue to give your talk as practiced and make eye contact with those who are listening
  – Show you are excited about your work yet maintain modesty
• Delivering the Talk (cont.)
  – Plant “discussion seeds” to encourage questions
  – When answering, repeat questions for the audience and take your time answering
  – Give your best answer and stop – Don’t Ramble!
  – OK to say “I don’t know”; offer to follow up and do so
  – No questions? Take initiative, point out some of your work you passed over quickly but warrants attention
  – If challenged, listen to the criticism and give a polite, judicious response
The Job Interview (cont.)

• Chalk Talk: A less formal presentation where you can offer detailed information about the direction of your future research
  – Though informal, prepare the chalk talk carefully
  – Provide both short- and long-term goals
  – Prepare several specific problems to work on
  – Be prepared to think on your feet
The Job Interview (cont.)

• You will get a chance to meet and speak with potential faculty colleagues, graduate students, technicians, and post-docs
  – Meeting other faculty members: often one-on-one interviews will take place
    • Show interest in their work
    • Expect to be taken to dinner by some of the faculty
  – Meeting students and post-docs: a department should provide you with an opportunity to meet with students and post-docs
    • Few or no opportunities to meet with students and post-docs is a cause for concern
The Job Interview (cont.)

• Concluding the interview, typically a conversation with the chair of the search committee
  – You might expect a time frame for when a decision will be reached
  – Send a formal letter to the committee chair thanking all for hospitality; reiterate interest in the position
  – Be sure to follow up on any commitments made in your talks and one-on-one discussions
  – If you need to withdraw or take another job before a decision is made, inform the search committee chair
Negotiating the Position

• An offer is made: If “you are the top candidate,” or if a tentative offer is made, you are in position of maximum strength for obtaining what you want

• Evaluate the offer: Find out as much as possible to make informed decision or negotiate better terms
  – Learn all the details of the offer
  – Reread your priorities to evaluate the current offer
  – Calculate your worth (salary and benefits) to see if the offer measures up
  – List other resources you will need in your career; can the department/university provide them?
  – Make your wishes known to the institution’s representatives and get everything spelled out in writing
Negotiating the Position

• Contact the search committee, your source for basic information on terms of the appointment and university-wide benefits and policies
  – Ask for a copy of the university’s faculty handbook and any other personnel policy manuals
  – Use informal contacts and “the grapevine” to know whether people who have worked in the department have been happy, well supported, and successful
  – Prepare a list of questions for the committee
  – If asked for a second interview, be sure to ask more detailed questions about the position based on your research
Negotiating the Position

- What You Need to Find Out: Areas that you will need to ask questions about
  - The appointment
  - The salary
  - Other forms of compensation
  - Start up package
  - Service within the university
  - Teaching responsibilities
  - Protected research time
Negotiating the Position

- The Appointment: You need to know
  - Job title and what it means
  - Length of initial contract
  - Terms under which the contract will be renewed
  - Verify that offer is a full-time, tenure-track position
  - The process for obtaining tenure
  - If offered an appointment to more than one department, insist on clarification in writing as to
    - Where “tenure home” will be
    - Questions related to salary and teaching responsibilities
Negotiating the Position

- The Salary: You need to know
  - Amount of base pay
  - If salary is guaranteed and for how long
  - The department’s history of salary increases
  - If pay is 9-month or 12-month basis (*If a 9-month basis, does the institution allow you to pay yourself a summer salary from a research grant?*)
  - Institution’s policies on outside consulting, how much is permitted, what approvals are required, and what limitations apply
  - Evaluate starting salary by researching information on faculty salaries elsewhere as well as on costs of living
Negotiating the Position

• Other Forms of Compensation - You need to know
  – Health coverage, life insurance, disability insurance, and retirement benefits
  – Other family-related benefits: tuition support for family members and access to university recreational facilities
  – If moving expenses will be paid
  – Availability of a housing subsidy or at least assistance in obtaining housing
  – If asked for a second interview, visit the HR office
Negotiating the Position

• Start Up Package - How the university will support your research until you can gain grant support

• Service - How many committees and other projects you will be expected to become involved with?

• Teaching Responsibilities - You will want a clear statement about the following
  – Your teaching load
  – Teaching Related Responsibilities

• Protected Research Time - Maximize (in writing) how much time you will have for research
Negotiating the Position

• How To Negotiate
  – Present requests clearly
  – Make a list of what you really need and explain why
  – Be prepared to make trade-offs

• Offer Letter - Should reflect results of negotiations
  – Should have the basics and detail the timing, schedule, process, and requirements for tenure
  – Take the letter seriously – it is usually your contract
  – Be prepared to make trade-offs

• Multiple Offers - Keep all parties informed of your status, be prompt to refuse, and ask for a deadline extension if necessary