Academic Job Offer Negotiations

As a first-time job candidate, you may be unaware of the range of negotiable issues, even for "entry-level" assistant professorship positions. Indeed, salary may be the least significant point of negotiation, in terms both of what is possible to achieve and what will benefit you the most in your professional development. Issues for discussion may include the following:

- The amount of time you'll have to decide on this offer
- Your starting date (including deferment in order to take a postdoc)
- Reduced teaching load (increasingly common for first year)
- Lab facilities and equipment
- Computer and other office equipment
- Money for other resources (dependent on your field)
- Summer research support
- Summer teaching opportunities
- Travel funds for conferences
- Early (or extended) sabbatical or leave (including parenting, if relevant)
- Early (or delayed) tenure review
- Research assistance
- Extra staff assistance
- Office space/location
- Parking permit
- Moving expenses
- Your benefits package: health, life, disability, tuition, and retirement are the most common and frequently are available for spouse and dependents as well. Less common benefits include: on-site day-care, spouse employment assistance, and a pharmaceutical plan. See whether the employer has the ability to negotiate any of these items and/or the date when coverage begins.
- Assistance in finding and sometimes in financing housing (relocation expenses)
- Assistance in finding spousal employment

Obviously, you would not want to negotiate on all of these items, but you might want to bring the most important ones into the negotiation. Bear in mind that the department chair may have little discretion in some of these areas (e.g., salary, benefits, housing) and may serve mainly as a conduit to the dean. Remember, too, that as you advance in your career and negotiate future job offers, you will have more leverage and the employer will have more latitude; in other words, more of these items are likely to be "on the table."

Source: Negotiating Your First Academic Job Offer by Margaret L. Newhouse

More on Start-up Packages

Start-up packages for experimental physical science/engineering are typically $750-$1250K, at a major research university. Start-up packages for humanities assistant professors are $15-20K. Some things that may be negotiable:

- Strings attached to the spending of funds, e.g., fixed amounts that must be spent on stipends vs. equipment vs. summer salary, etc; hiring students vs. postdocs vs. research assistants.
- Timeframe for expending the funds, e.g., all must be spent within the first 3 years? is the entire amount available upfront?
- In-kind offers, e.g., used equipment, TA positions
- Lab space, location, furnishings, renovations (do you have to pay for tables & chairs, phone line, cleanup, out of your startup funds?)