

Negotiating for an Academic Job: Lessons from Reality TV

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Fear Factor

When is it time to move on? This is a difficult question for most, and fraught with fear for many. For the first time in many of our academic careers, there is no set guideline or time limit. It's often hard to envision yourself as starting your own independent program, but remember, you're being hired for your potential. There are many benefits to moving for an academic position. It facilitates independence from your mentor, provides new research directions, and, almost without fail, you'll get a much better start-up package. Academic job searches can take much longer than expected, so start thinking about it at least a year in advance. Ideally, you'd like to move with several more years of grant support, not after your grant has ended.

How To Get To Be “The Apprentice”

Advertisements in professional journals are a reasonable place to start, but remember that many jobs are not advertised, and many advertised jobs already have an inside candidate in mind. (Think about this when the ad says they are looking for an investigator with expertise in microfilaments of type II epithelial cells in patients with Tuberous Sclerosis, for example.) In addition, your mentor or division chief may have insight into programs that are recruiting. Send inquiries to division chiefs about possible positions.

The ATS meeting is a great networking opportunity for jobs. Become involved in your assembly. Once you've identified job opportunities, determine if the job description meshes with your professional and personal career objectives. Is the mix of clinical/research/teaching/administration responsibilities consistent with your career goals? Are the necessary resources present for your research to succeed? Is there a critical mass of researchers and mentors available? Do your homework ahead of time: check out divisional/departmental websites, perform PubMed searches on key faculty (<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/PubMed/>); identify NIH-funded research grants through the NIH CRISP database (<http://crisp.cit.nih.gov>).

Define your needs and prioritize them: determine what's a deal breaker for you. For example, when I looked for my first faculty position, I wanted sufficient protected time (80%), adequate lab space, and adequate start-up funds to ensure that my research program would be successful. Remember, everything is negotiable—if you don't ask for it, you won't get it.

"You get what you negotiate, not what you deserve."

Chester Karass

The job offer is a package and each item should be weighted according to your own situation. Be prepared to ask for a specific salary—don't be ambushed by this question. An excellent resource for salary information is the AAMC website. Other questions to ask about salary are: What is the mechanism for salary increases? What is the source of salary- State line? Grant support? Clinical revenue?

What are the faculty tracks at your institution? **What are the criteria for promotion?** What title will you have—Instructor? Assistant Professor? Acting? Importantly, what is the divisional track record for mentoring junior faculty?

When you are negotiating a start-up package, it's important to justify your needs. Instead of saying "I need \$100,000 start-up funds," it's much more powerful to say "I need \$100,000 start-up funds to purchase a \$50,000 laser capture microscope, a \$25,000 freezer, and, a \$25,000 digital imaging system that are essential for my research program." This exercise also forces you to take a good look at what you'll need and understand what the actual costs are. It can be sobering to realize how much money you may need to start your research program. Some of the costs may be mitigated by available shared or core resources, and is a reflection of an appropriate research environment.

What's your bottom line? Items to consider:

- Research environment
- Clinical responsibility
- Start-up money
- Technician
- Moving expenses
- Salary
- Lab set-up
- Computing needs
- Tenure clock
- Travel support

- Benefits
- Administrative support

General Principle: Get It In Writing: Keep a copy of all correspondence, and verify phone conversations related to the negotiations with a follow-up email. You'd like support and commitment from both the division and the department, if appropriate. Finally, make a decision. It's not (necessarily) a lifetime commitment.

"Never cut what you can untie."

Joseph Joubert

How To Be a "Survivor"

Tips to minimize downtime:

- Set up budget number prior to arrival.
- Purchase major equipment prior to arrival.
- Determine what you can bring with you from your current institution.
- Consider purchase of depreciated equipment.
- Minimize initial clinical or teaching responsibilities (i.e., for research positions).
- Finish manuscripts or grant submissions when you get there.

K Grant Transfers:

- Identify a mentor at your new institution.
- Discuss with your NIH program director **ahead** of time.
- Fill out Change of Grantee Institution.
- Consider applying for administrative supplements due to changes in indirect costs/fringe benefits.
- Discuss other grant transfers directly with appropriate funding agencies (ALA, AHA, etc.).

How To Get Renewed For Next Season

Use your time wisely: it's useful when you first arrive at a new institution to offer to give seminars/lectures in your research area. This will increase your visibility, increase potential collaborations, and help establish useful local contacts. At the same time, limit the amount of "volunteer" work not directly related to your career objectives. It's a good idea to establish

regular contact with the department chairman. Be proactive and set up annual reviews yourself. This is very helpful to make sure that you are on track for promotion and to identify any areas that need adjusting. **Negotiations are an ongoing process.** Therefore, it is essential that you keep track of all your activities, including lectures and presentations (locally and nationally), teaching responsibilities, committees, related community activities (i.e., service with local ALA). Share good news with your division chief and chair. Let them know when your manuscript was accepted, or your RO1 got funded, or about the amazing teaching evaluations that you received. These occasions are potential opportunities for further negotiations.

“Real success is finding your lifework in the work that you love.”

David McCullough

“Never continue in a job you don't enjoy. If you're happy in what you're doing, you'll like yourself, you'll have inner peace. And if you have that, along with physical health, you will have had more success than you could possibly have imagined.”

Johnny Carson

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