

**Preparing for a Negotiation**  
**About the Terms of a Faculty Appointment in Chemistry:**  
**A Simulation by Richard Greissman**



**Overview**

One should go into any negotiation with a clear sense of the opportunities and constraints in one's negotiating position. Gathering information to ascertain the opportunities and constraints requires diligence, empathy and resolve.

A department chair faces a complicated dynamic in any negotiation over the terms of faculty hire. On the one hand, a department chair is under considerable pressure to diversify his or her departmental faculty profile, especially within the STEM disciplines. Departments across the STEM disciplines continue to be too white and too male, presenting to potential faculty hires and graduate/professional student prospects the appearance, if not the reality, of an 'old guard' bastion. Departments that have not made progress in their efforts to represent the demographics of their region and the nation find themselves at a considerable competitive disadvantage when recruiting and retaining the best graduation/professional students and faculty. A marker of a successful department is the individual's ability to improve and/or maintain the demographic mix of the unit's faculty.

This element of the dynamic bodes well for women in the job market for faculty positions in STEM disciplines.

On the other hand, a departmental faculty is ever vigilant, looking for signs that the chair, by virtue of his or her hiring practices has created a salary inversion, such that the starting salaries of recent faculty hires, especially those at the entry level (i.e., assistant professor rank) have outpaced the salary trajectory of longtime department members. A chair faces a raucous reckoning with his or her unit peers when a new faculty hire has garnered a starting salary that approaches or surpasses the salaries of tenured associate professors in the department.

So, a successful chair is always looking ahead for opportunities to build that 'next generation' department whose profile attracts and sustains a talented and diverse faculty. And, at the same time, that same chair is looking over his or her shoulder to see who is clamoring at the chair's office door.

Therefore, a person preparing for a negotiation about the terms of a faculty appointment needs to do her homework. She should do her best to determine the particular circumstances faced by the department chair, including:

- On the basis of the department's faculty profile, is it likely that the chair is under pressure from the dean and the chair's departmental colleagues to make progress in diversifying the unit? If so, a female faculty recruit should enter into the hiring negotiation from a position of strength. To be blunt: your premium is not simply that you are a talented individual, but you are a talented female recruit. Your hiring package ought to reflect that premium.
- What is the salary range in the department? Public institutions must make available to the public such information. Gather data to determine:
  - starting salaries for recent hires at the entry level (assistant professor)
  - the salaries of newly minted tenured faculty in the department
  - starting salaries of comparable departments in the same discipline, adjusted for factors like size of institution, public versus private and regional cost of living estimates

You bargain from a position of strength when you counter a salary offer that you know is low by demonstrating that your expectation for higher compensation is data-driven, an expectation that is informed and not arbitrary.

- In that most STEM disciplines require lab space and/or high-end computing capabilities, you should do your homework. Ask graduate school and postdoctoral mentors for help determining what you will need by way of laboratory infrastructure to be successful. This advice also holds true for individuals entering clinical practice in an academic setting (e.g., colleges of medicine or dentistry). Ask mentors and colleagues in the field for advice about what infrastructural supports made a difference, or would have made a difference had they asked, in the early years of their professional careers.