



JOB NEGOTIATIONS

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For many PA students when they graduate they are starting a second career. One thing that may be new for them is the negotiation process for their first job as a PA. Negotiating for many may be a foreign and uncomfortable task. You may feel like you are being too demanding or asking for too much. Here are some tips to help guide you through the negotiation process.

As with pretty much every big decision in life, do your home-work. Spending time and maybe a little bit of money to get salary reports for the job type you are looking for will pay dividends. AAPA and AASPA provide data by specialty, by region, and experience level. It also may be helpful to know what the average starting salary for graduates of your specific program. The base salary you receive will determine your future income! When you first start talking about salary it is important to know who is authorized to sign-off on your hiring agreement. In many cases it may not be your sponsoring physician. While their input and backing may be helpful, the ultimate person signing-off may be an administrator or HR representative.

Determine your walkaway point. How much it will cost to live where you'll be working, how much your monthly loan repayment will be, and transportation cost should all be tallied. Vacation days, sick time, medical and dental benefits, retirement options, disability and life insurance, CME time and expenses, and total hours worked per week should also be included. Once you come to a number, it is important to never disclose it.

Be patient, be gracious, and no giveaways. Negotiations, especially when done properly, take time. It may be a process that occurs over email and it is important to not expect an immediate response. It's a small world! Being kind and gracious to those you are negotiating with will help assure bridges aren't burned before you even start the job. And don't be tricked into a giveaway. For example, when you come to an agreement about salary and they throw in that you will be doing call one weekend a month it is time to pump the brakes. Your time isn't free and you just agreed on a salary that didn't include monthly call. Saying yes would be giving them a free weekend of your time.

One last point is nothing really is agreed upon until it is agreed upon in writing. They should send you a letter with the negotiated points listed and laid out. You should sign it and return it, but before you do make a copy for your records. When a contract is required it is wise to pay a lawyer to read it and evaluate it for any flaws or changes that need to be made. Doing this will help ensure you have a solid foundation from which to build your first job and a lifelong career.