

Tips for Engaging in the Job Search: Exploring alternatives and negotiating contracts

Invited Guest Speakers

Dr. Helen L. Coons & Dr. Kevin Larkin

1. Seek feedback from a trusted mentor on your cover letter applying for the position, the responsibilities of the position, the contract, and your follow-up letter expressing your interest in the position and how your skills are an excellent match for the Department's or Institution's needs.
2. Define how you want your professional "pie" carved up in terms of research, teaching, and service, and pursue positions that fit these parameters. If your heart is in doing applied work as a clinical health psychologist, you would not be happy in a position that involved very little expectation of service activity.
3. Acquire a complete understanding of typical standards of performance evaluation during the interview process. In traditional academic settings, standards for promotion and tenure involve demonstration of exceptional independent scholarship. Make sure you believe you can meet these standards before accepting the position.
4. The goal of negotiation is not to secure the biggest start-up package. Rather, it is helpful to think about negotiation as the launching pad for developing a productive working relationship with a Department or Institution that wants you to succeed. It's not uncommon for a place to request you to bring in a startup budget when you come in to interview; thus, plan ahead.
5. Key issues to consider when negotiating contractual agreements: (a) be familiar with salary ranges for the position and location that you are applying for (e.g., consult with databases for salary); (b) ask what percentage of your salary you are expected to bring in; (c) when meeting with HR explore potential benefits (e.g., cost share, 401k); (d) negotiate/discuss your rank and title, as well as the expectations associated to it, (e) negotiate your office and research/clinical space, as well as determine if appropriate to your needs; (f) consider "start-up" costs for your research and/or clinical practice (e.g., advertising budget, materials, travel costs, continuing education, moving expenses, supervision if not licensed).
6. Don't underestimate the "personal factor" that goes along with the interview process. You want to be perceived as a team player. Communicate that you are willing to work with others and work on committees. Your interpersonal skills are important.
7. While interviewing for a position, remember that you are always being evaluated, even during less formal events and meetings with faculty not on the search committee, or meetings with students/trainees.