



WABASH CENTER

For Teaching and Learning in Theology and Religion



Negotiating a Job Offer: Flourishing in the Teaching Life

Nancy Lynne Westfield, Ph.D., *The Wabash Center for Teaching and Learning in Theology and Religion* | Roger S. Nam, *Candler School of Theology*

Blog Series: Teaching On The Pulse | Flourishing in the Teaching Life

May 01, 2023

Tags: administration | finances | advocacy | negotiating

Preface

It is my pleasure to co-author this blog with Dr. Roger Nam, Professor of Hebrew Bible, Candler School of Theology, Emory University. Dr. Nam and I have been a part of the Wabash Center project for over twenty years. We have had the opportunity to hear, as participants and as participant leaders, the kinds of questions and concerns early career colleagues pose over meals, while canoeing or during the late-night hours in Clifford Lounge. Invariably, issues of thriving, surviving, and knowing “what to do” as an early career person navigating the academy are at the forefront of the concerns and conversations.

We understand that questions about the teaching life are just as important as questions about the craft, praxis, and art of teaching.

Generative teaching requires a life that is healthy, whole, and resilient – especially in the early stages of any colleague’s career.

Roger and I have recorded a series of podcast conversations which engages the questions we heard regularly posed by early career colleagues. These conversations are not meant to give advice to particular situations or specific people, nor are they intended to provide guidance for

opportunities. The conversations are intended to suggest the kinds of issues, questions, and curiosities needed to frame moments of discernment, decision making, mentoring, and dreaming. Further, Roger and I are not claiming expertise in any particular situation. Our expertise is in the many conversations we have had with colleagues and the many years we have had as leaders in our own fields of endeavor.

Flourishing in the Teaching Life Series

- **Personal Finance and Planning: Roger Nam**

Healthy and career stability includes planning for the financial future and managing personal funds. Understanding 403B retirement accounts investments, and estate planning is part of faculty wellness.

- **Understanding Institutional Finances: Roger Nam**

Learning to read institutional budgets, understand endowments, and be knowledgeable about financial reports will assist faculty persons. Being informed about your school's financial picture is an aspect of personal wellness.

- **Negotiating Job Offers: Roger Nam**

What is possible as you accept a new job? What kind of agency is needed to feel like you belong at hire? What does it mean to know your worth and value?

- **Charting the Course of a Scholarly Career: Roger Nam**

Scholarly careers are not linear or tidy. Hear about helpful tools for career management like: creating a map/plan for tenure process and promotion (6 year plan), having more than one mentor, knowing when to leave the first job and when to stay, finding conversation partners for career decisions.

- **Entrepreneurial Ambitions and Insights: Roger Nam**

What scholarly skills are transferrable to other enterprises? What does it mean to consider an executive position like a deanship or presidency? How do I manage speaking engagements, book deals, and other kinds of opportunities? What is an LLC and do I need one?

Negotiating

Once you are given a job offer, then it is time to negotiate your needs for hire. Negotiating your contract presumes you have agency concerning your career decision-making and that you have, in depth, researched the institution from which you have received an offer. Negotiating requires that you are not ambivalent about the job. You must have clarity about your needs, the needs of your family and the kinds of provisions you would need to thrive in that specific environment given the geographic location, kind of institution, and your hoped-for career

trajectory.

Negotiation is context specific – there is no “one size fits” every situation.

Be mindful, that while we have heard of each of these items listed below having been negotiated, we have never heard of all these items in any one contract. When negotiating for a job offer, you must consider the context of the school, know your own value to the institution, and consider what you will need to thrive in that location. Your requests should not be capricious and, as in any negotiation, compromise must be part of the engagement.

Salary is too often the only consideration of negotiation. Most schools have a determined entry-level salary for early career colleagues and/or the institution has established bans of salaries for the entire institution, which cannot be ignored nor changed. Many starting salaries are not negotiable. That said, even a 1% increase can accrue into a significant amount of money over 10, 20, 30 years of employment. Beyond salary negotiation, it is likely that your ability to thrive depends more on the kinds of items in the list below. Consider negotiating toward these kinds of needed aspects of the job:

- Title and Status
- Housing
 - Short term or long term / rent reduction/ mortgage support
- Equipment (computers, and other technologies)
- Teaching resources
- Office location and office furnishings
- Funds and Funding (access to funds is typically not taxable as they are not part of salary)
 - Moving Funds (Since 2018 moving expenses are not tax deductible except for military members).

Often funding amounts are pre-set and moving funds are always considered salary and thus taxable. Consider that if you do not need to move to take the job, ask that these funds be considered a hiring bonus or accessed for some other purpose.

- Research Funds
- Travel Funds
- Student Loan relief
- Startup costs to help establish a research trajectory (e.g., library funds, index services)
- Eligibility for tuition remission for children
- Access to institutional credit card so you do not need to “front” expenses
- Membership to or use of school’s membership in local institutions (e.g. country club)
- Classroom resources
- Scheduling and Timing
 - Course release
 - Course timing and flexibility in mode of teaching
 - Tenure Clock and Sabbatical Clock
 - Committee Relief or Committee Assignment

- Delay or reduce administrative obligation (e.g., will not chair department until after tenure)
- Junior faculty sabbatical (leave in preparation for tenure or promotion, year 3, 4, or 5)
- Staff Support
 - Research Assistant
 - Teaching Assistant
 - Publishing Assistance for: content editing, copying editing, indexing, footnote verification, etc.
 - Access to administrative assistant services
 - Hire of coach for administrative role and responsibilities
 - Grant writing assistant
- Creation of a center or other institutional project of your own scholarly interest

Bottom Line

Negotiation depends upon your own agency. Your agency, exercised for your own wellbeing, begins when you submit your job application and continues throughout your career.

Too many colleagues accept a job offer without negotiating or without having read the Faculty Handbook, the benefits package, or knowing enough about the culture of the faculty. Learning about the job begins with your preliminary research on the institution before making application, continues with posing your questions at the interviews, includes conversations with knowledgeable mentors and colleagues at other schools. By the time you are offered the position, you should have a clear sense of what is possible for the position you are considering and what you would need from that institution to thrive, flourish, and be well in your work.

<https://wabash.center/2023/05/negotiating-a-job-offer-flourishing-in-the-teaching-life/>