EVALUATING SALARY AND JOB OFFERS

Once a job offer has been extended to you there are several important steps that you must follow to properly accept or decline an offer. Maybe you’ve been fortunate to have more than one offer extended to you. During this stage, it is important that you do all you can to ensure you are well-informed and that you, in turn, keep the employer well-informed throughout your decision making process. You want to be certain to gather all facts and feel good about your decision and honor your commitment should you choose to accept an offer.

Our staff advisors offer workshops on Evaluating Salary and Job Offers a few times each semester. You may view the schedule and sign up at http://ter.ps/engrworkshop.

The pages that follow are intended to help you with how to navigate this oftentimes uncertain course, and it includes information on the following topics:

- Before Accepting a Job Offer .................................................................2
- Smart Salary Evaluation Tips .................................................................3
  - What NOT to Do: ................................................................................4
- Decision Time – Accepting and Declining ...........................................4
  - Accepting an Offer .............................................................................5
  - Tactfully Declining a Job Offer ..........................................................5
- After Accepting a Job Offer ...................................................................6
- Job Offer Checklist ................................................................................7
- Websites with Salary & Negotiation Information .................................8

A Note on Communication and Professionalism

In today’s competitive job market, it is essential that job seekers tend to all stages of the job acquisition process with the utmost tact and professionalism. To that end, there are proper ways of conducting oneself throughout each step.

Job seekers must strike a balance between demonstrating enthusiasm and sincere interest while providing the employer adequate time to process the many applications and resumes that they receive. Knowing when and how to communicate with employers is essential.

Regardless of where you are in your job search, how you conduct yourself provides the employer additional information about your professionalism as well as your ability to follow directions. Being informed about the employer’s timeframe for making a decision (and demonstrating patience) while conveying your continued interest without overstepping the bounds of tactfulness can be challenging.
BEFORE ACCEPTING A JOB OFFER

When you get “the call” you may be tempted to jump up and down and scream “I’ll take it!” into the phone. Please don’t do that. Here are some tips on what you should do.

Once you have been offered a position...

Show your appreciation. Be sure to show your appreciation of the offer, be tactful, and be careful... you may end up working for this person. Politely follow up via email (making sure to continue using the original email thread with the start of the email correspondence) to acknowledge that you have received the offer. Our advice is to not accept a job offer on the spot, rather take time to review all your options.

Gather the facts. Now is the time to gather as much information about the offer including salary, job description, start date, dress code, benefits, etc. Request a time to discuss your questions in person or by phone. After you carefully review the offer letter and company information regarding benefits, etc., prepare your questions for your discussion with the employer. (Use the Job Offer Checklist in this handout as a guide.) Don’t be concerned about annoying the employer with your questions; the employer understands this and is happy to assist you during this process. Timeliness is crucial at this stage, especially when weighing the benefits of multiple offers or trying to gather all the details of a position you have accepted.

Take time to communicate. If you receive an offer, but are still waiting to hear from other employers, it is appropriate to call any employers you are still waiting to hear back from to tell them you have received another offer and ask when they are planning to make their decision. If you need more time, be sure to explain your situation and ask for an additional week or two to make a final decision. (Don’t wait until the last minute to ask for an extension; this looks like you are not planning ahead.)

Don’t commit until you know the offer is legitimate. Before accepting a position, you need to determine that the offer is a legitimate one as opposed to a conditional offer. If your offer hinges on your passing a polygraph, for example, you will want to know this. You will also want to ensure that you are clear about the all the conditions that apply in offer (i.e. non-compete agreements, non-disclosure agreements, intellectual property restrictions, etc.). Do not sign anything you are unclear about.

Don’t accept unless and until you are sure. When an offer is extended to you and you have accepted it – whether verbally or in writing – you are obligated to that employer even if you get a better offer later. Telling an employer “no” after you already said “yes” is called reneging, and is both unethical and unprofessional. Once you have accepted a job offer you may not consider any other positions.
SMART SALARY EVALUATION TIPS

**Research the salary range of your prospective job.** Before you even expect to receive an offer, you should take a good look at your own salary requirements as well as develop an understanding of what your skills are worth in the current employment market. Collect salary range information from a variety of sources, such as UMD engineering salary surveys (available at the Engineering Co-op Office), online resources such as the National Association of Colleges & Employers annual salary survey, industry associations, professional journals, and the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. See *Websites with Salary & Negotiation Information* below for more.

**Ask questions!** First, make certain they know how excited you are about the job. Then ask a few relevant questions about benefits, stock options, etc. Make certain that you know all the ramifications of the offer before zeroing in on some issue - salary, stock, etc. - that you believe is substandard. Besides defusing the stress, your questions about other aspects of the company's offer may actually be quite valuable in comparing "apples with apples." Although a better insurance plan might not offset a $10,000 difference in salary, it could make the difference for you if you are down to a close decision.

**Factor the organization's entire compensation package** (i.e., tuition benefits, investment options, health plan, and any other perks) along with salary into your negotiation discussion. Compute the dollar worth of these benefits and add this figure to the salary for a more realistic picture of how the organization compensates. (Benefits can add up to 40% of your base pay.) If it is important to you, you may decide to negotiate benefits rather than an actual dollar increase. If a company appears hesitant to move on salary, bonus, stock options, etc., than perhaps they might have some latitude in other areas like relocation, vacation days, or temporary housing.

**Use tact when negotiating.** Emphasize to the employer how excited you are about the job but that you are disappointed with the salary that was offered. Then explain the reasons why you believe the offer is well below the market value for the position and describe what you can do for the company. If you can point to how you can make money for the company or how you can save them money, do so. Ask them to see if they can do any better. Then go home and wait. Use silence and time to your advantage.

**Keep selling yourself.** Marketing your skills and qualifications doesn’t end at the interview! In an employment negotiation, you must emphasize your skills and how they apply to the job at hand as reasons that they should offer you a higher salary. You have to provide solid reasons why they should pay you more.

**Determine opportunities for promotion.** Job progression is an important factor in making salary decisions. Ask how promotions and salary reviews are handled.

**Get written confirmation.** Don’t expect an original offer to be in writing 100% of the time. You'll find some employers prefer to discuss all the parameters of the offer first then send you a letter of agreement after you've given a verbal "yes." Getting something in writing provides closure and prevents any misunderstandings between you and an employer. Take charge of this process by writing a letter spelling out the details of your agreement while they're fresh in your mind. For example, yours might read something like this:

---

Dear Mr. Shoemaker,

I look forward to working with you. For the sake of clarity, I set down the points of the agreement we reached yesterday. [Insert points here.] If I am incorrect on any aspect, please let me know. If I don't hear from you, I'll assume we're in agreement.

Sincerely,

Jeff Shaeffer

---
What NOT to do:

**Don’t be caught unprepared.** The more information you have about your market value and the prospective employer, the greater your likelihood of success. There’s a wealth of information about average salaries and negotiation techniques on the Internet, at the public library and through professional associations and networking groups. Time spent learning how to negotiate and preparing for negotiations may be the best investment you’ll ever make.

**Don’t talk about why you need more money.** The employer doesn’t want to hear about your student loan debt, living expenses or preference for eating out. Your rationale for salary negotiation should focus on why you deserve more (relevant expertise, specific knowledge, offer below market value).

**Don’t approach salary negotiation like haggling over the price of a car.** Recognize that employment negotiations are unique. When the negotiations are over, you’ll have to work with the person with whom you’re negotiating. Moreover, your future success may depend on that person. So, while you want to negotiate the best possible deal, you need to do so in a way that doesn’t damage your image.

**Don’t be too eager to accept.** Ask for some time to respond to the offer. If you feel the salary isn’t sufficient, tell the employer when you ask for time to consider the offer. You’ll find out right away whether the salary quoted is set in stone or not.

**Don’t play “hard to get” when you have little or nothing to leverage.** If the company has offered you a salary that is more than fair compared to industry standards, you may not need to negotiate. In addition, if you are new to the field and applying for a position such as an internship or a co-op, you may not have as much leverage to negotiate.

**Don’t be greedy.** The one sure way to lose everything you’ve obtained is to be greedy. Know when to quit bargaining. There comes a point in every negotiation when you’ve achieved everything you could have reasonably expected to gain.

**Don’t lie about your past salary history or other salary offers.** It’s not only wrong to lie, but in employment negotiations, it’s ineffective. If you lie during negotiations, sooner or later you’re likely to be caught. Even if you don’t lose the offer, you’ll be at a tremendous disadvantage, and your credibility will always be suspect.

**Don’t forget that employment is an ongoing relationship.** Job negotiations are the starting point for your career with a company. Get too little and you’re disadvantaged throughout your career at that company; push too hard and you can sour the relationship before it begins.

**DECISION TIME – ACCEPTING AND DECLINING**

At some point, you are going to have to accept one offer and decline others you may have received.

Once you accept a position, you should immediately stop interviewing, cancel any further interviews, and notify all employers who are still considering you.
Accepting an Offer

Once you decide to accept an offer, you should reach out to the person that extended the offer. Ideally, you want to accept the offer by phone, and then follow up with an email.

Confirm any other important information about the position, such as start date, dress code, required background checks, etc. Follow up the conversation in writing.

**SAMPLE JOB ACCEPTANCE LETTER**

```plaintext
From: jwareumd@terpworld.net
To: mmckinney@bbengcompany.com
Date: October 30, 2015, 10:04 a.m.
Subject: Engineering Co-op, Acceptance of Offer, J. Ware

Dear Ms. McKinney:

Thank you for your offer of employment as a co-op at B&B Engineering. I am excited to accept your offer and I look forward to beginning work next semester at your Gaithersburg, Maryland site.

You indicated that I will be receiving a salary of $20.00 per hour, and I will have initial duties reporting to Andrew Chun. As your offer stated, I will begin work on January 15, 2016 at 8:30 AM. In the meantime, please let me know if I can provide you with any further information.

Again, thank you for offering me this exciting opportunity. I look forward to working at B&B Engineering.

Sincerely,

(Signature here)

Joseph Ware
```

Tactfully Declining a Job Offer

Applying for positions through the Engineering Co-op Office does not obligate you to accept a job offer. However, if you choose to decline a job offer, do so courteously, in writing, after making a phone call to explain you are not accepting the job offer. Keep in mind these tips when declining a job offer:

- Avoid saying anything negative in writing about the employer, even if you had a negative experience.
- If you choose to decline an offer because another offer is a better fit for your interests and goals, it is fine to state this, without giving details about why the declined offer is not the best fit. It is not necessary to state whose offer you accepted, but you may do so if you wish.
- Remember that this employer may be a contact for you in the future. Be professional and courteous.
From: jwardumd@terpworld.net
To: blumhr@engfirmtrb.com
Date: November 10, 2015, 4:30 p.m.
Subject: TRB Internship Offer, J. Ward

Dear Ms. Blum,

Thank you for your call and letter offering me the position of Summer Intern with TRB International. While I appreciate the challenging opportunity you offer, I have received another offer which I believe more closely matches my current career goals and interests. Therefore, although it was a difficult decision, I must decline your offer. I do appreciate all the courtesy and hospitality extended to me by your office, and I wish you well in your endeavors.

I will be attending the IEEE Conference this July in Raleigh, NC, so I hope to see you there.

Sincerely,

(Signature here)

Jocelyn Ward

---

**AFTER ACCEPTING A JOB OFFER**

Share your news with the Engineering Co-op & Career Services office. All students (not just co-op students) must notify the co-op office once they have accepted a position.

If you don’t notify us, we will continue to send your resume to employers, which is a poor use of everyone’s time. It is also important for our office to know who we have helped!

**Co-op students are required to register for our 0-credit course (ENCO 098 or 099).**
# JOB OFFER CHECKLIST

This table can help you evaluate the compensation package of a job offer. However, keep in mind that this is a very comprehensive list; every item may not necessarily apply to you or your specific offer.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic Area</th>
<th>Their Response</th>
<th>Potential Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Title</td>
<td></td>
<td>(Is it what was expected? If not, why not?)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Report To</td>
<td></td>
<td>(Is it who was expected? If not, why not?)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Start Date</td>
<td></td>
<td>Can we make it earlier? Later?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Base Salary</td>
<td></td>
<td>Payable monthly? Semi-monthly? Bi-weekly?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Signing Bonus</td>
<td></td>
<td>Do they offer one? How much? Any conditions?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commissions or other Bonuses</td>
<td></td>
<td>Are there any? Percentage? Tied to what specifically?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relocation</td>
<td></td>
<td>What expenses are covered, if any?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comp Time</td>
<td></td>
<td>Any work hours/days flexibility?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overtime</td>
<td></td>
<td>Is there paid overtime?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retirement Plan</td>
<td></td>
<td>Type? (401k?) Company match %? Max contribution amount?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stock Options</td>
<td></td>
<td>How are they determined?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td></td>
<td>What is my contribution amount (For myself? For my family)? Options (PPO? HMO?)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vision Care</td>
<td></td>
<td>Exams? Glasses/contacts? Max?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life Insurance</td>
<td></td>
<td>Set amount? % of salary?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short-term Disability</td>
<td></td>
<td>Period of time? Coverage?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long-term Disability</td>
<td></td>
<td>Period of time? Coverage?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vacation</td>
<td></td>
<td>Any flexibility in providing more? When does it increase?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holidays</td>
<td></td>
<td>How many? Can any be flexed?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sick/Personal Days</td>
<td></td>
<td>Covered? How many? Restrictions?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuition</td>
<td></td>
<td>Reimbursement rules and %?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training</td>
<td></td>
<td>Other training provided? Who approves?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health Clubs</td>
<td></td>
<td>Coverage?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dependent Care</td>
<td></td>
<td>Coverage?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performance Review</td>
<td></td>
<td>When will my first performance review be?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salary Review</td>
<td></td>
<td>When will my first salary review be?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Potential Increases</td>
<td></td>
<td>What % increases should I expect for the first 2-3 years?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travel</td>
<td></td>
<td>% overnight travel expected?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Expenses</td>
<td></td>
<td>Are all business-related expenses covered?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Adapted from: [www.collegegrad.com](http://www.collegegrad.com)
WEBSITES WITH SALARY & NEGOTIATION INFORMATION

www.collegegrad.com
Helpful information on job offers, salaries, negotiation, and other relevant information.

www.quintcareers.com/salary_negotiation_tutorial.html
A salary negotiation tutorial with examples of how to handle a variety of different scenarios.

www.homfair.com/homefair/calc/salcalc.html
Use this salary calculator to compare the cost of living in hundreds of U.S. and international cities.

www.rileyguide.com/salguides.html
View salary guides and guidance in The Riley Guide

www.careers.wsj.com/
Career Journal from the Wall Street Journal. Go to "How-To Guide" for several articles and tips

Information regarding the current state of the job market.

Salary surveys, separated by profession. Also contains helpful Salary IQ quiz and negotiation tips.

Basic reports on salaries by profession and location.

www.datamasters.com/
Cost of living analysis, job search, and salary surveys.

www.jobnob.com
Networking events, salaries, and job postings.

http://www.jobsearchintelligence.com/NACE/salary-calculator-intro/
NACE Salary Calculator Center

www.glassdoor.com
Create account with your UMD email address to access salary, interview and company information.