Preparing For and Finding Your First Faculty Position

Dennis Black, MD
J. D Buckman Professor of Pediatrics
Professor of Physiology
Vice-Chair for Research
UTHSC Department of Pediatrics
Director, Children’s Foundation Research Institute
It’s Never Too Early to Prepare for Your Post-Fellowship Career

• What career focus?
  – Patient care
  – Basic or clinical research
  – Teaching

• What specialized training do you need?
  – Specialized disease focus or clinical skills
  – Research training
  – Educational skills

• Trainee membership in professional organizations
  – Resources, workshops and mentoring
Planning a Career

• What professional activities do you enjoy and do well?
• Balance of career and life away from work
• Family considerations
• Geographic location
• Salary and cost of living
• Loan repayment commitments
• What are your five-year goals?
• Where do you want to be 20 years from now?
Finding a Position

• Begin looking ideally a year before completion of fellowship

• Sources
  – Posted positions
  – Word of mouth
  – Direct contact from Chair or Division Chief
  – Referral by mentor or colleague
Finding a Position

• Documents
  – CV that enumerates all of your accomplishments
  – Statement of career goals and highlight unique skills/training to achieve them

• Point of contact
  – Recruiting agency
  – Posting by Human Resources
  – Chair or Division Chief
  – E-mail followed by call
What Makes You An Attractive Candidate?

• Do you have skills and experience that make you stand out from the crowd?
• Are you a good fit for the job?
• What will you contribute to the team?
• Will you represent a good investment with a high potential to “pay off” down the road?
Factors to Consider

- Nature of the position
- Support to establish your clinical program, research and/or teaching
- Protected time
- Salary and benefits
- Your Division Chief and co-workers
- Location
- Lifestyle
Nature of the Position

• Is it really what you want to do?
• Right balance of the four missions of the academic institution: teaching, research, clinical duties and service?
• Will it help you achieve your career goals?
• Infrastructure to assist with biostatistics, informatics, genomics, grant and manuscript preparation, IRB, clinical research support, teaching, faculty development, etc.?
• Additional training opportunities?
Support to establish your clinical program, research and/or teaching

• Access to the right resources
  – Ample clinical or research space
  – Adequate office space
  – Access to critical equipment and core facilities

• Access to enough resources
  – Start-up funds
  – Summer students, graduate students
  – Research subjects
  – Research technician

• Access to appropriate mentorship and guidance

• Protected time
Details

• Space
  – Funds for renovation and furniture?
  – Layout and location appropriate?
  – Adequate vivarium services available?
  – Expect 600 to 1,000 sq ft web lab space as a start
  – Institutional research space allocation policy

• Start-up funds
  – Generally cover equipment, supplies, animals, staff, travel and computer support
  – Negotiate as lump sum or itemized by category
  – Usually spread over 2-3 years
  – Large/specialized equipment
    • Available as shared?
    • Negotiate separately. If purchased, willing to share to reduce cost?
Promotion and Tenure

• Expectations in each mission area
  – Research, teaching, clinical care and service

• Timeline
  – Early or deferred promotion/tenure available?

• Process
  – Usually first department, then college, then university approval
  – Know the requirements

• Know what tenure means at the institution
Salary

• Is it close to what you feel you are worth?
• Is it a base plus bonus system?
• If clinical, what are the RVU requirements?
• Protected research time?
• How much will you be expected to provide from grants and when?
  – What happens if expectations are not met?
  – If you exceed expectations, will some funds be returned for other uses?
Salary

• Review available data
  – AAMC salary survey for academic positions
  – State universities often publish current faculty salaries
  – Other online databases

• Account for geography
  – Use online cost-of-living calculators
  – Factor in personal needs

• Three numbers
  – “No go”
  – “Ideal”
  – “Acceptable”
Benefits

• Health Insurance
  – Types of plans
  – Coverage

• Other insurance
  – Life insurance
  – Disability

• Retirement plans
  – Specific investment vehicles
  – Employer match
  – TIAA/CREF
Benefits

• Vacation and sick leave
• Holidays
• Assistance with relocation
  – Moving allowance
  – Realtor assistance
  – Spouse or partner employment assistance
• Tuition assistance
• Child care facilities/subsidies
First Visit

• Work with organizer to gather as much information as possible
  – Meet Chair and Division Chief
  – Future colleagues and potential collaborators
  – Tour hospital, labs, vivarium, clinical research space, core facilities
  – Administrator to discuss benefits
  – Expect to present a seminar
  – Tour area with realtor or other guide (often second visit)
Negotiation

- Convey enthusiasm for the position
- Summarize areas you find acceptable
- Introduce points for negotiation
- Carefully note responses and ask for clarification if needed
- Take notes
- Restate positions and agreements
- Conclude with an indication of your level of enthusiasm
Three Possible Responses To an Offer

• Stall
  – Express enthusiasm
  – Ask for time to carefully consider, but be prepared to be turned down
  – Negotiate any important items

• Accept
  – Offer and acceptance must be in writing
  – Address start dates
  – Reject other offers and withdraw other applications

• Reject
  – Always be respectful
  – Be prepared to explain why, but keep it brief and general
Thank You and Good Luck!

Questions?