

FACULTY TIPSHEET

How to be a Better Negotiator

“Train people well enough so they can leave. Treat them well enough so they don’t want to.” – Richard Branson

Many faculty may be afraid to negotiate, but we negotiate all the time. For example, we negotiate who will cook dinner, do the dishes, walk the dog, clean the house, and if you have children, then you know bedtime is also a negotiation. Below are tips on how to be a better negotiator.

- 1. Remember that negotiation is a problem-solving exercise.** Before starting negotiations ask yourself: What do I want? What do I think the other party wants? Do I or the other party have any leverage? What are the circumstances surrounding the negotiation?
- 2. Determine your goals and preferred outcome.** Decide upon goals that are specific, reasonable, aspirational, and optimistic. Also, identify your bottom line.
- 3. Consider the context of the negotiation.** Some styles work better in different situations. A collaborative approach is ideal but can be time consuming. Only be competitive when important values are at stake, when a quick resolution is needed, or when the relationship is not of high value because this style may damage relationships over time. Be accommodating when you care more about the relationship than the outcome. Compromise when resources are scarce. Use avoidance when you need to maintain the status quo or if the issue is trivial. The best negotiators are flexible in their styles and employ the best style for the situation.
- 4. Plan ahead.** Make sure you’ve thought carefully about the situation. Consider your interests, persuasive arguments, what things with which you are willing to part, acceptable alternatives, your relationship with the other person, and your style. Consider the same things for the person with whom you are negotiating.
- 5. Gather leverage.** Look for information that will help improve your position. For example, when looking to improve your salary, look at institutional salary information, peer institutions, your colleagues, and cost of living calculators. Use leverage such as grants, your reputation, another job offer, and professional relationships.
- 6. Decide on a manner of communication.** Face-to-face communication can allow for a quick change of topics and allows you to track social cues and interpret body language. Phone calls give you some ability to track social clues but require quick responses. Email is more task oriented but allows for greater flexibility in when to read and respond and gives you the ability to reflect before responding.
- 7. Ask thoughtful questions and listen carefully to answers.** This will help you identify the others person’s interests, as well as obstacles.
- 8. Think through all possibilities.** You can negotiate salary, start-up funds, moving expenses, lab/office space, student support/research assistants, travel funds, release time, etc. Everything is negotiable.
- 9. Practice and reflect.** To be a better negotiator, you must practice negotiating and reflect on the results after each negotiation.

RESOURCES

- New York Times: “A Woman’s Guide to Salary Negotiation” go.unl.edu/wgsn
- Tenure, She Wrote: “Academic Negotiations” go.unl.edu/an2015
- The Chronical of Higher Education: “OK, Let’s Talk About Negotiating Salary” go.unl.edu/ltans2014
- Harvard Business Review: “How Women Can Get What They Want in a Negotiation” go.unl.edu/gwtw2018

