Salary is just one of a number of factors to consider when deciding whether or not to accept a job offer. 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 as much information as possible so you feel good about your decision and honor your commitment should you choose to accept an offer.

In this handout, we address the following:

- How can you know if the compensation you are being offered is fair?
- What else should you consider when weighing your options for an internship or full time job?
- How should you respond when you are offered a position, but it is not your first choice?
- How can you ask for more time to make a decision?
- When and how can you negotiate salary or other parts of an offer?
- How should you approach an employer when you are ready to accept or decline 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 on our website.

After the Interview

You had a job interview, you sent a thank you note to the employer, and now you are waiting to hear whether you have made it to the next stage of the selection process. When can you follow up with the recruiter again?

The most logical time to contact a potential employer for an update after an interview is when you start to receive job offers from other companies.

In today’s competitive job market, job seekers must approach each stage of the search process with the utmost tact and professionalism. Knowing when and how to communicate with employers is essential. In general, it is preferably to have these delicate conversations by phone, if not in person.

It can be challenging to convey your continued interest while respecting the employer’s timeframe for making a decision without overstepping the bounds of tactfulness. Job seekers must strike a balance between demonstrating enthusiasm while still providing the employer adequate time to process the many applications they receive.
Before You Accept 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 when you are offered a position.

Take your time!
The recruiter or hiring manager expects you to take time to consider the offer and ask questions before you make a decision.

Do not say yes (or no) to the offer until you consider the details!

1. Know what your work is worth.
Long before you expect to receive an offer, you should research typical salaries for your industry and geographic location (not just your major).
When you get the call, write down the details of the offer.

2. Acknowledge receipt of the offer.
Be sure to show your appreciation of the offer, be tactful, and be careful... you may end up working for this person.
Reply to an offer email (making sure to continue using the original email thread) to acknowledge that you have received it.
Set up a time in the near future for a phone call or in-person meeting to discuss details and questions you have about the offer.

3. Make sure the offer is legitimate.
Before accepting a position, you need to determine if the offer is final or conditional. Do not sign anything you are unclear about.
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 all the conditions that apply to the offer (i.e. non-compete agreements, non-disclosure agreements, intellectual property restrictions, etc.).
Note that “at-will” is a legal term you will see in most offer letters, which means that the company can fire you at any time, for any reason (except those that are illegal under state or federal law).

4. Weigh your options.
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.
If you receive an offer, 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.

5. Gather the facts.
Carefully review the offer letter and company information regarding benefits, etc., prepare questions for your discussion with the employer. (Use the Job Offer Checklist in this handout as a guide.)
Now is the time to ask for details on salary, job description, start date, dress code, benefits, etc.
Do not send your questions by email, or call the recruiter multiple times with different questions.
Don’t be concerned about annoying the employer with multiple questions in your meeting or phone call; the employer understands this and is happy to assist you during this process.

6. Should you ask for more (time or money)?
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.) Negotiating salary or other aspects of an offer requires that you be prepared to advocate for yourself and explain why you deserve more.

7. Accept only when and if you are sure.
Once you have accepted an offer for a job or internship — whether verbally or in writing — you are obligated to that employer even if you get a better offer later.
Stop your search and inform other potential employers with whom you had interviewed that you have already accepted a position.
Once you have accepted a job offer you may not consider any other positions. Telling an employer “no” after you already said “yes” is called reneging, and is both unethical and unprofessional. As a college student, you want to build a professional reputation, not burn bridges.

Take your time!
The recruiter or hiring manager expects you to take time to consider the offer and ask questions before you make a decision.

Do not say yes (or no) to the offer until you consider the details!
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 Engineering Career Services), 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 at the end of this handout 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 seems 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.

LOOK AT THE WHOLE PICTURE.

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.

DETERMINE OPPORTUNITIES FOR PROMOTION.

Job progression is an important factor in making salary decisions. Ask how promotions and salary reviews are handled.

USE TACT WHEN NEGOTIATING.

If you decide to negotiate, schedule a time to speak with the person that extended the offer to you. Emphasize to the employer how excited you are about the job but that you are disappointed with the salary that was offered. Then calmly explain the reasons why you believe the offer is below the market value for the position and describe what you can do for the company.

KEEP SELLING YOURSELF.

Marketing your skills and qualifications doesn't end at the interview! When negotiating salary or terms of employment, you must emphasize your skills and how they apply to the job at hand as reasons that they should offer you a higher salary.

If you can point to how you can make money for the company or how you can save them money, do so. Remember to focus on why you deserve more, not why you need more. Ask them to see if they can do any better. Then go home and wait. Use silence and time to your advantage.

GET WRITTEN CONFIRMATION OF CHANGES.

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

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.
DECISION TIME – ACCEPTING AND DECLINING

Accepting an Offer

After you verbally accept an offer, you can follow up with an email confirmation.

From: jwareumd@terpworld.net
To: mmckinney@bbengcompany.com
Date: October 30, 2017, 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,

Joseph Ware

Tactfully Declining a Job Offer

After you have spoken by phone with the employer to decline the offer, you should follow up with a gracious note.

From: jwardumd@terpworld.net
To: blumhr@engfirmtrb.com
Date: November 10, 2017, 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,

Jocelyn Ward
**After You Accept an Offer**

**Share your news with Engineering Career Services!**

You can complete the Job Update form on our website or come in and tell us about it.

If the position is a co-op, we can help you register for ENCO099/098 so you maintain your student status. International students on F-1 visas must request and receive CPT work authorization before they can begin working at an internship off campus.

If you notify us about the internship or entry level job you have accepted, we can stop sending your resume to employers.

It is also important for our office to know who we have helped!

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**Websites with Salary & Job Offer Resources**

- [https://www.bls.gov/bls/blswage.htm](https://www.bls.gov/bls/blswage.htm) - Bureau of Labor Statistics Wage Date by Area and Occupation
- [www.collegegrad.com/salaries](http://www.collegegrad.com/salaries) - CollegeGrad resources on job offers, salaries, negotiation, and other career preparation topics
- [https://www.livecareer.com/quintessential/salary-negotiation](https://www.livecareer.com/quintessential/salary-negotiation) - LiveCareer articles and tutorials for salary negotiation and job offer evaluation
- [https://www.educatetocareer.org/programs.php](https://www.educatetocareer.org/programs.php) - Educate to Career includes a free salary calculator
- [www.glassdoor.com](http://www.glassdoor.com) - Glassdoor includes user-reported information on salaries, interviews, and company reviews. Note that negotiation information is included under interviews, not salaries. Create free account with your .edu email address.

**GOINGGLOBAL**

**USA Career Guides**

GoinGlobal and USA Career Guides are helpful resources for a regional job search. Among other information, you can find cost of living data for U.S. and international cities. To access, log in to Careers4Engineers or Careers4Terps, then click on the logo to the right of the screen.
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>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Title</td>
<td>(Is it what was expected? If not, why not?)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Report To</td>
<td>(Is it who was expected? If not, why not?)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Start Date</td>
<td>Can we make it earlier? Later?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Base Salary</td>
<td>Payable monthly? Semi-monthly? Bi-weekly?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Signing Bonus</td>
<td>Do they offer one? How much? Any conditions?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Commissions or other Bonuses</td>
<td>Are there any? Percentage? Tied to what specifically?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Relocation</td>
<td>What expenses are covered, if any?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Comp Time</td>
<td>Any work hours/days flexibility?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Overtime</td>
<td>Is there paid overtime?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Retirement Plan</td>
<td>Type? (401k?) Company match %? Max contribution amount?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Stock Options</td>
<td>How are they determined?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>What is my contribution amount (For myself? For my family)? Options (PPO? HMO?)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Vision Care</td>
<td>Exams? Glasses/contacts? Max?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Life Insurance</td>
<td>Set amount? % of salary?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Short-term Disability</td>
<td>Period of time? Coverage?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Long-term Disability</td>
<td>Period of time? Coverage?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vacation</td>
<td>Any flexibility in providing more? When does it increase?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Holidays</td>
<td>How many? Can any be flexed?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sick/Personal Days</td>
<td>Covered? How many? Restrictions?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Tuition</td>
<td>Reimbursement rules and %?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Training</td>
<td>Other training provided? Who approves?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Health Clubs</td>
<td>Coverage?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Dependent Care</td>
<td>Coverage?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Performance Review</td>
<td>When will my first performance review be?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Salary Review</td>
<td>When will my first salary review be?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Potential Increases</td>
<td>What % increases should I expect for the first 2-3 years?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Travel</td>
<td>% overnight travel expected?</td>
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<tr>
<td>General Expenses</td>
<td>Are all business-related expenses covered?</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>