

You decide to go to the library after your next class to research SPOT and the market in general: How large is the school? Who's in the department? How many students do they have? Are there any possibilities for your significant other? What should you expect for a salary? You start to formulate a list of questions for the chair. You don't want to call more than once or twice, because any more would seem like badgering.

The next morning you find a faxed letter in your mailbox detailing the offer; it's about \$4,000 less than what the Chronicle of Higher Education says is average for a beginning assistant professorship. Furthermore, the letter does indeed say that you are being offered a "terminal, two-year position."

Before you respond you want to call those schools among the remaining nineteen possibilities that are higher on your list than SPOT. This consists of seventeen schools (two are lower than SPOT), of which nine tell you that they have either filled the position or stopped the search for "institutional reasons." Three chairs or search committees are out of town for up to a week. Of the other five, three say that they haven't reached the point where they have a short list yet, but they can contact you "in two or three weeks." When you mention that you have another offer, they say that, given their situation, you should "seriously consider it."

The other two schools say that they are "really interested"; one chair says that you are on her short list. When you press for details, however, she becomes more guarded: "Of course, the search committee is still at work, and they haven't decided who to bring to campus yet, and we won't really have an offer to make for some time...maybe a month."

The linguist calls; she liked northern Minnesota. "The people are nice, and there's a lot of outdoor stuff to do. Of course, you have to drive eighty miles to the nearest big town, and the winter is colder than you've ever experienced. I didn't go to St. Pat's, but it has a rather good regional reputation. I'm pretty sure your significant other could get some kind of job at the school."

You start to put together a list of questions for the chair at St. Pat's. Is the salary firm? If so, are there any travel funds? At least if you can go to conferences, you can keep yourself current, show off your research, and network for another job. As to the teaching schedule, your advisor has suggested that, since you will have to leave in two years, it might be possible to get release time for research during one or two semesters. Summer research support is another factor you want to pursue. You will also be asking the chair about possible jobs for computer scientists.

You also want to know how firm the two-year commitment is. If another position opens in the department during that time, will they consider you? And if they do consider you, will they count the two years toward tenure?

As you are considering these questions, you begin to realize that, in some ways, a two-year position is a blessing in disguise - if it is used properly. A contract for that amount of time allows you to see if you are interested in the school, while at the same time forcing you to continue your research and look for other positions.

When you call the chair the next day, he says that while the salary is firm, "you can get some travel funds, within reason, for up to two conferences a year and only if you give talks there." He says he will consider you for any opening that comes up, but he will have to confer with the dean about the "two-years-toward-tenure" issue. He thinks he "would entertain a two-course reduction" during the first year, or maybe one course less each year. He says he doesn't know about the computer science possibilities, but he will check and get back to you.



Comments: webmaster@ams.org
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