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WHERE THE MONEY RESIDES

Demystifying
Academic Job
Negotiations

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GRATITUDES

Thank you to those who shared personal stories and information about your experiences with negotiation through the survey we sent out in Spring 2022.

Thank you also to Zoë Wool who helped conceptualize this project in its earliest phases.

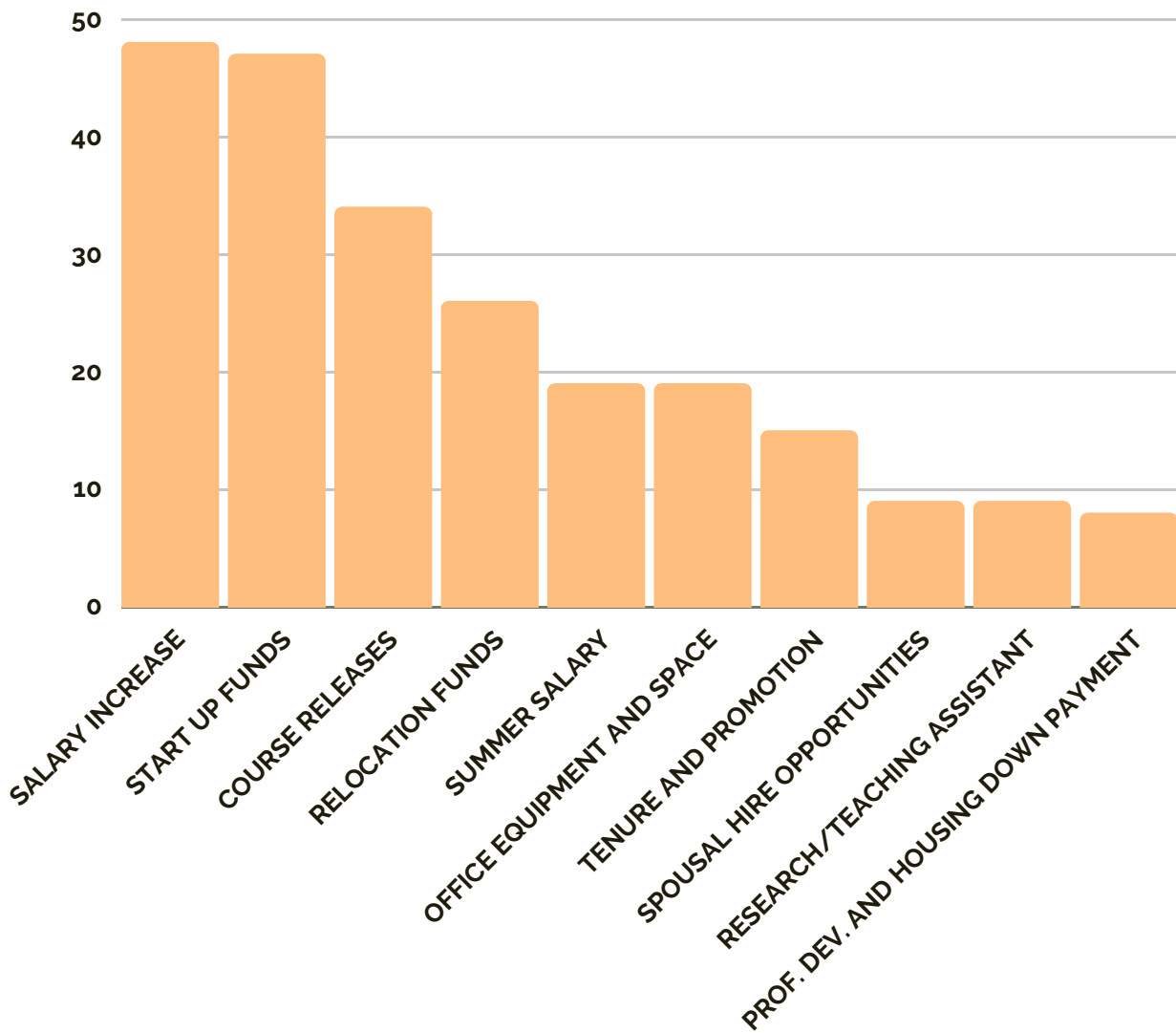
Lastly, we'd like to thank Tatiana Esh for designing the final product that you now hold in your hands (or on your laptops).

**OVERVIEW:
WHAT THIS IS AND
WHO ARE WE TO HAVE
DONE IT.**

This project started with a conversation between Ashanté and Ashley: what things do people ask for when they are negotiating jobs? Though the two of us had negotiated job offers in the past, we realized that aside from asking for more of what was offered to us, no one had really taught us how to negotiate or what the landscape of possibilities looked like. We were basically relying on knowledge gained through whisper networks and the benevolence of mentors. As two people in relatively privileged positions (tenured/tenure on the horizon, above average salaries for humanities professors, and ongoing research support through our departments), we see this project as a step in the direction of democratizing information.

We began by creating a form with questions asking respondents about their backgrounds, what they negotiated for, what type of mentorship they'd received, and what quality of life changes that they saw their colleagues get that they wished they had asked for themselves. We circulated the anonymous form on social media for several weeks, closing it after we received 324 responses. During this time, Hannah and Zoë offered to help organize and translate this information into a format that would make the demographic and negotiations data more legible. The following report is an overview of what our team believed to be the most useful aspects of this data in the hopes that it helps people across multiple communities imagine a more capacious and fulfilling life in the academy and offers some tools to help them achieve it. Ultimately, we hope that it demystifies some aspects of what is possible and gestures toward what we could push for in the future. Negotiation is often an intensely private and sometimes lonely process. We hope that this guide inspires us all to move more toward a collective approach to understanding negotiations.

TOP TEN NEGOTIATION POINTS



"I got the university to commit to covering 5 years of salary at \$100,000 for my partner. He wasn't comfortable with the lack of job security and the salary and support didn't compare favorably with his current job, so he decided to stick with his current job and commute."

"I was an internal hire at a med school and was advised by mentors that negotiation was not possible (an experience confirmed by a previous attempt to negotiate on a different issue while I was a postdoc). No start-up, no negotiation on salary. I will note that all PhDs hired internally in this department get hired at the same salary, based on conversations with several of my colleagues."

"Institution made an offer, stated it was non-negotiable, and that they would withdraw the offer if I countered in any way. Initial hire."

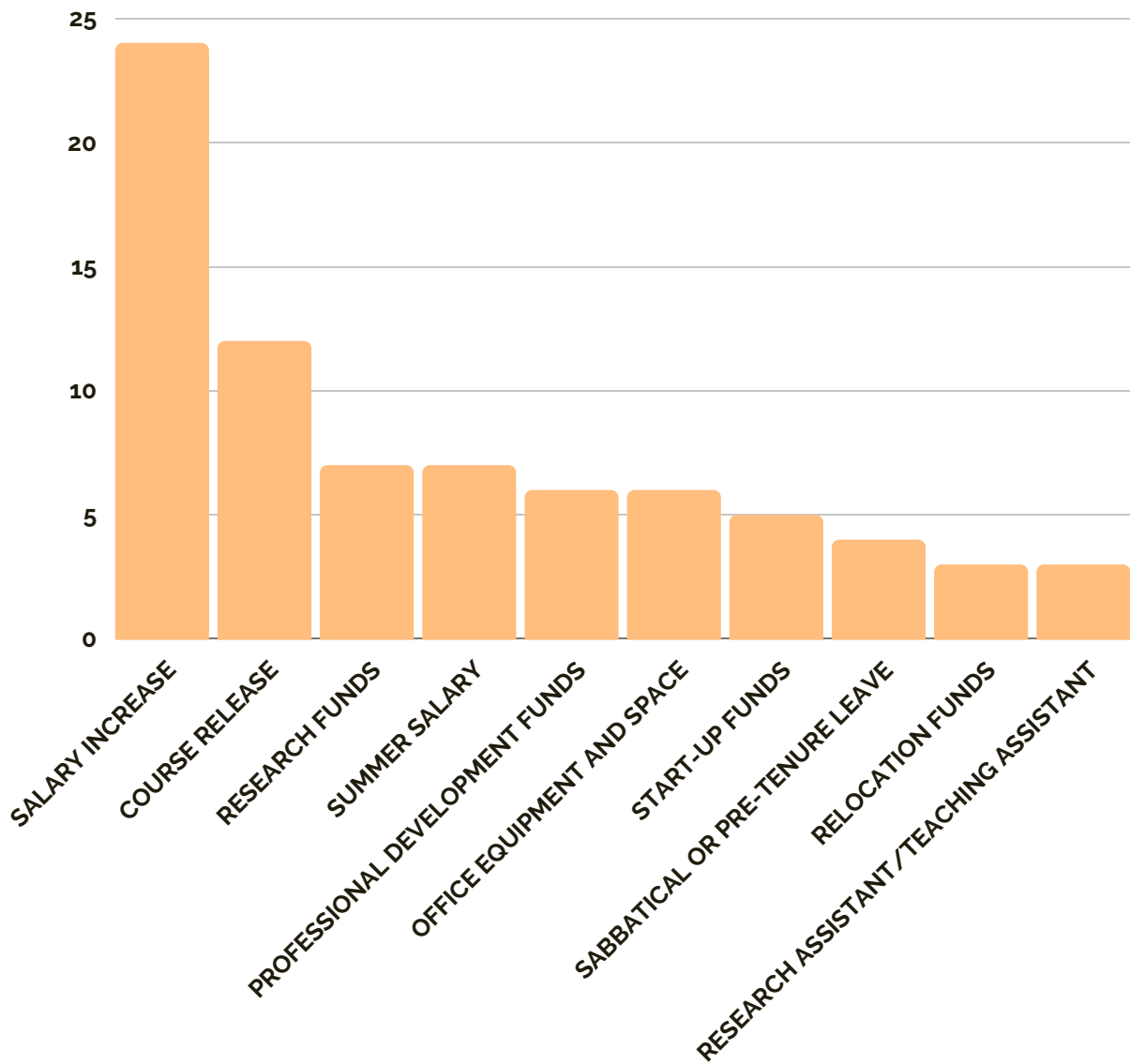
"I was able to get the highest salary of any Asst Prof in my unit or comparable units. I was able to do so by (1) reviewing public salary records and (2) feeling assertive in the likelihood that incoming males in my cluster would get higher offers if I didn't self advocate."

"My partner was offered a job, and in the negotiation he asked for me to be considered for a position. The university has a spousal/partner hire policy which they followed. I applied for a position and went through the entire interview process. We were both offered TT jobs but in the process ended up with lower salaries than all our colleagues to be."

"My initial offer did not include a course release, but the revised offer did (primarily because I brought up equity concerns.)"

**PARTICIPANTS'
REFLECTIONS ON
NEGOTIATIONS**

TOP TEN WISH LIST ASKS



"I wish I had more strategically stretched out the timeline. The university did not have a ton of incentive to give me all that I wanted because they made the offer very early--when other searches I was part of were very early in their processes. But that's also the challenge of today's market: fewer folks get multiple offers and it seems harder to make a case that you are exemplary. There will be folks happy to accept a job if you do not (and the institutions know that). And knowing this, the SLAC's often fast-track their processes to prevent having to compete with R1s that have more resources to offer you."

"I wish I had known to ask for a childcare spot. This seems to be the only way to get into the university center. Current and future caregiving needs are a critical part of the negotiation process."

"Start date moved up to avoid a gap in health insurance coverage."

"After accepting the offer from the dean, I found out that the chair would have been willing to help me negotiate, but I didn't know that this would be ok to ask for."

"Some faculty in my unit asked for and received (1) explicit service commitment limitations and (2) limitations on the numbers of new preps they'd have to do pre-tenure. I wish I had known to do that."

**WHAT THEY WISH
THEY'D ASK FOR**

"I most honestly wish there was a way to get funds to help get new furniture and rebuild my wardrobe but I couldn't figure out how to ask for that."

"An advance on my paycheck!! I could not work out of grad school because of my visa. So I was unemployed for 3 months and absolutely broke. I had to borrow a lot of money from a friend and when I arrived in OK I lived in a mostly unfurnished apartment for the best part of a year."

"Publication fees. Someone in the department has negotiated to never pay for publication fees in high impact journals - basically if they get into Science, Nature, Cell journals then the department pays the APCs."

"I wish I had learned more about my university's benefits package (which isn't very strong) and used that knowledge to my advantage when negotiating the starting salary."

"I always wish I had more salary (the number looks REALLY big before you try to live on it)."

**WHAT THEY WISH
THEY'D ASK FOR**

ABOUT THE DATA

[View a spreadsheet summarizing responses.](#)

The information provided in this report represents 324 responses to a Google Form circulated on Twitter in Spring 2022. The survey asked respondents to provide demographic information, including their race, gender, institution type, job title, and salary. It then invited participants to detail what they successfully negotiated for, what they were unable to negotiate for, and what they wished they had asked for.

The information in this report is primarily qualitative. While we do have some quantitative data, we did not conduct a statistical analysis of the responses. What we do know is that the survey represents respondents in the social sciences, arts, and humanities, with some outliers in medicine and engineering. It includes lecturers and faculty across all ranks of the tenure track, as well as some contingent faculty and staff. About half of respondents were white, and two-thirds were women.

The respondents to this survey were not a representative sample of the field. For example, while we know that [female faculty are underpaid relative to their male counterparts](#), female respondents to this survey earned slightly more, most likely because of variations in rank, discipline, and institution. Similarly, while we know that [Black scholars represent only 4% of full-time faculty](#), they represent a quarter of the faculty who responded here.

IMAGINING A NEW LIFE: FORWARD THINKING ASKS

- Travel Costs for Long Distance Relationship
- Formal Mentorship
- Personal "P-Card" (credit card for costs paid by the university)
- Redefining Teaching Load to Include Other Activities (i.e. k-12 teaching)
- Commuting Costs
- Student Loan Relief (paid in summer funding)
- Library Fund
- Health FSA contribution
- Money for New Wardrobe
- Parking
- Office Redecoration
- Teaching Format Autonomy (Virtual vs. In-Person)
- Accounting for Caregiving Responsibilities in Work Load
- Travel Costs for In-Person Dissertation Defense

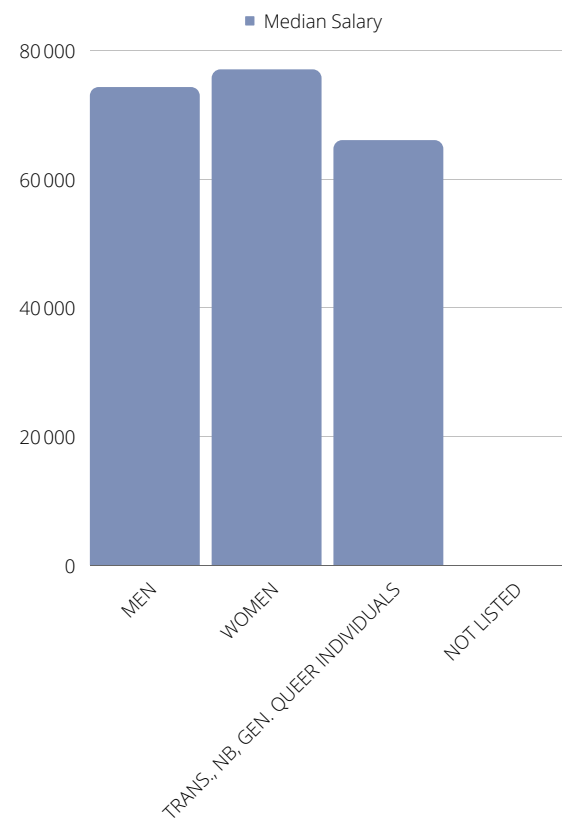
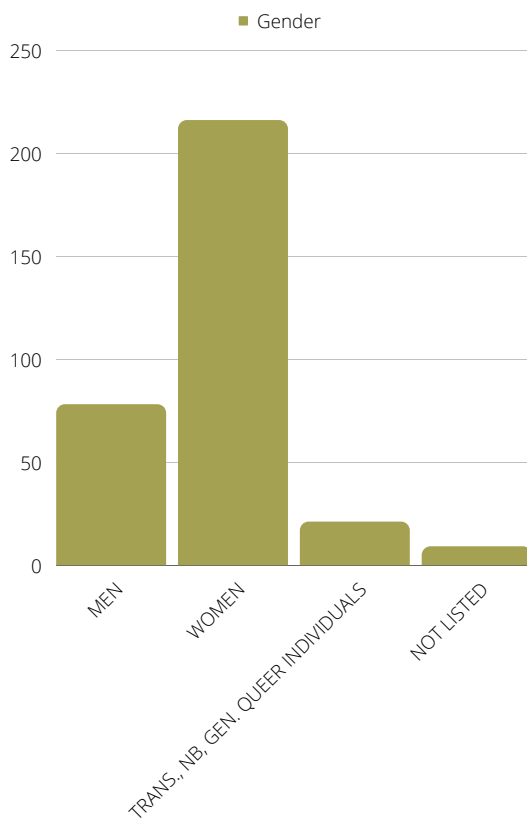
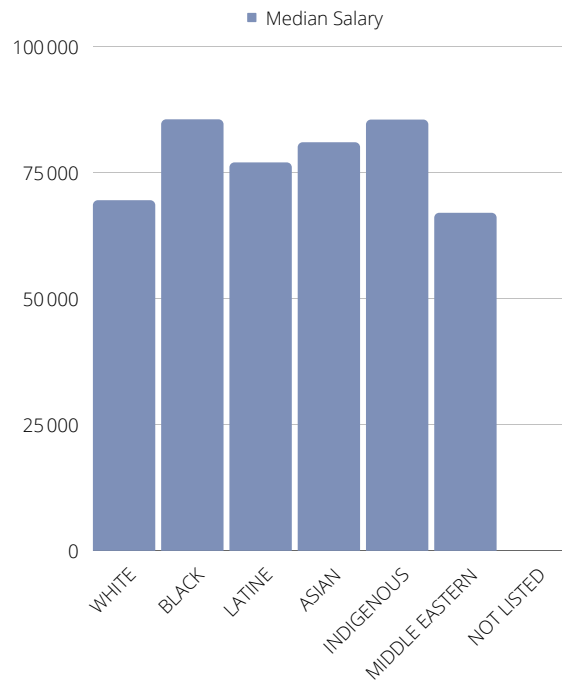
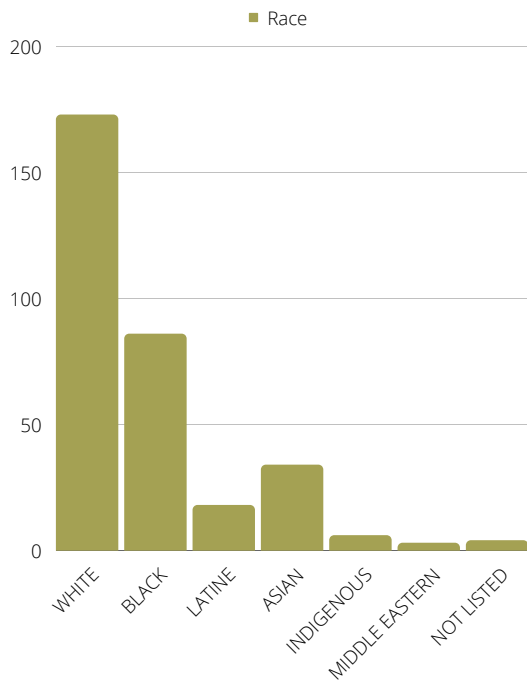
Recognition of Indigenous knowledge for additional steps on salary grid

- Applying past service credit from work from other universities
- Employer to contribute to retirement right away (if usually deferred)

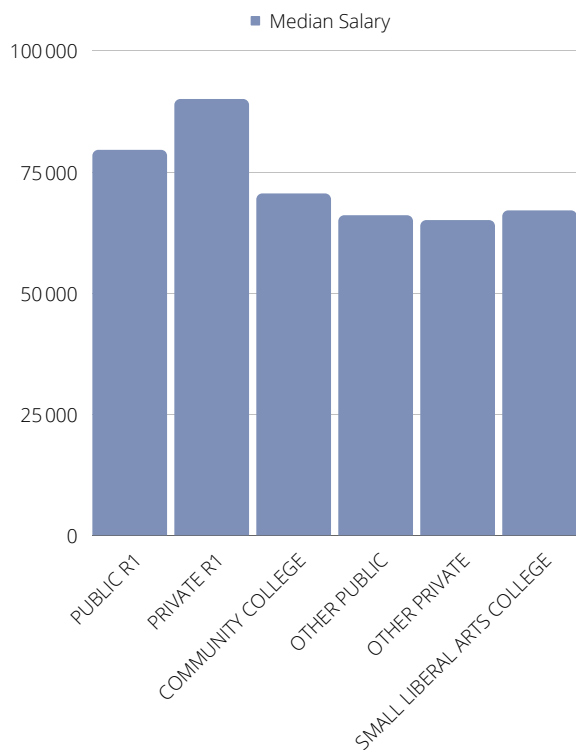
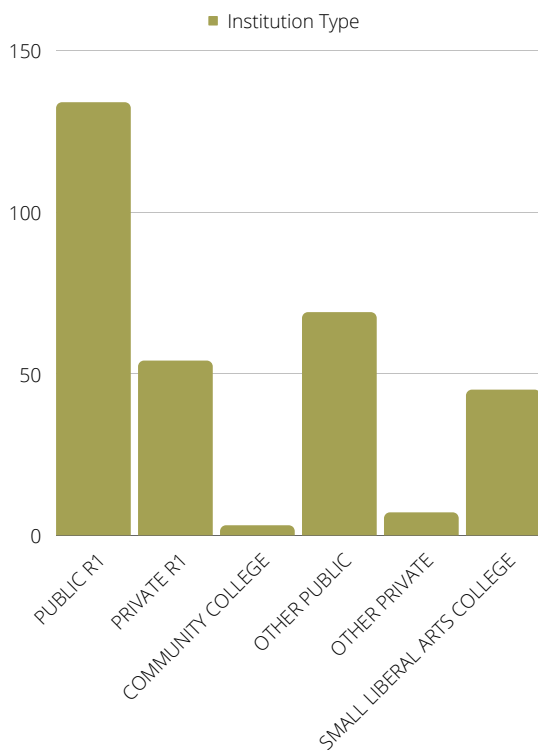
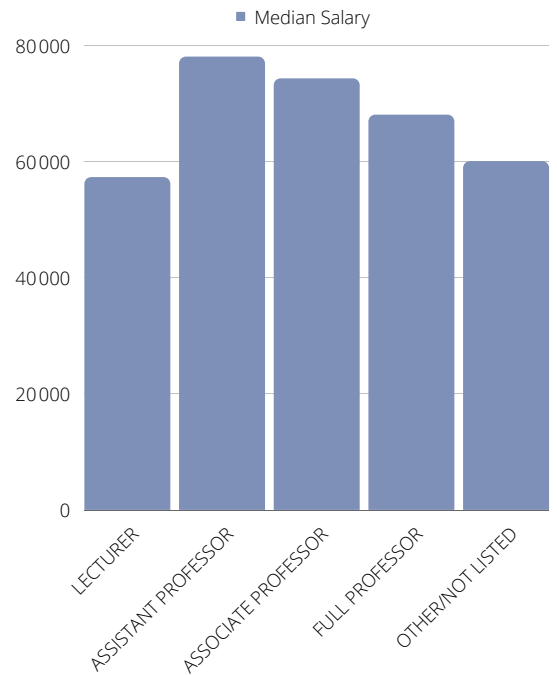
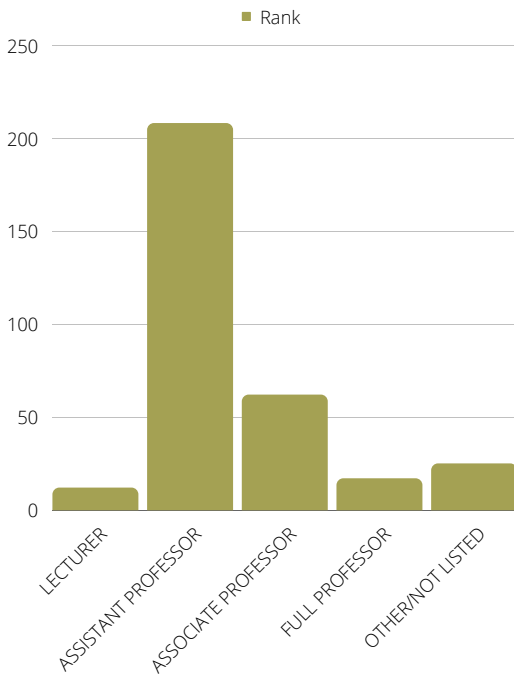
WORDS OF WISDOM

- It is not unreasonable to expect that basic equipment required to complete your job will be provided by the college or university.
- Ask for more than you're willing to accept, with the understanding that a negotiation is about meeting in the middle.
- Remember that negotiations are happening within a web of power—one that you might not fully understand but may be determining your value to the institution. Try not to take it personally (emphasis on try).
- Deciding if or when to disclose a disability is a personal choice. When making that decision, consider if it will help you better understand the landscape of resources you can tap into.
- Once you get salary numbers, 1) research the cost of living and 2) use a take home pay calculator to estimate the amount of money you will be bringing home.

ABOUT THE RESPONDENTS



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