• Welcome everyone. My name is Deb Carroll and I oversee Employer Relations at the Office of Career Services.

• I have two main goals for this presentation. The first is getting you comfortable talking to an employer about your offer. The second is introducing you to some of the things you might want to think about when negotiating or making decisions.

• If you have or are expecting an offer sometime soon, **congratulations!** OCS is here as a resource for this stage of the process, too. Feel free to make an advising appointment through Crimson Careers if you are looking for one-on-one advice.
Offer & Negotiation Themes

- Maintaining professional relationships
- Staying in communication
- Respecting people’s time
- “Doing your research”

A few things you will hear me say throughout this presentation are listed here. At the end of the day, you should always be trying to maintain your professional relationships throughout your job or internship search. Even if you turn down an offer, you can continue to have people you’ve met in your network. You never know when your paths might cross again, or when someone might be able to help you take your next step.

Some of the key ways to maintain those relationships are by staying in communication, respecting people’s time, and doing your research, which I will go into more detail about later in the presentation.
It is always helpful to start in the context of the current labor market and entry-level hiring. Every year is different, and within every year things can change month to month.

This year has been very complicated. You may have heard of the “great resignation,” and some organizations are doing lots of hiring to make up for retirements and people who left during COVID. At the same time, we see other sectors being very cautious about a potential recession or other volatility, with tech being the most notable right now.

This context influences how many offers you may receive, the leverage you may have with employers to negotiate, and if you do get multiple offers, the impact you can have on your peers by hanging on to multiple offers for too long.
Some students get very stressed about the offer process because they expect it to be like applying to college or graduate school - when acceptances and declines arrived through email around the same time and had roughly the same decision timeline.

Deciding on a job or internship offer is very different.
• Most likely you will not be able to wait until you have all your possible offers to start making decisions.
• You will have to communicate extensively by phone.
• It can become much more personal than accepting and declining admissions, especially if you built relationships working side-by-side with people over the summer at the organization that now wants to hire you full-time.
The Offer Process

- Say thank you
- Get it in writing
- Keep in touch
- Be an active decision-maker
- Negotiate if appropriate
- Decline and accept ASAP
- Fill out your paperwork
- DO NOT continue to search once you’ve accepted an offer

Keeping that in mind, in general, the offer and decision process follows these steps.

- When you get an offer, usually by phone but sometimes by email, your primary responsibility is to say thank you.
  - You don’t need to decide on the spot, but you need to express your appreciation and your enthusiasm.
- Ask for the offer details in writing whenever possible – even an email helps.
- Plan to stay in touch with the organization – returning phone calls and emails.
- **You will not come to a decision simply by allowing time to pass by.** You need to talk to people – friends and family, other organizations that interest you, other people at the organization who are already doing the same work, etc.
- Negotiate if appropriate and accept and decline offers as soon as possible.
  - Declining in a timely fashion is extremely important.
  - Being respectful of someone’s time is one of the best ways to maintain a relationship, even if you end up saying no to their offer.
  - Declining offers also allows a spot to open for the next student in line, which could be your friend or classmate.
- Fill out all your paperwork, and DO NOT continue to search elsewhere once you’ve accepted an offer.
  - Continuing to interview after you have accepted an offer can jeopardize both your existing and future job opportunities. Remember what I said at the beginning about how important it is to maintain your professional relationships.
**Keep in Touch**

*Why They Keep Calling...*

- They have made a commitment to you.
- They want to make sure you have all the information you need.
- They have other students in line for the position if you say no.
- They suspect they are not your first choice.

Students sometimes complain that once they receive an offer, they get a lot of calls from the employer. I explain this is by comparing the hiring process to dating.

- When an employer gives you an offer, they are saying, we really like you and want to stop seeing other people.
- Especially if you worked at an organization over the summer, you have real relationships with mentors and coworkers.
- It is human nature that now that they have said that they want you on the team, they are anxious for you to say it back to them.
- It is much easier for them to wait for your answer if you are reassuring them that the feeling is mutual. So, it is important to the relationship that you keep in touch.

The organization also wants you to have everything you need to decide and because they have other students next in line for the position.
- If you wait too long to decide and say no, it is often that next student who loses out.

Sometimes the employer can tell that they are not your first choice.
- The organization does not just want someone who can do the job, they want to hire someone who wants to do the job for them, so returning calls and connecting with people is a way to demonstrate your continued interest.
- This can be time consuming, and this is what I think of as “managing” the offer process, so remember to do everything you can to decide as soon as possible.
Communication

Confrontation vs Conversation

Communication will be very important if you decide to negotiate any part of your offer or want to maintain a long decision timeline. It should never be confrontational when you communicate with your employer about your offer.

• Remember that you are simply having a conversation.
• All you are doing is asking a question; even a negotiation is just asking a question, and if you are doing it in a polite way, it shouldn’t hurt your relationship with an employer to ask a question.
• Even if you are concerned that asking for more time to decide will make you appear uninterested, remember that you are just asking a question, and there is a lot you can do to make sure the employer knows that you absolutely are interested.

If you decide to negotiate, think about it as a difficult conversation rather than a negotiation. Negotiation implies that it is a zero-sum game, meaning that someone must lose for the other to gain. Negotiation about your employment is trying to get to a win-win scenario. They want to hire you, and they want to help create the conditions that will make that happen.

However, keep in mind that it is not always an even playing field. That context I mentioned before becomes very important. Sometimes the employer has more power than they would in other circumstances, and you might want to be more conservative with your asks. Regardless, you have the most power to negotiate or ask questions after the offer is given but before you accept.
When you have a question or issue with your offer, or want to negotiate something, we always recommend reaching out to your Human Resources or recruiting contact.

• Part of the HR function is to field awkward or difficult questions so you can more easily maintain your relationships with your manager and the other people who you might work side-by-side with later on.
• You can also ask HR who would be the most appropriate person for you to speak with and let them direct you.

The other people you may want to speak with include your “hiring manager” (the person who would be your boss), your mentor, or an alum you have gotten close to.
• You are the person who has met all the parties involved, so you need to use your judgment, but sometimes HR helps advocate with your hiring manager, and sometimes it is the reverse – your hiring manager helps advocate for you with HR.

We also always suggest that you have these conversations over the phone.
• You can use email to set up a time to speak by phone, but otherwise you should avoid asking any sensitive questions over email.
• It is very hard to control for tone of voice in an email. (You do not want to be using emoji or exclamation points to emphasize your enthusiasm.)
• You want to be able to hear the other person’s tone of voice so you can adjust your approach depending on the cues you get from them.
• The only exception might be when trying to have a conversation across time zones.
Communicaton

The Positive Sandwich

Positive statement:
- “I’m really excited about this opportunity.”

Your question/inquiry about the offer:
- “I’m wondering if there is any flexibility with the decision timeline.”

Positive statement:
- “I really appreciate you taking the time to discuss this with me. Thank you for all your help.”

We’ve discussed some of the communication logistics, but you also want to be sure to plan the content of your conversation. I always recommend using what we refer to as “the positive sandwich.” You want to begin and end any request with some sort of appreciative and positive statement.

For example:
• Start with “I’m really excited about this opportunity.”
• Then get to the substance of what you are asking or proposing, saying something like, “I’m wondering if there is any flexibility with the decision timeline?”
  • “Is there any flexibility?” is one of the magic phrases used to signal that you are going to ask for something but are not making a demand.
  • Another magic phrase is “I’m just looking for some advice.” Everyone likes to give advice, and by asking for advice you are gathering information, not making demands.
• After you have discussed some of your questions or requests be sure to end again with a positive statement: “I really appreciate you taking the time to discuss this with me. Thank you for all your help.”
• Most likely the person you will speak with will have to check in with someone else, so don’t expect that all your questions will be resolved in the one phone call.
• Once that person gets back to you with a response, whether its yes or no, you at least then have more information on which to base your decision.
The time between when you are given your offer and when you accept is when you have leverage for reasonable requests.

- **DO NOT** wait until the last minute. Respecting people’s time is one of the best ways to maintain relationships, even if you say no.

For example, if an employer gives you two weeks, you should ask questions and consider negotiating that first week. **That’s also the ideal time to get advice from OCS.**

- The employer then has time to respond to your requests and get you updated information. If you wait too long, it can annoy the employer, or they just won’t have time to address your requests.

To negotiate for more decision time, consider how much time you need.

- Rather than ask to extend your deadline one more day, then one more day, etc, determine a reasonable timeline and proactively set up a few check-in times.
- This approach respects the employer’s time, and it helps you manage your own time because you won’t get unexpected phone calls from the employer asking where you are in your decision-making process.

Also note that dragging out the process is stressful for **YOU.** Though it can be daunting to make a decision, it also takes a huge weight off your shoulders and lets you get excited about the opportunity you’ve chosen.
So what is negotiable?
• Some things are not negotiable, like benefits that are standard across the whole organization. But benefits are expensive, so don’t discount them as an important part of your overall compensation.
• And note that some organizations will not negotiate and offer all entry-level hires the same contract to be equitable.

If you decide to negotiate, that employer really should be your first choice.
• This is because if they meet your demands, it is poor form to then turn them down.
• Approach negotiation with humility and remember the positive sandwich.
• It is always best to prioritize what is important to you, since you may only get one ask if the employer agrees to it.
• If the answer is no, it is ok to move toward something else on your list.
• For example, if you want to negotiate on salary but the employer says no, then you can ask about bonus structure, assuming from their tone that it seems ok to ask for something else.
• However, two “asks” is usually it.

Please note that salary may not be negotiable.
• The organization gives the same starting salary to all new hires; to be fair and for legal reasons.
• Never ask for an increase in salary without doing some research.
In an ideal world, you’d have a competing offer, and therefore have a specific salary comparison to negotiate with. However, that is not always feasible, especially when there is a short decision timeline. The alternative is to do some research. Keep in mind that salary is not about what you need or what you are worth, it is about what the market will pay, so online salary tools are a great way to start. Advance salary research is also important if an employer asks for a desired salary on an application or in an interview.

- With online tools, you enter a job title, location, etc., and the results are a graphical display. This slide is showing results from OCS’s Job Market Insights tool.
- It is important to know what you are looking at before estimating where you belong on the graph.
- For example, if you searched “marketing coordinator,” and the resulting range is just new grads, as a Harvard student, it is reasonable to negotiate for something higher than the mean.
- However, if the data is for all people who hold that position, even if they’ve had it for five years, then you should consider negotiating for the high end of the first quartile or low end of the second.
- Regardless, when you negotiate, don’t lead the conversation with a specific number. You ask whether there is any flexibility with the salary and see how the employer responds. If they try to get you to name a number first, always select a range rather than an exact number.
Another way of doing your research is by searching for similar positions, or by speaking with alumni already working in the organization or in the field.

- Speaking with alumni is also a great way to investigate if the job or internship is the right fit for you.
- Don’t ask an alum their salary, ask them whether they negotiated and what strategies they may have used. They may end up offering their salary as part of the conversation.
- It is also important to listen to alumni advice knowing that your circumstances could be different than theirs.
  - For example, sometimes alumni advise to negotiate aggressively because they had done so successfully years before, but you should educate yourself about the current economic conditions before taking that approach.
  - Alums might also advise you to get a competing offer because that’s what they did, not realizing how that might be more difficult depending on economic conditions or your decision timeline.
When you are doing your research, you do want to make you are aware of things that seem comparable but really are not. Apples and oranges are both fruit, but they are not the same thing.

- Going back to that marketing coordinator example again, you can be a marketing coordinator for a corporation, a non-profit, a start-up, etc.
- All have very different compensation ranges, including big differences in what they can offer in terms of benefits.
- For example, Harvard is well-known for having great benefits, but many job functions would have a higher salary at a for-profit organization.
Leveraging Your Offer

If you do find yourself with an offer, it is acceptable to approach other organizations and inform them in hopes that it helps expedite their timeline.

• But we recommend you do so only after having done some preparation.
• Remember that this is not like when you applied to College, and most likely you will not be able to hold on to all your options while you pursue others.
• You will need to make decisions as opportunities become available, so that means making decisions as you go and not holding on to more than one or two offers at once.
• Remember that it is time consuming and stressful for you to juggle multiple offers, and it may take that opportunity away from a fellow Harvard student if you hold on to something you are not interested in for too long.

You can also leverage an offer to try to get a higher salary elsewhere. Similar to the earlier negotiation advice, you want to approach this as a conversation and not a confrontation. And you want to be negotiating with your top choice employer because you will want to be in a position to say yes if your demands are met.

Also remember that it is important not to misrepresent yourself during this process.
• You cannot pretend to have another offer in order to negotiate some part of your existing one.
• Although you do not need to reveal every piece of information about your decision-making process, anything you do share needs to be truthful and in good faith.
Everyone has their own decision-making processes, but here are a few things for you to think about. You won’t come to a good decision simply by waiting for your decision deadline to approach. There are lots of things you can do in advance or during your job or internship search that will help you make a good decision when the time comes, but you may find yourself doing more of this work once you have an offer in hand.

Internally – Nothing is going to be perfect, at this phase your self-reflection has a lot to do with prioritization. There are lots of questions to ask yourself: what are your skills and interests? where can you learn and grow as a professional? what are your salary needs? what are your family obligations? where do you need to be in the country or the world? what is your risk tolerance? what are your visa requirements? what is most important to you?

Externally – There are lots of ways to learn more about the opportunity before you make your final choice:
- Speak with alumni who are doing or have done the work
- Read reviews on Glassdoor.com and elsewhere
- Explore what is being said about the organization in the news

Take some time to imagine yourself in the role. Do you like what you will be doing on a daily basis? Can you imagine yourself working with these people? I often remind
students that they could be spending more waking hours with coworkers than anyone else in their lives.

Remember that this is just your first destination!! You are not deciding the rest of your life. Expect that you will be in the role for two years, though it could be more or it could be less, and know that you will have lots of opportunities to pivot and change direction.
For any big decision, it is a good idea to consult with the important people in your life. We sometimes refer to this as creating your board of advisors.

- Different people also know you in different capacities, so it helps to seek advice from multiple people.
- Family and friends may be more familiar with your internal priorities, whereas faculty and mentors may be more familiar with your professional goals.
- It is also a reminder that you do not have to think through your decision on your own.
- There are many people who want to support you and be your sounding board, including the advising team at OCS.
- The decision is yours, but your board of advisors can help you approach your decision-making process from a place of confidence rather than from a place of anxiety.
Congratulations!

Finally, congratulations! When you get an offer, don’t forget to be happy! Offer issues are sometimes referred to as “champagne problems” – meaning that, even if it is stressful, having an offer is a GOOD PROBLEM to have.
Resources and Questions

- OCS Offers Webpage
  - https://careerservices.fas.harvard.edu/channels/negotiate-an-offer/
- Salary Tools
  - Job Market Insights
  - Payscale.com
  - Salary.com
  - Glassdoor
  - Candor.co
- Industry/Sector Resources
  - Vault Guides (free via OCS website)
- OCS Advisers
  - Email ocsrec@fas.harvard.edu for time-sensitive offer issues
  - Schedule 30 min advising appointments via Crimson Careers
  - For Harvard College students: daily drop-ins M-F

I will leave these resources up as I answer some of your submitted questions.