

NEGOTIATING

Athletic Trainers are healthcare professionals who frequently report lower median salaries than similarly credentialed peers in other fields including Physical and Occupational Therapy.¹ Negotiation during the hiring process are commonplace in many professional fields, yet many ATs choose not engage in negotiations.^{1,2} A comprehensive negotiation should address salary, employment terms (e.g. travel expectations, patient panel, start dates, etc.), benefits package, and retirement contributions.

In a national survey, 57% of ATs did not try to negotiate their salary and 70% did not attempt to negotiate any part of their employment terms nor compensation package during the hiring process.¹

- There were no differences among men and women in attempts to negotiate, however, men did have more success in negotiating their salary to a higher amount.
- ATs with more previous full-time positions were more likely to negotiate both salary and certain terms of employment.
- There were no differences in the likelihood to attempt salary negotiations based on age or degrees obtained.
- Those who reported their salary in the lowest range (<\$40,000) were more likely to indicate not having any success in negotiating that salary.
- ATs negotiating with physician practice and rehabilitation clinics were more successful in gaining continuing education funding and weekly/monthly expected work hours.
- ATs employed in secondary schools and collegiate settings were more successful in negotiating moving expenses and desired start dates.
- The authors recommended formal instruction and training on negotiation in accredited education programs, encouraged ATs to seek out a support network to discuss their compensation packages and negotiation strategies, and for ATs to consider negotiation strategies during their next hiring process. These recommendations apply to all ATs but are of particular importance for women and early career professionals.



RESOURCES

[NATA Transitional Employment: Fiscal Worksheet](#)

[NATA Timely Topic: The AT and the Great Renegotiation](#)

[NATA Timely Topic: The AT Student and Negotiating Salary](#)

[NATA Salary Survey](#)

[NATA Negotiating Tip Sheet](#)

In interviews, 28 ATs across 8 practice settings in 18 states who did and did not negotiate during interviews indicated these perceptions²:

| ATs Who Negotiated | ATs Who Did Not Negotiate |
|---|--|
| Cited cost of living as a reason to negotiate and provided data demonstrating their worth and value coming into negotiations | Assumed what a fair salary would be but experienced long-term negative financial consequences from not negotiating |
| Identified that low benefits packages were the impetus to negotiate higher salary to compensate | Were unaware negotiation was possible |
| Thought the first offer was lower than expected | Thought the first offer seemed fair |
| Had previous negotiation experience | Cited a lack of negotiating experience or training |
| Noted that the position they were seeking had increased responsibilities or an administrative job title that helped them negotiate | Had concerns over upsetting a future supervisor or colleague, which discouraged their interest in negotiating. |
| Had a safety net of a current job or multiple offers that increased their comfort in negotiating without fear of losing the opportunity | Believed they lacked leverage to negotiate |
| Had a support system of family, mentors or peers who encouraged negotiation | Received advice from mentors/advisors not to negotiate |
| Had some successes but also some regrets in negotiation, for example, not negotiating for more | Expressed regret they did not attempt negotiation |

Both ATs Who Did and Did Not Negotiate

- Gathered publicly accessible salary data from local, state, or federal sources and cost of living calculations for the area
- Gathered private data like NATA salary survey, peer salaries, and value of AT services provided
- Had positive and negative reactions from potential employers during the hiring process

ATs serve as supervisors and directors in positions of authority, but few reported formal training to prepare them for management and leadership positions.³ Advanced-practice leadership development specific to health care can build skills in negotiation, finance, personnel management, and influence.³ Strengthening these skills may result in better negotiating and hiring experiences for employers and employees.

In a survey of approximately 1,100 collegiate ATs, salary was the most important factor in evaluating employment options.⁴ Over 80% of respondents listed medical benefits, retirement benefits, paid professional development opportunities, payment of professional membership, dues and state licensure, and paid vacation and sick leave as components of the compensation package on which they were evaluating employers. Over half of respondents also noted they were caring for more than 100 student-athletes and had been assigned additional responsibilities with no increase in compensation.⁴ Job seekers could consider these factors when evaluating compensation packages, and employers could address these concerns to attract and negotiate with applicants.

References

1. Cavallario JM, Campbell BL, Jones BC, Welch Bacon CE. Negotiation Practices of Athletic Trainers Employed in the Clinical Setting. *J Athl Train*. 2023 May 1;58(5):458-482. <https://doi.org/10.4085/244.22>
2. Cavallario JM, Detwiler K, Jones L, Welch Bacon CE. Athletic Trainers' Perceptions of Salary Negotiation Decision-Making During the Hiring Process. *J Athl Train*. 2023 <https://doi.org/10.4085/1062-6050-0313.23>
3. Eberman LE, Edler Nye JR, Neil ER, Games KE. Leadership and management perspectives from athletic health care executives. *Athl Train Educ J*. 2021;16(1):1-12. <https://doi.org/10.4085/1947-380X-19-078>
4. The Collegiate Athletic Trainer Labor Crisis: A Data Driven Guide Outlining the Current Collegiate Workplace Environment and Strategies to Improve Workplace Engagement. National Athletic Trainers' Association. <https://www.nata.org/professional-interests/job-settings/college-university/resources>

