Negotiating

After reviewing the full job offer, you may decide that you want to negotiate. You will need to prepare a strategy ahead of time and approach the negotiation with a positive attitude. You will also need to provide a reason why you are worthy of an increase in salary or benefits (not just because you think you deserve it). This is very similar to an interview – you must convince the employer that you possess skills or experience that they need. Follow these steps to help you with the negotiation:

- **Assess your budget**: Create a budget of your expenses, and determine if the salary will allow you to live comfortably. Estimate about 28% of your salary will go to taxes.
- **Research**: Determine typical salary ranges for someone of your educational background, experience level, and geographic location. You can find salary information on the NYS Bureau of Labor Statistics, www.salary.com, or you can ask the Rockefeller College Office of Career Development for the average salary of recent graduates.
- **Benefits**: Your salary is not the only compensation you will receive. Most companies will offer a retirement plan, health and dental insurance, and paid vacations. In addition, some organizations may also offer bonuses, increases, stock options, commissions, company cars, pensions, signing bonuses, and relocation expenses. You should factor these perks into your total offer.

After evaluating the total offer, you should then determine what factors you would like to negotiate. Typically, you will negotiate salary, and you should determine how much more you would like. The salary increase should not be much higher than what the original offer was – for example, if you were offered $40,000, then it would be inappropriate to ask for $65,000; instead, you may want to ask for $50,000. Keep in mind that the company may come back with a counter-offer, which will typically be in the middle of the two salaries. Therefore, if your budget is $45,000/year, you should ask for a higher rate, in case the organization counter-offers. After determining the salary amount you will ask for, you should start the salary negotiations by stating something like, “I’m very pleased to receive the offer, but given the responsibilities of the job and my qualifications, I wanted to determine if the salary is negotiable.” It is best to ask if the salary is negotiable first, as you do not want to offend the employer, and also, there may be set pay structures in place that don’t allow for room to negotiate. If the salary is not negotiable, you may want to consider negotiating other benefits, such as working from home/telecommuting, working a reduced schedule, or having the employer pay for transportation costs.