

EARLY CAREER JOURNEY



STS Career Development Task Force
2024 TweetChat on

Negotiating for Early Career Surgeons

Moderated by Dr. Olugbenga Okusanya

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Each quarter, the STS Career Development Communications Task Force hosts a TweetChat on topics important to early career cardiothoracic surgeons. It's an opportunity for Task Force members to connect directly with early career surgeons and share insights in real time.

What follows is a recap of the TweetChat on **Negotiating for Early Career Surgeons** moderated by Dr. Olugbenga Okusanya on February, 2024.

STS Career Development Task Force members who participated in the discussion, which **reached more than 1.7M people**, included Dr. Mara Antonoff, Dr. Robert Van Haren, and Dr. Brian Mitzman.

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 **Olugbenga Okusanya MD** @okusanyamd · Feb 21 ...
Welcome to the [#CTCareers](#) Chat, brought to you by the [@STS_CTSurgery](#) Workforce on Career Development! Tonight, we're negotiating as an early career surgeon.

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 **Olugbenga Okusanya MD** @okusanyamd · Feb 21 ...
Opinions expressed in this chat are those of its individual contributors and don't necessarily reflect the views of The Society of Thoracic Surgeons. [#CTCareers](#)

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 **Olugbenga Okusanya MD** @okusanyamd · Feb 21 ...
I'm your moderator Olugbenga Okusanya. I'm a thoracic surgeon at [@JeffersonSurgery](#) in Philadelphia, PA. I am the new Chair of the [@STS_CTSurgery](#) Early Career-Development Workforce taking over from the legend that is [@maraantonoff](#) [#CTCareers](#)

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 **Olugbenga Okusanya MD** @okusanyamd · Feb 21 ...
Tag all comments with [#CTCareers](#)
Questions:
i. When is the right time to negotiate?
ii. What resources are out there to help me negotiate?
iii. How do I prepare to negotiate?
iv. Who are the right people to engage in negotiation?

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T1: When is the right time to negotiate as an early career surgeon?

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Brian Mitzman, MD MS FACS @BrianMitzman · Feb 21

Realistically, you have one opportunity in your first year - before signing your contract. It is very difficult to negotiate for anything in the first 3 years once you've started. [#CTCareers](#)



Olugbenga Okusanya MD @okusanyamd · Feb 21

T1: There is no set time in stone. However, typically within the last six months of your current contract or when receiving a promotion in academic rank are reasonable times to start the process. [#ctcareers](#)



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Robert Van Haren, MD @rvanharen · Feb 21

T1 I think it's important to advocate for yourself from the beginning. This can include salary, support team, resources - anything you need to be successful [#CTCareers](#)



1.4K



Olugbenga Okusanya MD @okusanyamd · Feb 21

Replying to @rvanharen


Yup. The compensation that hits your bank account is not all the value and support you actually need. Administrative assistants, research coordinators/funds may be what you really actually want to ask for. [#ctcareers.](#)



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 **Mara Antonoff, MD, FACS** @maraantonoff · Feb 21 ...

Replying to @BrianMitzman

A1 Agree. Know which things are negotiable and which things aren't. The things tend to be most negotiable are those that do not result in an ongoing financial cost to an institution, things like details of the work week or a signing bonus. #CTCareers

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 **Derek Serna-Gallegos MD** @DSGMD · Feb 21 ...

Derek Serna -Gallegos cardiac surgeon university of Pittsburgh T1. Once you have recieved an offer letter or 6-9 months before current contact expires.strategize what is important to you to negotiate. You can't negotiate everything but you can negotiate anything. #ctcareers

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 **Olugbenga Okusanya MD** @okusanyamd · Feb 21 ...

T1: Oddly, when recruiting a new partner is also a good time as often the compensation models for your entire group may need to be revised. Individual negotiations can be very challenging but for a whole group may have more heft. #ctcareers

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 **Brian Mitzman, MD MS FACS** @BrianMitzman · Feb 21 ...

Replying to @okusanyamd and @rvanharen
#CTCareers



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 **Olugbenga Okusanya MD** @okusanyamd · Feb 21 ...
Replying to @maraantonoff and @BrianMitzman
T1: This is a 100% protip. Anything that can go away after one fiscal year will but much more manageable from a departmental or institutional standpoint. Your total cash compensation sets a floor that might last for decades. #ctcareers

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 **Robert Van Haren, MD** @rvanharen · Feb 21 ...
Replying to @okusanyamd
T1 - good point. Every year there is a new budget, so always a potential for a new salary #ctcareers

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 **Olugbenga Okusanya MD** @okusanyamd · Feb 21 ...
Replying to @ElliotServaisMD and @rvanharen
T1: Yup! You can't be afraid to ask. If you don't ask you certainly wont get what you need. You're totally worth advocating for! #ctcareers

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 **Elliot Servais, MD, FACS** @ElliotServaisMD · Feb 21 ...
Replying to @okusanyamd and @rvanharen
Mostly on the sideline tonight, but congrats to the new #CTCareers team.

Negotiation is a skill and like any skill it requires practice. Do not be afraid to negotiate. You already engage in multiple "micro negotiations" every single day, be intentional about it and get better

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 **Robert Van Haren, MD** @rvanharen · Feb 21 ...
Replying to @ElliotServaisMD and @okusanyamd
Yes 100 - it is a skill and like many things in surgery aren't talked about a lot or taught #ctcareers

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T2: What resources are out there to help me negotiate?

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Brian Mitzman, MD MS FACS @BrianMitzman · Feb 21

T2: Talk to your colleagues, be up to speed with MGMA and AAMC data, know your worth and what is standard for support and compensation. The recently released @STS_CTSurgery Compensation Survey is your new best friend. #CTCareers



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Robert Van Haren, MD @rvanharen · Feb 21

You have to do your homework - RVUs compared to national average, AAMC salary charts, how much has your volume grown 📈 #CTCareers



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Olugbenga Okusanya MD @okusanyamd · Feb 21

T2: The @STS_CTSurgery has done an amazing job putting together a compensation survey which I think is a great reference for comparison. Find more information: bit.ly/3HRXGXl #ctcareers



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Olugbenga Okusanya MD @okusanyamd · Feb 21

T2There are many good books on the topic but in general a data driven approach will be the most straightforward. I would suggest setting up a meeting with your practice manager to go through hard data like wrvus, cases, new patients etc. #ctcareers



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Derek Serna-Gallegos MD @DSGMD · Feb 21

T2 the white coat investor is my go to for many types of career guidance and there are several blog posts and links to references re: contract negotiation. For example whitecoatinvestor.com/contract-negot... #CTCareers



From whitecoatinvestor.com



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Gavitt Woodard @GavittWoodard · Feb 21

Replying to @okusanyamd

T2 salary is always the first thing that comes to mind here but there are other important things: OR block time, protected research time, research start up package, moving bonus where an institution may have more flexibility vs starting salary (often predetermined) #ctcareers



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Olugbenga Okusanya MD @okusanyamd · Feb 21

Replying to @GavittWoodard

Gavitt!! Fun fact, Gavitt and I were in undergrad together!

So true. There is actually a lot of meat on the bone that is not cash comp. Would add CME funds! #ctcareers





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 **Elliot Servais, MD, FACS**  @ElliotServaisMD · Feb 21

Replying to @GavittWoodard and @okusanyamd

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money matters, but the most valuable commodity is your time.
Do not neglect to negotiate for workflow support and time offsets!

[#CTCareers](#)

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 **Elliot Servais, MD, FACS**  @ElliotServaisMD · Feb 21

Replying to @ElliotServaisMD @GavittWoodard and @okusanyamd

Maybe I should say that again for the folks sitting in the back...

Your most valuable commodity is your time

[#CTCareers](#)

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Time is more valuable than money. You can get more money, but you can't get more time .

[@marketingwithyogi17](#)

T3: How do I prepare to negotiate?

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Brian Mitzman, MD MS FACS @BrianMitzman · Feb 21

T3: First, know the data & standard (see T2). Then, be upfront with your potential (or current) new boss about your needs. Worst case scenario is they say no. (If a job offer is pulled due to a reasonable negotiation request, then you dodged a bullet). #CTCareers



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Olugbenga Okusanya MD @okusanyamd · Feb 21

T3 I would recommend drawing up a list of all the unique contributions you make to the organization in the domains of administration, education, innovation and program development. #ctcareers

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Olugbenga Okusanya MD @okusanyamd · Feb 21

T3 Talk to your friends who have recently done it. Their insights will be invaluable! Do you have a mentor via the @STS_CTsurgery? They might help too! sts.org/sts-mentorship...

#ctcareers

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Brian Mitzman, MD MS FACS @BrianMitzman · Feb 21

Replying to @okusanyamd
#CTCareers



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Derek Serna-Gallegos MD @DSGMD · Feb 21

T3. Discuss with trusted mentors, honestly evaluate your strengths and use resources like STS compensation survey. The people you will be negotiating with have much more experience with it so put real effort into preparation. #ctcareers

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Robert Van Haren, MD @rvanharen · Feb 21

T3 can also talk to friend/family in other careers like finance, lawyers. These are some professional negotiators! #ctcareers

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Olugbenga Okusanya MD @okusanyamd · Feb 21

T3 Think about what your actual goals are and how you would approach it if you and your organization are not able to come to a satisfactory conclusion. Are you prepared to meaningfully start looking at other positions? #CTCareers

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T4: Who are the right people to engage in negotiation?

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Derek Serna-Gallegos MD @DSGMD · Feb 21

T4. Its likely different in different institutions but a good place to start the inquiry of who to engage would be the division or group leadership in an academic or private structure [#CTCareers](#)



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Olugbenga Okusanya MD @okusanyamd · Feb 21

T4: In academics, often your direct report, division or section chief, is not actually who are negotiating with. They are probably an ally. Often compensation is at the discretion of executive administration at the hospital or institution level. [#CTCareers](#)



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Olugbenga Okusanya MD @okusanyamd · Feb 21

Replying to @DSGMD

Yup. This is the first stop. Let your direct leadership know what you're thinking and engage them in helping you. [#ctcareers](#)



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Robert Van Haren, MD @rvanharen · Feb 21

Replying to @okusanyamd

T4 definitely agree that getting your boss to support can be a huge help [#ctcareers](#)



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Brian Mitzman, MD MS FACS @BrianMitzman · Feb 21



Replying to @okusanyamd

This is very variable. Depends if you are employed by a hospital or a medical school (which can go either way in academics now a days). We can have an entire tweet chat on funds flow and where the money comes from!

[#CTCareers](#)



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Derek Serna-Gallegos MD @DSGMD · Feb 21



Contract negotiation is incredibly important but it's important to remember it's not always about the money and negotiating a big salary doesn't necessarily mean you won. [#CTCareers](#)



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Olugbenga Okusanya MD @okusanyamd · Feb 21



Now more than ever, it is important for CT surgeons to feel and be valued. You can't be afraid to ask for you're your worth. [#CTCareers](#).



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Robert Van Haren, MD @rvanharen · Feb 21

Great discussion. Have to advocate for yourself, prioritize your needs, be prepared with data, think big picture [#CTCareers](#)



Olugbenga Okusanya MD @okusanyamd · Feb 21

Thank you all for contributing to this fantastic chat! Such great advice. Follow [@CTSurgCareers](#) and [#CTCareers](#) to stay on top of the discussion! sts.org/career-develop...



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Contract negotiation resources available from STS:

- [Early Career Journey Webinar: Contract Negotiations](#)
- [Negotiating Your Second Contract: Know Your Worth](#)
- [Pro Tips for Every CT Surgeon Searching for that First Job](#)
- [Finding A First Job: Lessons Learned](#)