Hard v. soft money: Deciding what type of faculty position is right for you

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No disclosures

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Who am I?

• ScD: Nutritional Epidemiology
  • Harvard School of Public Health
  • Focus: CVD

• Post-doctoral fellowship / instructor
  • HSPH
  • BWH/HMS
  • K99/R00 NHLBI

• Assistant Professor (2012 - present)
  • BWH/HMS
  • Focus on nutritional/lifestyle predictors of CVD/arrhythmias
  • Epidemiology
  • 100% salary through grants - “Soft money”
Hard v soft money: What do we mean?

• Hard money: tuition, endowments
• Soft money: external funding agencies (NIH, AHA, etc)
• Research: raise money for research costs
• Salary: Is your salary covered or do you need to raise money for your salary
Job types: Academia

- **Soft money positions**
  - E.g. Research institutions / Medical schools
  - 80-100% salary via grant funding (yours or your colleagues)
  - Primary responsibility is research

- **Hard money position**
  - E.g. State Universities
  - All/most salary covered by the school in return for teaching, research, and service
  - Raise money for research costs
  - 50% Research / 40% Teaching / 10% Service

- **Clinician - researchers**
## Pros & Cons of soft money positions

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Pros</th>
<th>Cons</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• 100% time for research</td>
<td>• Dependent on getting funds</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Independence</td>
<td>• 30% effort on an R01</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Choose who to work with and what to study</td>
<td>• No clinical/teaching time to cover gaps</td>
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<td>• Motivated and forces me to work on problems important enough to receive NIH funding</td>
<td>• Worry about funding/salary</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Control your career</td>
<td>• Expectation for teaching/service</td>
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Hard money

• Salary is covered
  • 9 month
  • Supplement income with grants to cover teaching or research over the summer

• Time commitment in teaching/service can be high

• What classes will you teach
  • grad seminar v undergrad survey course

• Successful getting grant: buy out teaching time
  • Departmental views about buying out time
Finding the right institution to conduct research

• Supportive of junior faculty
• Resources
  • Career development
  • Research: grant writing, collaborations
  • Financial: start up, cover gaps
• Supportive mentor(s)
  • Supportive of YOUR career trajectory
    • First authorship, PI on own grants
    • Find mentees
    • Help you get funding
  • Cover your gaps
Small fish in a big pond

Pros
• Established research institutions
• Excellent environment - + for funding
• Available data
• Established investigators
  • Good mentors
  • Collaborators
  • Funding to cover gaps

Cons
• Gain independence
• Develop niche
• Stand out from the crowd
Big fish in a small pond

**Pros**
- Expert
- Novel research to the institution
- Collaborations
- Advancement

**Cons**
- Collaborators/data elsewhere
- Hard to get funding
- Will you have the resources to build a research program
What to consider: Your personality

• How do you handle pressure?

• Are you motivated to write grants?

• Entrepreneur
  • Small business owner
  • Boss of post-docs, students and assistants

• How do you want to spend your day
  • Research and grants
  • Teach
  • Advise/mentor
  • How is success evaluated?