
Subject: Re: Job Offer: Dept. of Planetary Sciences, Univ. of Arizona
Posted by [knighton](#) on Thu, 01 Feb 1996 08:00:00 GMT
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In <4eolk1\$cad@newsreader.wustl.edu> lrn@wuphys.wustl.edu (Larry Roger Nittler) writes:

> Ken Knighton (knighton@gav.gat.com) wrote:
> :
> : You must work in the bay area. The figure you give is no doubt greater
> : than the salaries made by the Ph.D. researchers in that department.
> : These researchers are used to paying \$12,000/year to highly capable grad
> : students to do the same thing. Also, most researchers have written
> : 500-1000 line tangled webs of code that they believe are computer
> : programs, and so they view programming as something that is inherently
> : easy, requires merely above average intelligence, and is mostly just
> : grunt work like writing a paper or preparing a presentation. Realizing
> : that the researchers control the funds and that they are underpaid for
> : the amount of education and hard work that they have invested, it is
> : easy to understand that they would resent paying market wages to someone
> : doing a task that they perceive as easy.

> The whole tone of this article is out of place in this newsgroup.

I apologize to anyone who is offended by the tone of my posting. My intent was not to offend, but to reply to another posting in which the poster was aghast at the amount of money being offered to hire an experienced senior-level computer professional. My reply was based on my own experiences and observations as well as those of others.

Actually, a lack of respect for the capabilities and hard work of computer professionals is by no means limited to a few federally funded researchers. This attitude can be found throughout the business community as well. It is amazing how many people believe that because they can write a macro for a spreadsheet program, they are a qualified computer professional.

This sort of reasoning is similar to a person thinking that they are an architect/general contractor because they once remodeled a house. Unfortunately, as human beings, we all have these little misconceptions from time to time.

We computer professionals are mostly to blame for this situation. We have not set professional standards for ourselves and organized ourselves into a powerful political force like other professions have done.

> I see no reason to pit ``researchers" (by which I assume you mean
> scientists) against programmers (computer scientists or whoever makes
> a ``market wage").

My posting did not intend to pit one group against another.

- > I don't think it's scientists
- > resenting programmers as much as it is lack of funding in science
- > compared to Microsoft or wherever it is that pays ``market wages".

The original job posting was an insult to me in that it was asking for a computer professional who: 1) was senior level, 2) had 4 years of experience, 3) had in depth experience in several very marketable skills, but was offering a salary that was about \$15,000 less per year than is typically reported as being the average for a person with these qualifications. This is akin to asking someone to sell their home for fifty percent of its appraised market value. If they really want to hire an ex-graduate student and pay them an entry level wage, why don't they just say so?

Somehow, the people in charge of these big science projects find the money to budget for and pay market rate for facilities, fancy hardware, administrators, pencils, computers, and even the scientists themselves. Why then is a valuable support position that will be crucial to the success of this endeavor being offered at such a low salary? Remember, idealism aside, one tends to get what they pay for.

I personally admire the work that is being done by the scientists with whom I work and scientists in general. I feel that scientific and technological research and development is crucial to the long term success and prosperity of our nation. This does not change my opinion that all too often, critical support positions are overlooked or shortchanged in the budgeting process.

> Have a lovely day,
You too.

Ken Knighton knighton@cts.com
San Diego
