

PDAC # 1

Academic Couples - Take Me, Take My Spouse

Tuesday, September 24, 2013

Questions/Discussion items to consider:

- What are some examples of dual faculty careers that you are aware of here at Stanford?
- What do you think are the biggest challenges you and your partner will face as a dual career couple?
- What are the biggest concerns you have about raising the dual career issue during your academic job hunting?

Readings

#1. Married Profs Sound Off on Dual Academic Career Hiring

#2. Dual-Career Academic Couples – What Universities Need to Know

#1. Married Profs Sound Off on Dual Academic Career Hiring

Whether they have shared last names, work in similar fields or have completely separate academic identities, married professors are not uncommon at Stanford and add a certain “nerdy-romantic” dynamic to the Farm.

Sociology Prof. Andrew Walder and his wife, political science Prof. Jean Oi, were jointly recruited to Stanford and have collaborated on publications and other academic endeavors.

“We definitely wanted to work at the same school, not only for convenience, but because we share similar interests and it’s nice to already have a colleague you like to work with,” Walder said. “Harvard, where we worked before, was definitely more discouraging [of having married faculty].”

Current freshmen may be well acquainted with another academic power couple, Michele Elam, English professor, and Harry Elam, Jr., drama professor. Aside from moderating the Three Books talk at the beginning of the year, the Elams taught the “Beyond Survival” Introduction to the Humanities (IHUM) class together this fall quarter.

“We share similar tastes, interests and commitments and are close intellectual companions,” said Michele Elam. “We submitted a proposal together to teach an IHUM because we are both interested in diversity, art and politics. Students quickly realized that we were married, and I guess this led to some entertainment value during class when we would appear to disagree.”

The Elams also collaborate on research and are currently writing a book together. They said they are not fazed by the overlap between their professional and personal lives.

“No — I absolutely love working with my wife!” exclaimed Harry Elam. “We are excited by each others’ work, intellectual curiosity and love of teaching.”

Working closely together has only enhanced their relationship, the Elams revealed. They share an office at home and enjoy “talking about Stanford all the time.” And while occasional confusion occurs when students contact the wrong Dr. Elam, they say they are incredibly happy with their situation.

Christine Wotipka, education professor, shared similar sentiments about work with her husband.

“We’re both workaholics,” Dr. Wotipka admitted. “With such busy lives and two young kids, any chance to be together is appreciated. Even if it’s a meeting, work becomes time together.”

However, she and husband Anthony Antonio, education professor, also work in the same department, which has the potential to complicate matters.

“I feel like having an academic couple work in the same department would be less beneficial due to issues with voting,” Walder said. Michele Elam agreed, pointing out the increased opportunities for conflicts of interest as well as the constant — perhaps excessive — contact.

“Because we still work with different programs, there are no conflicts of interest,” Wotipka said. “Plus, I benefit from having a nurturing, ‘in-house’ mentor, which can be difficult for many junior faculty to find.”

The University also stresses the attention it pays to Dual-Career Academic Hiring.

“[It’s] a very serious topic,” noted Londa Schiebinger, history professor and director of the Clayman Institute for Gender Research. In addition to being the wife of Dr. Robert Proctor, a fellow history professor, Dr. Schiebinger published a detailed research paper

and policy guide regarding dual-career academic couples in 2008.

According to her research, over a third of academic professionals are married to another academic professional, and finding suitable employment for a spouse is considered a very high priority by most. Over the past decade, the joint hiring of academic couples has increased significantly, and many universities have started to realize the potential value in having a couple work together to recruit and retain top talent.

The Elams and Walder agreed that they would have had no qualms about choosing a less prestigious institution if Stanford had not hired their respective spouses. Their opinions reflect Dr. Schiebinger's research, which found that 88 percent of dual-career faculty nationwide would have refused their current position if their spouse had not also been hired.

This also supports the steps that Stanford has been taking in order to acquire top-notch faculty, which include creating a special administrative position to assist with dual hires, encouraging departments to find suitable positions for spouses and operating several databases containing information about available jobs on campus and in the area.

"It's impossible to hire some of the best without hiring a couple, and Stanford does a really good job at this," Walder said. "I can't think of any place in the world that would be more open!"

Although they met and married at Stanford after being hired separately, Antonio and Wotipka left Stanford briefly to pursue promising positions and were only convinced to return when the University was able to make an attractive offer to both parties.

"If we were to come back, it had to be as a family," Wotipka said. "Luckily, Stanford definitely has more resources and great staff to attract dual hires."

Evidence suggests that dual-hiring might boost faculty satisfaction and retention rates and improve hiring for minorities and women, without many detriments. Even when a second professor is hired because their spouse was recruited, productivity levels do not drop, and Stanford in particular is still very strict about upholding its high standards.

"People come with lives — it is definitely beneficial to the couple and to the institution if a couple can receive tenure at the same place," said Michele Elam. "Of course, both candidates still need to undergo the same rigorous vetting processes, but more priority or a second glance will be offered in a potential dual-hire. And it is important to note that this applies to same-sex couples at Stanford, as well."

Students have also noticed advantages to having professors who are content and share good camaraderie.

Taylor Nguyen '13, who was a member of the Elams' "Beyond Survival" IHUM, felt that having a married couple co-teach a class "actually added to the dynamics of the class."

“They are both brilliant professors with a lot of valuable insight,” she said. “During lectures they were very professional, but [during discussions] you could definitely tell that the seamless flow of the discussion was aided by their years together.”

Also, it was just nice to see professors working together “who had such great respect and admiration for each other,” she added.

#2. Dual-Career Academic Couples – What Universities Need to Know

In August, 2008 the Michelle R. Clayman institute for Gender Research Stanford University published an important research on dual-careers in academia. Called, Dual-Career Academic Couples – What Universities Need to Know, the executive summary appears below. The full report can be found at http://gender.stanford.edu/sites/default/files/DualCareerFinal_0.pdf and you are urged to look over the table of contents and read about any topics that are of particular interest to you. One of the authors of the report, Londa Schiebinger, will be one of our guests on September 24, 2013.

Executive Summary

Meting the needs and expectations of dual-career academic couples— while still ensuring the high quality of university faculty—is the next great challenge facing universities. Academic couples comprise 36 per- cent of the American professoriate—representing a deep pool of talent (Figure 1).¹ The proportion of academic couples (i.e., couples in which both partners are academics) at four-year institutions nationally has not changed since 1989.² What has changed is the rate at which universities are hiring couples. Academic couple hiring has increased from 3 percent in the 1970s to 13 percent since 2000.³ In a recent survey of Canadian science deans, couple hiring emerged as one of the thorniest issues confronting their faculties.⁴ Administrators in this study concur.

SEE http://gender.stanford.edu/sites/default/files/DualCareerFinal_0.pdf PAGE 1 for figure.

One department chair commented that no other aspect of his job arouses as much controversy as dual-career hiring.

Despite the sizable number of academic couples in the workforce, little institutional and national data exist describing their career trajectories.⁵ Institutional approaches to couple hiring tend to be ad hoc, often shrouded in secrecy, and inconsistent across departments. Faculty tend to be unfamiliar with key issues and solutions, and many know little about their own university’s policies and practices.

But change is afoot. Universities across the country have begun devoting attention to dual-career issues. In recent years, a number of conferences and collaborative

[Support for dual careers opens another avenue by which universities can compete](#)

for the best and brightest.

efforts have sprung up, and university hiring practices are evolving to keep pace.⁶ In the same way that U.S. universities restructured hiring practices in the 1960s and 1970s in response to increased access to higher education and the advent of equal opportunity legislation, institutions are again today undergoing major transitions in hiring practices with respect to couple hiring.

Ten percent of faculty respondents in this study are part of a couple hire, or “dual hire,” at their current institutions (this figure includes both recruitment hires and retentions).⁷ Ten percent is a small, but important, proportion of faculty hiring. Universities are in danger of losing some of their most prized candidates if suitable employment cannot be found for qualified partners. In independent internal studies analyzing factors influencing failed faculty recruitment, two prominent U.S. research universities found that partner employment ranked high (number one or two) in lists that included salary, housing costs, and some 14 to 15 other factors.⁸ Similarly, a German study found that 72 percent of German scientists abroad cited “career opportunities for the partner” as a decisive factor for scientists contemplating a return home.⁹

There are three key reasons for taking a new look at couple hiring:

Excellence. Our study suggests that couples more and more vote with their feet, leaving or not considering universities that do not support them. Support for dual careers opens another avenue by which universities can compete for the best and brightest. A professor of medicine in our survey commented that talented academics are often partnered, and “if you want the most talented, you find innovative ways of going after them.”

Diversity. Over past decades, universities have worked hard to attract women and underrepresented minorities to faculty positions and, in many instances, are meeting with success. The new generation of academics is more diverse in terms of gender and ethnicity than ever before. With greater diversity comes the need for new hiring practices. Institutions should not expect new participants to assimilate into current practices built around old academic models and demographics. This undermines innovation, opportunity, and equity. New hiring practices are needed to support a diverse professoriate—and one of these practices is couple hiring.

Quality of Life. Faculty today are a new breed determined more than ever to strike a sustainable balance between working and private lives. Couple hiring is part of a deeper institutional restructuring around quality-of-life issues. To enhance competitive excellence, universities are increasingly supporting faculty needs, such as housing, child care, schools, and elder care, in addition to partner hiring. Attending to quality-of-life issues has the potential to contribute stability to the workplace. Faculty may be more productive and more loyal if universities are committed to their success as whole persons. While often costly up front, assisting faculty address the challenges of their personal lives may help universities secure their investments in the long run.

As a relatively new hiring practice, couple hiring is fraught with complexities and pitfalls. The reality is, however, that 21st century universities increasingly hire couples. One purpose of this report is to help institutions do a better job of partner hiring. To this end, we recommend that universities develop agreed-upon and written policies or guidelines for vetting requests for partner hiring and seeing that process through the university. The ultimate goal is not necessarily to hire more couples but rather to improve the processes by which partner hiring decisions are made.

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Key Findings

Stanford University's Clayman Institute for Gender Research launched a major study of dual-career academic couples in 2006 in an effort to bring data to bear on current debates about couple hiring. As part of this study, we collected survey information from more than 9,000 full-time faculty at 13 leading U.S. research universities (for a discussion of sample and methods, see Appendix A). This survey was supplemented with the collection of hiring policies from participating universities and interviews with university administrators. Our unique data set provides fresh insights into the place of couples in the academic workforce as well as university recruiting and retention practices. Key findings are as follows:

- Partners matter: Faculty members' career decisions are strongly influenced by partner employment status. Thirty-six percent of full-time faculty at the institutions we studied have academic partners; these we call "dual-career academic couples." In addition, 36 percent of our survey respondents have employed (but non-academic) partners. This means that 72 percent of survey respondents overall have employed partners whose careers need to be taken into consideration when recruiting.
- As a strategy to enhance competitive excellence, couple hiring (or dual hiring) is on the rise. Dual hires comprise an increasing proportion of all faculty hires over the last four decades (from 3% in the 1970s to 13% in the 2000s), whereas the proportion of academic couples has remained relatively constant. Overall, 10 percent of faculty enter the academy through dual hires. Ninety-three percent of dual hires work at the same institution.
- Couple hiring can help build a more diverse, equitable, and competitive workforce, especially with regard to gender.

- Women are more likely than men to have academic partners (40% of female faculty in our sample versus 34% of male faculty). In fact, rates of dual hiring are higher among women respondents than among men respondents (13% versus 7%). This means that couple hiring becomes a particularly relevant strategy for the recruitment and retention of female faculty.

- Women in academic couples report that their partner's employment status and opportunities are important to their own career decisions. Not only do women more often than men perceive a loss in professional mobility as a result of their academic

partnerships (54% for women versus 41% for men), but they actively refuse job offers if their partner cannot find a satisfactory position. In our study, the number-one reason women refused an outside offer was because their academic partners were not offered appropriate employment at the new location. These findings have significant implications for institutions seeking to recruit top women.

– Couple hiring is important to attract more female faculty to fields where women are underrepresented, such as the natural sciences and engineering. Academics practice “disciplinary endogamy”; that is to say, they tend to couple in similar fields of study and are often found in the very same department. Endogamy rates are high in the natural sciences, particularly among women. Fully 83 percent of women scientists in academic couples are partnered with another scientist, compared with 54 percent of men scientists.

– Historically, men more than women have used their market power to bargain for positions for their partners. Men comprise the majority (58%) of “first hires” (or the first partner hired in a couple recruitment) who responded to our survey. They make up only 26 percent of second hires (meaning that women are 74% of second hires). However, gender ratios of first and second hires may be changing with time, which suggests that there is an increasingly equitable share of bargaining power among women and men.

– An important finding is that recruiting women as first hires breaks the stereotype of senior academics seeking to negotiate jobs for junior partners. Remarkably, more than half (53%) of female first hires who are full professors are partnered with male academics of equal rank. By contrast, only 19 percent of male first hires who are full professors seek positions for women who are their equals in academic rank. Administrators need to consider carefully how dual-hire policies might be refined to help their institutions achieve greater gender equality.

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- Couple hiring may help to advance not only gender equity but also racial/ ethnic diversity, which enhances competitive excellence. Women and men from all backgrounds have academic partners; in fact, among underrepresented minority respondents to our survey, the gender difference in rate of academic coupling disappears (30% of minority women and 32% of minority men are partnered with another academic). And although the rate of academic coupling among underrepresented minority faculty is generally lower than that among faculty overall (31% versus 36%, respectively), the rate of dual hiring is the same (10% of all underrepresented minority respondents have been part of a dual hire at their current institutions). Dual hiring, in other words, may support institutional efforts to compete for the brightest talent across the widest spectrum.

- Universities are in danger of losing prized candidates if suitable employment cannot be found for a partner. When couples have choices, they prefer to live together and take jobs where each partner can flourish professionally. A full 88 percent of faculty who successfully negotiated a dual hire at their current institution indicated that the first hire would have refused the position had her or his partner not found appropriate

employment. Slightly more than 20 percent also report that they or their partner have taken a job at a less prestigious institution to improve the couple's overall employment situation.

- Universities need to understand how policies and practices affect faculty attitudes toward dual hires on their campuses. Most survey respondents marked “I don't know” in response to the question: Does your current institution have a written hiring and retention policy in place for dual-career academic couples? However, the one institution in our study with the highest rate of faculty awareness also enjoys the highest rate of perceived institutional and departmental support for accommodating academic couples. We also find that schools with written policies have higher rates of perceived support for academic couples than do schools without written policies. Thus, awareness and clarity are critical to creating a positive climate overall.
- One problem with couple hiring is that a stigma of “less good” often attaches to a second hire. Study data suggest, however, that second hires, when full-time faculty members, are not less productive than are their disciplinary peers.

Policy Recommendations

U.S. universities are in the midst of a major transition in hiring practices. Couples comprise a significant proportion of the academic workforce, and couple hiring, when done properly, can support important institutional objectives. Based on our findings, we offer the following recommendations:

Develop a dual-career academic couple hiring protocol. Universities have much to gain by developing agreed-upon, written protocols or guidelines for the processes whereby requests for partner hires flow efficiently through the institution. Each institution needs to develop policies that are right for it. Well-developed protocols increase the transparency and fairness as well as the speed with which departments can vet potential candidates. Written protocols may also help cultivate departmental reciprocity in partner hiring.

Think of the university as an intellectual and corporate whole. Finding an appropriate fit for a qualified partner is one of the most difficult aspects of dual hiring and requires cooperation among departments across the university. Couple hiring may be an instance where the whole becomes more than the sum of its parts, and faculty should be encouraged to think of the university not as a set of autonomous departments but as an intellectual and corporate whole.

Use dual hiring to increase gender equality. Our data and practices at one of our participating universities suggest that recruiting women and underrepresented minorities as first (rather than second) hires may help universities address both diversity and equity issues. Women more than men tend to request positions for partners of equal academic rank.

Budget funds for dual hiring. Couple hiring is now part of the cost of doing business.

Universities need to budget funds for partner hiring to increase the speed and agility with which they can place qualified partners.

Communicate with faculty. A general awareness of institutional goals and priorities as well as policies and practices surrounding couple hiring can lead to greater cooperation across the university as individual cases arise. The process of developing or refining protocols provides an excellent opportunity to saturate the scholarly community with information about partner hiring and to build greater consensus.

Make the partner issue easier to raise. Job candidates currently have much to lose by discussing the employment needs of a partner too soon (fearing that preference may consciously or unconsciously be given unencumbered candidates). At the same time, universities have much to lose by not finding out about partners early enough to act. Universities that are dual-career couple friendly should signal this in job announcements, recruitment materials, and university websites.

Interview potential partner hires. Departments asked to consider hiring a partner must do so carefully. Partners should go through a department's full review process. This will help build consensus within the department and, should the candidate be successful, contribute to a warm welcome for the new colleague.

Negotiate partner positions fully up front. Among dual-hired faculty who were dissatisfied with at least one aspect of the process, 27 percent thought that they did not receive what was promised during negotiations. Universities need to step up to dual hiring and make decisions about where and how partners will—or will not—fit into a particular institution at the time of hire. All promises need to be made in writing before either partner signs a contract.

Collaborate with neighboring institutions. The many Higher Education Recruitment Consortia (HERCs) springing up around the country provide new opportunities for institutions to coordinate job opportunities. It is important to publicize local HERCs effectively on campus so that dual-career couples, faculty, department chairs, and deans take advantage of these networks.

Develop dual-career programs. Universities should hire dedicated staff or outside consultants to assist faculty relocate. For partners of new or current faculty seeking academic positions, programs should appoint a senior faculty member to serve in an official capacity as special assistant, vice provost, or the like. This administrator will work with departments to place partners. For non-academic partners seeking employment, program staff or consultants should be available to assist in the on- or off-campus job search. Program staff may help all faculty with quality-of-life issues, such as locating good-quality housing, daycare, elder care, and schools in the area.

Evaluate dual-career programs. Universities need to collect data and evaluate their programs in order to (1) assist universities in overall strategic planning and (2) ensure equitable treatment of faculty partners—both academic and non-academic.

The Clayman Institute is pleased to present our new research study on dual-careers in academia. Dual-career issues are increasingly important in higher education today. Over 70 percent of faculty are in dual-career relationships; more than a third are partnered with another academic. This trend is particularly strong among women scientists and assistant professors. As the number of women receiving Ph.D.s continues to rise, U.S. universities will see an increasing number of high quality candidates for faculty positions partnered with another academic. This presents universities with a challenge, but also a great opportunity to diversify their faculty.

Based on the partnering status of full-time tenured and tenure-track faculty in thirteen top U.S. research universities, *Dual-Career Academic Couples* explores the impact of dual-career partnering on hiring, retention, professional attitudes, and work culture in the U.S. university sector. It also makes recommendations for improving the way universities work with dual-career candidates and strengthen overall communication with their faculty on hiring and retention issues.

Please click on the link below to download PDF files of the full report (including executive summary). There is no charge for this report.

Full Report: [Dual-Career Academic Couples: What Universities Need to Know](#) (August 2008)