

Dual Careers and Faculty Worklife Balance
Preparing Future Faculty Conference
Center for Research on Learning and Teaching
October 5, 2011

Tips for the Dual Career Job Search

Landing the right academic appointment is a challenging process, and conducting that search as a couple adds another layer of complexity. However, you are not alone! The proportion of faculty hires involving couples continues to grow and, as a result, institutions across the country are giving dual career issues more attention. Even before you begin the job search, though, it is vitally important to sit down as a couple and talk about your joint visions of your careers. The relative rigidity of the junior faculty track means it is difficult to make adjustments after the fact, if one of you is unhappy with decisions that have been made. One of our handouts, “*Dual Career Couples and the Job Search*,” addresses this issue in detail, and serves as an excellent discussion guide.

Dual Career Website Resources

Regional HERC (Higher Education Recruitment Consortium) websites

- Faculty, staff, and administrative positions available at colleges and universities by region (e.g. Greater Chicago, Southern California, New England)
<http://www.hercjobs.org> — National HERC site that lists 11 regional HERCs

Inside Higher Ed

- Job posting section offers tool for finding locations with openings in each person’s field
<http://www.insidehighered.com/career/seekers>

Discovering Whether an Institution offers Dual Career Assistance: Where to Look

Some institutions make their dual career services very visible, others don’t publicize them at all, and others do not yet offer services. The advertisement for the position is a good place to start: for example, as a matter of College policy LSA uses the phrase, “The University is supportive of the needs of dual career couples,” in its ads for tenure track positions. Review all materials sent to you by the institution for information about available dual career services. If you know someone at the institution, ask that person what s/he knows about the availability of dual career assistance. Make use of the institutional web site to research the existence of dual career services.

Helpful keywords in the search for programs and/or services:

- Dual career, dual-career
- Academic couple
- Partner hire, partner assistance
- Dual career program, dual career services
- Academic job search assistance
- Relocation assistance

Dual career resources are housed in a variety of locations, depending upon the institution:

- Human Resources
- Academic Affairs
- Faculty recruitment home (Provost’s Office or similar academic unit)
- Faculty diversification or development program (e.g., ADVANCE, the NSF-funded program to increase the participation and advancement of women in academic science and engineering careers)

Make Your Needs Known

Due to hiring laws, a search committee cannot ask during the interview process whether opportunities for a partner will be part of the decision-making process; institutions are only able to make you aware of the availability of dual career services. If such assistance will be crucial to your decision to accept an eventual offer, you must make the department aware of your need.

- Look and listen for references to dual career services in materials provided and in discussions about campus resources. For example, the LSA web site and our dual career brochure advise candidates that “Prospective faculty who have been invited to campus for an interview are encouraged to contact the dual career office for information about available services. Those who have been offered a position should inform the unit Chair/Director of their interest in accessing LSA’s dual career services.”
- If you are unable to surface any reference to dual career services, best strategy would be to wait until you are a finalist before asking about services, or at least until it’s very clear that there is high interest in your candidacy

Services and Resources You Can Expect

Dual career services are not found at every institution, but a growing number provide some level of service. When there is a dual career program on a campus, services typically available include:

- Provide information about local job market
- Provide local job search resources
- Experienced input regarding job search strategy and interview preparation
- Assistance with local networking in partner’s area of expertise
- Recommendations regarding related services and resources

Dual career programs rarely provide:

- Job creation
- Job placement
- Preferential treatment in interview pool

Each dual career case is unique, and its resolution is dependent upon the type of position the partner is seeking and the extent of his or her qualifications. The success of any job search—and the length of time involved—depends on factors such as the economy, the “fit” between the partner’s credentials and current job openings, and the initiative taken by the partner. Searches are most successful when the partner takes the lead.