



## **Academy Coaching**

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### **Navigating the Dual Career Hiring Path**

Dual career hiring in the Academy is a sensitive and often “taboo” topic because it challenges cherished ideals of academic integrity including open competition, fairness, and merit. However, the reality is that universities increasingly hire couples. In fact, if they want to remain competitive and not only recruit but also retain the best caliber of faculty and academic administrators they need to be proactive and strategic in their dual career efforts. Given that 72 percent of full-time faculty are in dual-career partnerships (where partners are either academics or employed elsewhere in the workforce) with 36 percent of faculty part of an academic couple a number of universities now wisely market themselves as institutions committed in working collaboratively with departments to meet the needs of dual-career couples<sup>1</sup>. The Higher Education Dual Career Network indicates that forty universities across the country now offer dual career hiring assistance at varying levels.

Hiring dual-career academic couples is one of the biggest challenges facing higher education, said Londa Schiebinger, a history of science professor and director of the Clayman Institute. It is not only a tool to recruit top academic talent, it is also a way to attract and retain top women and minority faculty members, she said.

According to the recently released report "Dual-Career Academic Couples: What Universities Need to Know," by Stanford University's Clayman Institute for Gender Research (2008)

<http://www.stanford.edu/group/gender/ResearchPrograms/DualCareer/index.html>

“Climbing the academic ladder with respect to rank, salary, professional opportunities, and prestige often drives faculty to seek outside offers. When asked, “Have you applied for another position within the past five years?” 37 percent of all faculty said yes. Surprisingly, academic couples (42%) along with faculty who are single are the groups most likely to pursue outside offers. Why is this so? First and foremost, academic couples seek to have both partners settled in one location where each can thrive professionally. A full 88 percent of faculty who successfully negotiated a (sequential) dual hire at their current institution indicated that the first hire would have refused the position if her or his partner had not found appropriate employment”.

A current case example can be found in the Chronicle of Higher Education “Lessons of a Dual Hire” August 19, 2009 <http://chronicle.com/section/Home/5/> where Rebecca Manderlay (pseudonym of a Ph.D. in geological sciences) details the long journey and tough choices she and her husband had to make during their academic dual career hiring odyssey.

While it is important to highlight “what institutions should know” there is also a need to emphasize “what dual career couples should know”. Based on my experiences as the past Director of the Academic Dual Career Recruitment Program for the College of Literature, Science & the Arts at the University of

Michigan as well as over a dozen interviews this summer with academic couples ranging from Assistant Professors to Deans on “How to best navigate the dual career hiring process; Lessons Learned” here is some food for thought:

- **Before you go on the market, decide as a couple who will compromise when in order to find the better of two possible positions.** This entails some honest soul searching and tough questions of one another. Ask yourself if you are in a relationship that is whole heartedly committed to your career and vice - versa. According to one full professor I spoke with on the East Coast, “you must both be prepared to compromise at different points and times throughout your career if you want to stay together”. Some questions she recommended couples work through, well in advance of a search include asking;
  - Are we willing to live apart? If so, for how long? Do we plan to start a family at some point? If we start a family, do the same rules apply?
  - Whose career takes priority when? Why?
  - Who has a better chance of securing a tenure track appointment in a national search?
  - How long of a commute should each partner make?
  - Create a short list of institutions each of you feels would meet the academic and intellectual rigor you are seeking. Where is there overlap? Are there other institutions nearby? Is it a geographical area that both of you would enjoy?
  
- **If you are part of a dual career couple on the job market, your chances are best if you are both strong candidates.** It may be hard to be objective about your partner’s level of productivity and potential added value to a given department/institution. However, it is not hard for the potential hiring department. Be realistic about the chances of either of you getting a permanent job - ask senior colleagues for advice.
  
- **Live within your means, so you can afford to walk away from offers that don’t meet your standards/goals.** This is perhaps one of the best pieces of advice that I recently heard when interviewing a dean at a large Research 1 institution. Don’t over purchase a home or “reward yourself” with expenses that tie you to a given position or prevent you from being able to afford, literally afford, to say no to subpar offers. The less financial strain you have the more empowered you are as a couple.
  
- **Not all appointments are created equal.** Accepting a multiyear post doc over a one year adjunct position with the promise of “exploring tenure track options down the road” may be a safer bet. For example, in Rebecca Manderlay’s article she notes “Two years ago, we turned down tenure-for-him, adjunct-for-me positions. I caught a lot of flak for that, but we were fortunate in that both of us had stable, multiyear post docs to fall back on”. Many couples have found that fellowships are the answer as they can often be taken from one institution to another. They also carry prestige and add enormously to your chances of getting a permanent job.
  
- **Negotiate wisely, for in the end you usually get exactly what you bargained for.** Once you've accepted an offer that features only one tenure-track job and a second temporary position, much of your bargaining power is gone until you 1) publish your book and become nationally sought after, 2) have compelling outside offers with joint tenure track commitments in writing, 3) secure tenure.
  
- **Find a mentor who understands your commitment to your partner and your career.** Observe academic dual-career couples whose partners have both found fulfilling careers. Ask them how they nurtured their relationships while managing career transitions. Advice from a seasoned mentor is priceless and can even help partners avoid some pitfalls.

A strategic approach to dual career hiring needs begin at home and in the end you will find your future.

## Dual Career Job Search: Mastering the Academic Hiring Process

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<sup>i i</sup> *The American College Teacher*, and Lindholm et al., *The American College Teacher*. Further, Astin and Milem found 35 percent men and 40 percent women in academic partnerships in 1997 (“The Status of Academic Couples in U.S. Institutions,” 131).

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