Guidelines to Department Chairs and Search Committees
for Engaging in Faculty Dual Career Hiring

Office of the Executive Vice President and Provost in collaboration with
University Human Resources:
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Introduction: Understanding the Challenge and
Promise of Dual Career Couples

Recruiting a stellar faculty is one of the biggest challenges we face as a university in the current competitive environment. According to Stanford University’s Clayman Institute, 36% of academics have an academic partner and another 36% have an employed, non-academic partner.1 Spouses of faculty members will want to advance in their own careers even if they relocate to accommodate a spouse’s career. Identifying and accommodating dual career spouses is a critical piece of academic recruiting.

Dual career hiring is especially important if we are to recruit and retain women, who have been shown to be more likely than men to have an academic spouse. In the Clayman study, the number-one reason women refused an outside offer was because their academic spouses were not offered appropriate employment at the new location.

Although it requires work to successfully hire dual career couples, the attention paid during the hiring process often yields great dividends down the road. When we assist accompanying spouses in finding opportunities for autonomy and growth in their careers, we increase the couple’s chances of their both fully integrating into the greater Charlottesville community, putting down roots, and staying here for the long-term.

To help search committee chairs, department chairs, associate deans and deans in making the most of the opportunity to hire dual career couples, we have compiled the following collection of best practices.

Step One: Identifying Dual-Career Candidates

Dual-career candidates do not show up with “dual career” stamped on their foreheads. In fact, many dual-career couples are hesitant to “come out” as dual career for fear that they will be discriminated against. Yet from the University’s perspective, finding out about a dual career spouse early creates the greatest likelihood that we will be able to accommodate the spouse. Here are some guidelines for how to manage this conundrum:

- **Do not** ask a candidate: “are you married,” “do you have a spouse,” or “what does your spouse do?” This may put them on their guard and could lead to a hiring discrimination claim later on if they are not given an interview or offer.

- **Do** give every candidate, whether or not you suspect they have a spouse, information about U.Va.’s commitment to dual career hiring early in the process. This information could be in the form of a handout mailed to candidates or given to them at hiring conferences, making reference in the job specification to our dual career website, or verbally during the initial interview. Letting candidates know that U.Va. can assist in helping dual career couples will encourage couples to begin exploring their options early on.

- **Do not** penalize a candidate for being part of a dual-career couple once you have information about his or her personal situation. This is unlawful discrimination based on marital status. Keep in mind as well that some dual-career couples will try to negotiate for the best possible outcome (e.g., two tenure-track positions at the same university), but might also be willing to settle for much less. Some couples may be willing to commute; some may be willing for one member of the couple to take an academic non-tenure track, non-academic, or administrative position. You should never assume that a faculty member will not accept a position without an accommodation for their spouse unless you hear it unequivocally from them.

- **Avoid** the term “trailing spouse.” Many people view it as pejorative, and in any case, it is often a misnomer. Often the members of a couple will be on the market simultaneously, with one spouse getting a “first offer” at one school and the other getting a “first offer” at a different one. The order in which we discover the spouses may not be relevant to their desirability as candidates. Similarly, the phrase “two body problem” implies that dual career couples are a problem, rather than an opportunity. Instead, refer to these couples as “dual career” couples and the spouse of a previously-identified candidate as an “accompanying spouse.”
Step Two: Exploring the Options

Once a candidate has disclosed that he or she has a spouse who will be seeking employment, the next step is to have a conversation, either in person or by phone, with the spouse to get to know him or her and determine what possible trajectories would make sense. Ask for the spouse’s CV or resume, and schedule a time to talk with them. It is usually better to talk directly with the spouse rather than the candidate, as information can get lost in translation. A conversation with both spouses together can also work well. **Usually, the best person to begin this process is the search chair, the department chair, or the school HR representative**, depending on the culture and practice of the department or school. During this conversation, your aim should be to develop trust and rapport, listen to the spouse’s career goals and needs, set realistic expectations, and figure out what avenues you’d like to pursue further. You can also encourage the candidate to search available positions in Jobs@UVA, while explaining to them that other positions are likely to be posted over time. [jobs.virginia.edu](http://jobs.virginia.edu).

**Academic Spouses**

If it is clear from your initial dialogue that the spouse would prefer an academic position, you’ll need to identify the possible schools or departments where there could be a “fit.” In particular:

- Ask about their job experience and their preferences for types of positions (tenure- or non-tenure track; teaching, research or service-focused positions; administrative or leadership positions).

- Think broadly about what options might be available. Providing a list of all degree programs at U.Va: [http://www.virginia.edu/Virginia/degrees](http://www.virginia.edu/Virginia/degrees) can spur a conversation about what schools or departments might provide a good fit.

Next, you will need to begin contacting other departments, schools within U.Va., or area universities to find out what the possible options are. First, if you haven’t already, contact your Associate Dean or Dean to make sure that they understand the spouse’s situation. Then, the chair, AD, or Dean should begin reaching out to other schools or departments to explore options. When you email another school or department, copy your AD, Dean, the school-level HR professional, and the Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs ([kla6t@virginia.edu](mailto:kla6t@virginia.edu)). Transparency encourages cooperation among all parties. If you haven’t heard back within a week, try again. Communicating early is crucial to sealing the deal.

Sometimes you will get lucky, and there will be a search open in the spouse’s field. Often, there will not be an open position, but you may discover that a school or department would be interested in hiring someone in that field; perhaps they were planning to do a search sometime in the next few years, and would be open to doing one now or making a spousal hire early.
If there is indeed an appropriate position open, call the spouse and encourage him or her to apply for it. If there is not, you will need to facilitate an informational interview between the spouse and the appropriate Dean or Chair or begin working yourself with the School to craft a potential position.

Normally, we expect schools to finance their own dual career hires. In other words, the schools or departments need to work together to figure out how to fund the hire. Sometimes that may mean a school will take on financial responsibility for hiring a spouse for a position they had not planned to create. Sometimes, this may mean that one school will provide funds for a hire in another.

In some circumstances, the Provost’s Office may also provide temporary bridge funding for up to three years. We have limited funds for this purpose, and so we make the decision to provide funding based on several factors, including: 1) whether the hire contributes to the University’s strategic goals, including diversity or area-specific hiring; 2) whether the school that wants us to hire their candidate’s spouse has been cooperative in facilitating dual-career hires for other schools in the past; and 3) whether the schools can demonstrate that the school hiring the accompanying spouse is making a long-term commitment to that spouse’s career success, one that will outlive the Provost’s Office funds. The Provost’s Office will sometimes fund positions that are expressly short-term, but everyone, including the new employee, needs to fully understand the terms of the position and the likelihood of renewal. Funding dual-career hires is not helpful in the long term if the accompanying spouse finds him or herself abandoned by the hiring department after the bridge funding runs out.

Non-Academic Spouses

If the accompanying spouse is not an academic, or if he or she is an academic who is also open to non-academic positions, you should contact University Human Resources as an additional resource, if needed. They can work with the accompanying spouse to identify positions within the University that might be appropriate. On the Dual Career Program website, http://hr.virginia.edu/other-hr-services/hr-consulting-services/employment/office-of-dual-career-recruitment/, you will find a link to a questionnaire that the accompanying spouse should complete. This questionnaire is the first step towards having a conversation with a representative from the HR Office. As a member of the Mid-Atlantic Higher Education Recruitment Consortium (HERC), spouses can also search available positions at other Virginia, D.C., and Maryland colleges and universities. The HR representative can also provide information about Charlottesville businesses.

With non-academic spouses, informational interviews and networking can be key to finding a desirable position or assuring an accompanying spouse that there is likely to be a position available in the future in Charlottesville. Find out as much as you can about the spouse’s desired position, and reach out to people in your own network. Think carefully about whom your personal network includes and be creative—we are a
relatively small community, so if you have friends, a spouse, colleagues or acquaintances in the accompanying spouse’s field, they are very likely to have contacts that could be useful. Making sure that multiple people are engaged—HR, the Provost’s Office, the department chair, the AD, and Dean of the given school, members of the search committee, etc.—can vastly increase the available network and make it more likely that the spouse will meet the right people for informational interviews. These interviews can be very helpful in finding long-term positions, even when no position currently exists.

Communication is key between all entities. When you email another school or department, cc your Associate Dean, Dean, the school-level HR professional, and the UHR Dual Career Program (dualcareers@virginia.edu) so overlap of services does not occur.

**Step Three: Spousal exemption to normal recruitment and hiring process**

Sometimes when recruiting or retaining a faculty member, a position may be specially created for the faculty member’s spouse or the spouse may be placed into a vacant position without a formal search being conducted. When this occurs, you need to make sure that you obtain a spousal exemption to justify the deviation from the normal recruitment and hiring process. The HR professional or hiring official from the unit hiring the spouse should submit a request by email to Laura Hawthorne, Special Assistant to the Provost, at lfh4c@virginia.edu. In cases where the spouse’s position is a non-academic one, the official should also direct the request to Susan Carkeek, Director of Human Resources, sc9ym@Virginia.edu, as it will require her approval as well.

The request for an exemption should briefly describe the position offered to the spouse and the spouse’s qualifications for the position. Please include his or her resume or CV as an attachment. The request should also describe the faculty member the spousal hire is intended to help recruit or retain. Once the Provost’s Office (and, in applicable cases, HR) approves the request, it will be forwarded to EOP for approval and processing.

Please note that spousal exemptions are a tool for the recruiting and retention of excellent faculty, not an automatic benefit faculty members receive when their spouses want to apply for jobs at U.Va.

**Step Four: Continuous Recruiting**

Dual career hires require energy and long-term commitment. One conversation is not usually going to result in a successful hire. There is not usually a job tailor-made for the accompanying spouse. But with some effort and ingenuity, there is often a solution. Regardless of whether or not you are able to accommodate an accompanying spouse in the short-term, retaining faculty members requires ongoing efforts to also retain their spouses. Your job is not complete when the hire is made. You should
continue to check in with the faculty member to find out how his or her spouse is adapting and continue to use your own networks and those of the University to assist the spouse.

Keep in mind throughout this process that different schools handle dual career hires differently. In some, the department chair takes on the lion’s share of the work; in others it might be the school-based HR professional, the Associate Dean, or the Dean. You may need to include several parties in emails or attempt to contact many different people. It is always a good idea to keep everyone in the loop, regardless of who appears to be spearheading a particular case. If at any point you get “stuck” – e.g., school leadership won’t call you back, you agree in principle on a hire but can’t figure out how to finance it—contact the Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs, who can assist in moving forward. Creativity and persistence are crucial.

Also, remember that in some cases there simply is no solution that will satisfy a couple. This often happens if the accompanying spouse is very established in his or her career and invested in a particular line of work, and that work is so specialized that there is no comparable position available in Charlottesville. It can also happen when the accompanying spouse works in an academic field in which U.Va. is especially strong; these jobs are more competitive than others, and a particular school or department may understandably not be willing to compromise its strength to make a particular hire, especially on the tenure-track. It is important to be realistic and upfront with the candidates at the beginning. However, in many instances, the obstacles can be overcome, either immediately or over time. Once they have been overcome, dual career hires are often the most loyal and committed to the University and very likely to have long and successful careers at U.Va.