

Key Findings

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.

Dual-Hiring is on the Rise

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.

Diversity

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.



Dual-Hiring and Women

Couple hiring can help build a more diverse, equitable, and competitive workforce, especially with regard to gender.



Women are More Likely Dual-Career Academics

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 Value Their Partner's Career

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 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.

Dual Hiring is Key in Natural Sciences and Engineering

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.

Men Have Been Doing the Bargaining

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.

Senior Women Negotiate for Senior Partners

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.

Hiring Policies Matter



Many Dual-Career Academics Won't Accept an Offer without Their Partner

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.

Awareness of Dual-Career Policies and Perceived Satisfaction

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.

Second Hires are Productive

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.



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