

# Susan and Thomas

## A “SOLO” HIRE



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Associate Professor of  
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Senior Software Engineer,  
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**T**homas Narten and Susan Rodger met during their graduate school years at Purdue University. Even before they finished their degrees in computer science, they planned to go on the job market together in the hopes of finding positions at the same school or nearby universities. Thomas (who was one year ahead of Susan in their doctoral program) accepted a postdoctoral fellowship at Purdue to give Susan time to complete her Ph.D. Once both degrees were in hand, they applied for faculty positions across the country and found tenure-track offers in computer science at two universities within commuting distance in Upstate New York—Susan at

Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute and Thomas at the State University of New York at Albany.

Although the couple was not looking to move, Susan learned of a position at Duke University that was a perfect fit for her. Both agreed that this new position, which focused on computer science education, was an excellent career move for Susan, who was already developing software experimenting with theoretical concepts. Thomas also felt ready to look for a new job and investigated opportunities near Duke, but outside academia. The faculty position at Duke had another alluring feature: Susan and Thomas were planning to start a family, and Duke would bring them closer to their own extended families.

To help the couple relocate, Duke offered Thomas a visiting professor position for one semester while he looked for work in the area. This was an ideal scenario for Thomas, who was interested in working for IBM but had to wait for the company to lift a hiring freeze. After Susan and Thomas settled into their first semester at Duke, IBM made Thomas an attractive offer.

Now an associate professor at Duke, Susan is a faculty member whom we define as a “solo hire”; that is to say, Susan and Thomas are an academic couple where one partner is not currently employed in an academic position. Theirs is a vibrant, dual-career household with two children. Although Thomas works on “issues that he loves” at IBM, his passion for teaching remains, and “down the road” he may once again search for a faculty position.