

Who Brokers the Deal?

Once a partner is identified, who oversees university efforts to find a potential fit for the candidate?

The Department Chair

The first one on the scene is usually the department chair of the first hire. The department chair renders an initial judgment concerning the partner and initiates appropriate action. In all cases, the crucial step is finding an appropriate academic fit for the partner. Universities have settled into essentially two different protocols for vetting partner hires.

First, the key interactions follow the usual chain-of-command at a particular university with information and support flowing up or down from departments, through the dean's office, and on to the provost's office. There are two variations in this scenario.:

Variation 1: The department chair takes the lead

The department chair takes the lead, determining the type of position the partner seeks, reviewing the partner's qualifications, and contacting the chair of a second department (although partners may also seek appointments within the same department). If the second chair decides to move forward to ask his or her department to consider the appointment, the two chairs approach the dean (if in the same school or college) or provost (if in different schools or colleges) for approval of a potential faculty line or funding. If both appointments are within the same college, the issue may be handled at that level. If funding outside a college or school is required, application may be made to the provost's office.

Variation 2: The Dean, Associate Dean or Vice Provost takes the lead

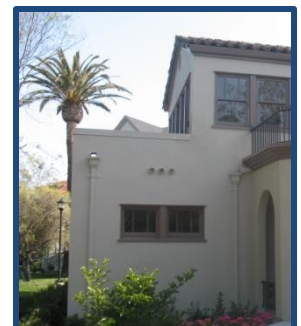
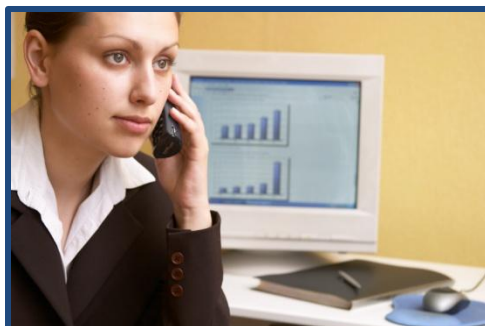
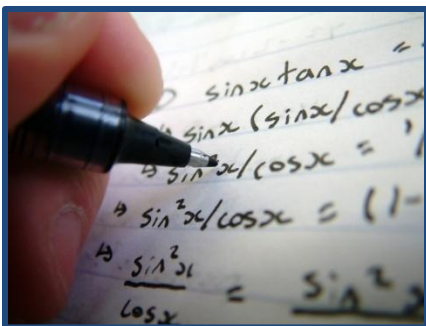
In a slightly different version of this scenario, the department chair hands off to a dean, associate dean, or even a vice provost for faculty affairs who takes on the heavy responsibility of finding an appropriate home for the partner.

Department Chairs

In both of these scenarios, department chairs are key to initiating the process, whether they coordinate with another chair or dean, or launch the request up the chain-of-command. Faculty in our study pointed out that, in the absence of a clear university process for partner hiring, “the chair sets the tone and agenda for dual-career hiring.”

Even where policies or protocols are in place, department chairs or heads often make or break deals. One engineer commented that how policies are implemented depends on “the talent of the relevant department chairs and deans.” This is a large responsibility.

Department chairs are generally members of faculty who step up to lead the department for a short three- or five-year term. Many have little experience with dual hiring, and some may be unaware of university policies or practices. Moreover, as active scholars themselves, department chairs may not have time to see this complex process through, or they may not think that such issues lie within their purview. Chairs may also lack expertise in a partner’s field and feel uncertain about the quality of the candidate he or she is putting forward for consideration. One chair noted that “no other aspect of my job arouses as much controversy as dual-career hiring.”



Special Assistant

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A second, quite distinct protocol is currently used in several private universities but could be implemented in public institutions as well (in the university as a whole if the institution is not too large; in a college or school when size is an issue). In this process, department chairs hand off not to another chair or dean but to a centralized “special assistant” to the provost who serves as a “broker” universitywide— across all schools and colleges—to find the right departmental fit for a partner and identify the necessary resources. A central broker, a senior administrator with release time to specialize in this area, can save department chairs (whose learning curve may be steep) considerable time by stepping in when called upon. To be effective, this special assistant needs to be a distinguished member of the faculty whose job it is to see the process through to the end. By providing department chairs with assistance in this matter (and not relying on the talents or proclivities of particular chairs) the university helps build uniformity, fairness, and reciprocity into dual-hiring practices.

Such central brokers might devote from one-quarter to half time to overseeing dual-career issues. This special assistant must know faculty, departments, and schools—their priorities and needs—across the university as a whole. One vice provost speculated that 80 percent of this job may be devoted to universitywide communication and coordination and only about 20 percent to resource allocation. Unfortunately, no written guidelines are currently available for this process.

Summary

In all cases—no matter what institutional pathway is devised (and universities often mix and match methods to find a solution)—speed is of the essence. The initial step of finding the right department to consider a partner is crucial. The chair of the department receiving a potential second hire can usually provide an initial “read” on the situation. If the answer is a clear “no,” a fast “no” is better than a slow “no.” If the answer is “maybe,” the process must be conducted with all deliberate speed to reach a final agreement in time to allow a successful recruitment of the initial candidate. Especially when considering junior hires, universities need to be careful not to lose their second candidate.



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