

Welcome to Column 10 of Hey Jane! This is a project of the SWS Career Development Committee. Questions and answers are generated by the committee and SWS members. Answers are compiled from several anonymous sources. All columns are archived on our committee's page on the SWS website <http://newmedia.colorado.edu/~socwomen/about/career.html>

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HEY JANE!

"I am part of an academic couple, what advice can you give me and my partner on searching for jobs and negotiating a dual hire?"

JANE SAYS:

This is a very difficult question to answer, in part because there are so many different scenarios, making it hard to offer generalized advice. There may be different things to consider if you are looking for jobs in the same department or different departments; if you are aiming for research or teaching positions; if you are a same-sex or heterosexual couple; if you are married or not; if you are in the same or different phases of your career – and the list goes on. With that said, I will offer some suggestions for things you might consider before, during and after a job search, but first a few words of advice that apply to all stages of the process.

- Communication with your partner is **VERY** important. Together you need to decide what is most important to you – Income? Location? Prestige? Being together? You should set clear expectations and boundaries and be honest about what kinds of sacrifices each of you are willing to make.
- Be the best that you can be. The stronger your reputation in your field, the better chance you have of having some leverage in the negotiating process, although this isn't always the case. While a dual-tenure track hire at the same institution (maybe the same department) might be your dream scenario, it might not happen right away. If one of you accepts a desirable job, but one of you has to settle for a less desirable position initially, it's always good advice to be friendly and collegial wherever you are in case future opportunities for the partner arise.
- Chances are this process will be difficult and may take a long time. You may end up spending years in a commuter relationship or with one partner in a less desirable position before finding your ideal situation. Don't take rejection personally. Departments and universities will have different goals and objectives than you and your partner do. Of course, knowing this doesn't make it *feel* any better, but try to remember that the rejection and difficulties that you most likely will face are not a comment on your worth as a scholar or a human being.
- Academic couples on the job market straight out graduate school probably need to be much more savvy about university politics and governance and need to do

even more “homework” on the institutions to which they are applying than their graduate school peers who are not looking for a dual-hire.

PHASE ONE: Planning the search

- Communicate, communicate, communicate. What do you each want? What will you each sacrifice? Will you “take turns” doing what’s best for your respective careers? These are questions that will need to be continually addressed.
- Consider the location of your search. Large metropolitan areas have the advantage of having many colleges and universities in the area, but because these areas are often more popular or desirable, schools may not need to be flexible. Schools in more rural areas or less popular regions of the country may be more flexible in order to recruit and retain talented people.
- Look to see if the places you are applying have dual-hire or dual-career policies. However, if no policy exists, don’t assume the institution won’t be willing to negotiate, and on the flip side, even if there is a policy in place, it doesn’t necessarily mean that the process will be easy. If policies do exist, the language used might give you some idea of how these situations are viewed in a given organizational culture. “Two-body problem,” and “trailing spouse,” sound different than “partner accommodation” which sounds different than “dual-hire” or “dual-career.” Another thing to consider is that while some colleges and universities may use the term “spouse” in their policies, in practice they may accommodate unmarried heterosexual, gay, or lesbian partners.
- Be prepared to be creative. There are many different arrangements that might not be what you initially had in mind, but if being in the same location is at the top of your priority list you might need to “think outside of the box. Some arrangements that I am aware of (and I’m sure there are more that I’m not aware of) include:
 - Shared positions – these usually involve splitting a salary and a teaching load, but each partner would receive full benefits and would be considered separately for tenure and promotion.
 - Short-term positions such as fellowships, visiting professor or instructor positions.
 - Research positions that are tied to grants.
 - Courtesy appointments – no pay, but access to office space, library resources, letterhead, etc.
 - Working in a department or college that is different from your original training. Sociologists are in a unique position to be able to potentially contribute to the curriculum in business (organizational theory); communication/journalism (interactionsists); education; religion; medical, nursing, and pharmacy schools; law schools. Also, consider how you (and/or your partner) might be able to contribute to interdisciplinary programs and centers.

PHASE TWO: Negotiating

- The vast majority of people suggest waiting until one of you has an offer to broach the topic of a dual-hire. This is the time when you have the most

negotiating power. Approaching the issue before you have an offer also puts the university in an awkward position of assessing its legal liability in possible discrimination cases (marital status, sexual orientation, etc.)

- Although a minority opinion, some people suggest two situations in which you might approach the topic prior to having an offer in hand: 1) If two tenure track jobs is the only situation you are willing to accept and 2) If you already have a job. A subtle way to do this, especially if you already have a job is to write in an application letter that you are looking for a new job for “personal and family reasons.” The hiring department then knows what to expect and if they want you, they can get a head start on making arrangements. Putting it all on the table at the beginning could also ease some of the tension, conflict and resentment from faculty in the hiring department (more below). I have to re-emphasize that this approach is discouraged by most people I have talked to.
- If promises are made, get them in writing.
- There is a good chance that things will get complicated and involve multiple levels of administration, prolonging the process. For example, if the two jobs are in different departments or different colleges, a sample arrangement might look something like this: 1/3 of the money comes from the department of the initial hire (so that department is paying the full salary of the person who they initially made an offer to plus 1/3 of the salary of the partner in a different department); 1/3 from the department in which the secondary hire will be housed; and 1/3 from the provost.
- Try to identify allies in the hiring department who can champion your case to the rest of the faculty. The department chair who is trying to hire you can potentially be one of your best allies. But, be careful in making assumptions about who those allies might be. The person you least expect might make the best ally, while the couple who already share a position might be the most resistant.
- The department chair will probably have to justify to faculty, deans, and maybe provosts how this arrangement is in the institution’s best interest. You might consider being prepared to talk about yourself and your partner with that in mind. How can you contribute across the curriculum? Does one of you bring grant money (or potential for grant money) with you? Are you willing to do something that the university is struggling with – maybe they desperately need a women’s studies director but haven’t had the money to hire one.
- Expect resistance. Even if you and your partner are both superstars in your field and the faculty would have been thrilled to hire you under other circumstances, they may feel resentful or feel that this decision is being forced upon them. Some of the concerns they may have include:
 - For couples in the same department, there may be concerns that you would form a “voting block.”
 - Concerns that the 2nd hire took a line that could have gone to someone that the faculty had a say in hiring.
 - Fear that in the event of a “break-up” the 1st hire will leave the department and they will be “stuck with” the 2nd hire. Although at least one study suggests that this fear is probably unfounded. [See Loeb, J.W. 1997. “Programs for Academic Partners: How

Well Can They Work?" In M.A. Ferber and J.W.. Loeb (eds.), *Academic Couples: problems and Promises*. Urbana and Chicago, IL: University of Illinois Press.].

- Equity/affirmative action concerns (that the position wasn't advertised, etc.) [Although, dual-hires can actually be a very useful approach to promoting diversity in departments and Universities].

PHASE THREE: We landed our dream jobs: now what?

The challenges for academic couples do not end after a dual-hire has been negotiated. Working in the same department or at the same institution is likely to involve boundary negotiations and emotion work.

- Regardless of how welcoming the department is, the partner who was the 2nd hire might have some initial feelings of inadequacy.
- You and your partner should be prepared to deal with faculty resentment, especially initially.
- There may be times when you overhear gossip about your partner from students/faculty, or if people are not aware of your relationship they may gossip about your partner to you.
- Students and faculty may try to appeal to you to pressure your partner about grades or departmental decisions or may expect you to "speak for" your partner at times. Don't be afraid to say "please talk to him/her yourself."
- In a shared position, although you essentially are each paid part-time, there may be informal expectations of full-time work.
- If one partner is more powerful than the other (dept. chair, dean, etc) and has made unpopular decisions, faculty may take out frustration on the less powerful partner (even to the point of tenure decisions).

A few words for those readers who might be on the hiring side and want to demonstrate a willingness and openness to dual hires:

- Language is important: avoid terms such as "trailing spouse," "two-body problem," and "partner accommodation." Dual-hire, dual-career, accompanying partner, initial hire and second hire are suggestions that are more inclusive.
- Explore a broad spectrum of possibilities (tenure track, part-time/adjunct, short term visiting professor or short-term post-doc; long term soft money; shared positions; administrative positions)
- Inform all finalists of any dual-career policies at the university.
- Try to start a dual-hire fund at your university - see Purdue's "Bridge Program" for an example.
- Depending on the size of your institution, you may see if a position could be created for a dual-career counselor or "broker."
- Emphasize to faculty how the department/college/university benefits from getting two great people instead of one. The way a 2nd hire is presented to the department can make a big difference in its reception.

An extensive list of suggested readings for academic couples can be found at:
http://www.earthinstitute.columbia.edu/advance/documents/Dual_Career_Reading_30105.pdf

CAVEAT to all professional advice: Always check with your departmental colleagues, chair, dean, etc. to find out what the norms and expectations are in your institution.

I hope this helps! Stay tuned next month for Question 11: “Is there life after being denied tenure?”

-- Jane

Do you have a question for Jane? E-mail it to lara-foley@utulsa.edu.