

Overview of Dual-Career/Spousal Needs

Dual-career couples are becoming increasingly more common, and universities must respond to the needs of these couples in order to attract and retain top faculty members, and build strong academic programs. 80% of faculty members have spouses or partners who are working professionals (Didion, 1996), and the number of these spouses or partners who are also academics is steadily increasing (Burke, 1988). The majority of dual-career couples view both partners' careers as being of equal importance, and decisions about employment are based on the availability of opportunities for both partners (Acker, Baskin, Bird, and Bird, 2006). Academic women are more likely to be affected by dual-career issues than academic men, since significantly more academic women have an academic partner (Astin and Milem, 1997).

Although the number of dual-career couples with both partners seeking tenure-track academic positions is increasing, there are also individuals seeking tenure-track faculty positions whose partners are looking for non-faculty jobs, including research positions, administrative and professional positions, or other staff positions, either at the university or in other worksites. For universities that are geographically isolated or located in non-metropolitan areas, it is particularly important to recognize that the limited opportunities for professional positions for accompanying partners will impact decisions about accepting faculty positions. Thus, universities need to attend to the needs of accompanying partners in both faculty and non-faculty areas.

Recommendation to Appoint an Ad hoc Committee on Dual Partner Hiring Policies and Procedures

I am recommending the formation of an ad hoc university committee that will be charged with developing recommendations for dual-hiring policies at Auburn University. The committee will review best practices from other comparable institutions, provide a rationale for a dual-hiring policy at AU, develop procedures to be followed for dual-hiring, and provide information and recommendations about the funding needs associated with implementing a dual-hiring policy at Auburn University.

This committee will include representatives from the various stakeholders, including deans, department heads, faculty members, and administrative and professional staff, and others. The committee will submit a report to the Senate leadership, and the report will be sent to the Senate for approval, and then to the Provost's Office for implementation.

Overview of Dual Career Hiring Needs and Policies at Other Universities

In an increasingly competitive environment, many colleges and universities are recognizing the importance of responding to the needs of dual-career academic couples in order to successfully recruit top candidates. Over the past several years, more than 20 articles have appeared in the *Chronicle of Higher Education* focusing on the challenges and successes of dual-career academics. A recent study by Wolf-Wendel, Twombly, and Rice (2003) examined policies and procedures used by colleges and universities in efforts to respond to needs of dual-career couples. This study employed multiple research strategies, including surveys, interviews, and in-depth case studies of several institutions, and identified a range of strategies used by institutions in trying to address the problem of dual-career couples. More than 80% of the universities and colleges surveyed regarded spouse and partner accommodations as "somewhat important" to "important". Of the research universities that participated in the study, 43% had written dual-career policies in place.

Because dual-career academic couples are so prevalent in the sciences, the "two-body problem" terminology is commonly used to describe the situation (Wolf-Wendel, Twombly, & Rice, 2003). As universities respond to the "two-body problem", there are several key points to consider that impact recruitment and retention of faculty members, and that impact issues of attracting women faculty to areas where they are underrepresented. These include:

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- Dual-career academic couples view both partners' careers as equally important, and opportunities for both partners is the key deciding factor in their employment decisions. Current figures indicate that 49% of female faculty members are married to a fellow academic, compared to 12% of male faculty; thus, academic women are more likely to be affected by dual career issues than academic men.
- Dual-career options are of particular importance for colleges with low percentages of female faculty members; in order to successfully recruit women faculty in these colleges, there must be academic career opportunities for their partners.
- 70--80% of married women faculty in the STEM disciplines (Sciences, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics) have academic partners, compared to less than 10% of married men in STEM with academic spouses.

Women Faculty at Auburn University

Although it is important for Auburn University to address needs of these couples in order to be more competitive in our recruitment efforts for both male and female faculty candidates, it is particularly critical as we address issues in increasing the number of female faculty members. The most recent figures (2006-2007) that we have indicate that at the **assistant professor** level, there are 91 female faculty members (42%) and 128 male faculty members (58%); at the **associate professor** level, there are 109 females (32%), and 232 males (68%); and at the **full professor** level, there are 70 females (14%) and 424 (86%) males. Following is a summary of the percentage of female faculty members in the colleges where less than 50% of the faculty is female:

- Half of the colleges, including the STEM disciplines (Sciences, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics), at Auburn University have **fewer than 20%** female faculty members.
(Engineering—9%; Forestry and Wildlife Sciences—11%; Sciences and Mathematics—15%; Agriculture—16%; Architecture—17%; Business—18%)
- Three-fourths of the colleges at Auburn University have **fewer than 50%** female faculty members.
(Pharmacy—25%; Liberal Arts—38%; Veterinary Medicine—38%, in addition to those above)

Need for Dual-Career Programs and Policies at Auburn University

Attempts to accommodate dual-career faculty couples are not without problems. However, Wolf-Wendel, Twombly, and Rice (2006) conclude that institutions who want to be competitive for the best faculty need to consider their stance on this complex issue, and make decisions about what kind of accommodation policy that is best for their campus, keeping in mind the importance of keeping pace with their peer institutions. Addressing the "two body problem" is imperative for Auburn University in order to meet our goals of becoming a top-notch university.

References

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