

## MEETING THE NEEDS OF DUAL-CAREER COUPLES IN ACADEMIA

The Dual Career Conference at the University of Iowa on April 25, 2003

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### ABSTRACT

This paper discusses dual-career programs implemented at academic institutions within the United States and Canada. Various institutions across the United States and Canada were surveyed regarding their policies and practices pertaining to dual-career couples. A comparative analysis of the survey results provides comprehensive benchmarks of existing practices.

### INTRODUCTION

A critical issue facing many organizations is the recruitment and retention of qualified employees. Work and family concerns, specifically dual career considerations, influence people's decisions to apply to and remain members of organizations. Increasingly, both partners in a marriage or relationship are pursuing careers. As a result, when one partner is offered a job involving relocation, the other partner often has concerns regarding the opportunity to continue his or her career progression after the move.

The decision to accept a job often becomes contingent upon an offer, either formal or informal, of job search assistance for the accompanying partner. Organizations that recognize this need and take steps to facilitate partner relocation and career continuation may have a competitive advantage in highly competitive labor markets. By offering job search assistance to accompanying partners, organizations increase the likelihood of hiring their first-choice candidates.

A survey (Didion, 1996) determined that 80% of faculty had partners who were employed professionals. In academic settings, recruiting top faculty is increasingly dependent on assisting partners with their employment needs. As Wolf-Wendel, Twombly, and Rice stated, "Academic couples face an extremely difficult task, namely finding 2 positions that will permit both partners to live in the same geographic region, to address their professional goals, and to meet the day-to-day needs of running a household which, in many cases, includes caring for children or elderly parents." (2000, 291)

To address this need, many institutions have developed formal programs to assist dual-career couples with their relocation needs. However, minimal research has been done on the nuts-and-bolts components of dual-career programs at academic institutions (Wolf-Wendel et al., 2000).

This study attempts to address that gap in the research by investigating the similarities and differences between dual-career programs within academia. The purpose of the survey was

twofold. First, it was designed to provide a comprehensive benchmark of the existing services offered to dual-career couples at academic institutions. Second, the information about current policies and practices provides a framework to those institutions seeking to establish dual-career programs.

## TERMINOLOGY

In contrast to a traditional model, a “revolutionary” dual-wage family was defined as one in which both husband and wife pursued lifelong careers that were generally uninterrupted (Rapoports, 1969). In this dual-wage family, the wife worked whether or not it was financially necessary.

Since then, a husband and wife both pursuing careers have been referred to as a dual-career couple. The authors of this paper define the term *dual-career couple* more broadly to include any two persons in a committed relationship whether married or unmarried, heterosexual or homosexual.

The term *dual-faculty couple* is a subset of dual-career couples. It refers to two persons in a committed relationship who both have a terminal degree in their respective field of study and who are both pursuing academic positions.

The term *relocating partner* is used to define the person receiving services from a dual-career program. Most programs surveyed for this study offer dual-career services to partners of new employees whether married or unmarried, heterosexual or homosexual. In addition, eligibility for a program is based on whether the partner is making a geographic move to the region near the institution.

## METHOD

A questionnaire was distributed to various universities with known programs prior to the April 25, 2003 Dual Career Programs Conference held at the University of Iowa. In an attempt to learn as much as possible about the different dual-career services offered by academic institutions, the survey was comprised of mostly open-ended questions. Sample questions included "How long will you serve a client?" and "Does your institution provide funding?" Eighteen academic institutions from the United States and Canada completed the survey.

In completing the surveys, some academic institutions requested anonymity. To insure confidentiality in the accompanying tables, some institutions are identified by a single letter which was randomly assigned.

It is important to note that each dual career program surveyed has unique components. Because of such differences between programs, the survey data were compiled in such a way as to focus on the broad areas of consensus. Therefore, not all details were reported.

A review of the attached tables will reveal blank spaces. There are three possible reasons for a blank space in any table. First, if the given data compromised the anonymity of a respondent that requested confidentiality, the data were excluded from the table. Second, the answer given to a

question may have been so unusual as to not fit into the broad categories; therefore, the data were excluded from the table. Third, the respondent may have not provided an answer to a particular question on the survey.

## RESULTS

### *Academic Institutions*

Table 1 provides some background information on the academic institutions that completed the survey. Thirty-nine percent have fewer than 20,000 students, 39% have 20,000 to 40,000 students, and 22% have more than 40,000 students. Examining the number of faculty employed shows that 17% have fewer than 1000 faculty, 50% have between 1000 and 3000 faculty, and 22% have greater than 3000 faculty members.

### *Program Materials*

A determination was made of the types of materials that are offered to a prospective candidate and/or a participant in a dual career program. The three most common program materials (See Table 2) are brochures (83%) and websites (83%), and informational packets (50%). The next two materials commonly offered are directories of area employers (28%) and community resource information (28%). Other materials provided to dual-career couples include folders with information about job-search assistance and relocation, reprints of articles about dual-career programs, and information about local companies.

### *Eligibility*

In ascertaining who is eligible to receive services from a dual-career program, 94% of the institutions surveyed offer services to the relocating partner of the dual-career couple (See Table 3). Only one university reported restricting services to the spouse of an employee. A formal policy of offering dual-career services to family members of the new employee, e.g. children and partners, is in place at one university.

Seventy-eight percent of respondents indicated that dual-career services are for the relocating partners of *faculty*. Some institutions also provide these services to the relocating partners of administrators (39%) and staff (22%). Three universities provide services to the relocating partners of all employees (17%).

In anecdotal comments on the survey, some institutions indicated that special qualifications were needed for relocating partners of candidates for administrative or staff positions. One university commented that the dual-career program was for "... [relocating partners] of key administrative positions as determined by a Dean or higher."

Most often, services for dual-career couples are provided for one year after their relocation (33%) with 11% of universities offering assistance for up to two years. Twenty-two percent have no time limit on dual-career services and 11% assist relocating partners until they find a job.

An additional criterion used for eligibility is the length of time the relocating partner has lived in the new location. Relocating partners can receive services if they have lived in the same area as the university less than two years (17%) or one year (6%). One university noted that some relocating partners focus on family concerns initially after the move; therefore, providing the relocating partners with a two-year window reassures them that their career is viewed as important and they can address their job search at a time appropriate to them.

### *Services*

A broad range of services are provided by the academic institutions offering dual-career programs (See Table 4). The average number of different types of services offered is seven and the minimum number that all respondents reported offering is four.

The service most offered is résumé/curriculum vita critiques (100%). The next two most common services are cover letter assistance and community/networking resources (94%). Coaching on interviewing techniques is offered by 89%. Seventy-eight percent provide a lending library of job search resource materials. Career coaching is offered by 72% and 67% write internal letters of support on behalf of the relocating partner. Fifty percent provide coaching in salary negotiation. Some universities sponsor a social event for relocating partners to network with each other and key decision-makers from the community (22%).

Relocation assistance is provided for families by some universities. One dual-career administrator wrote "I provide information on real estate, schools, childcare [and ] volunteer opportunities." Another noted that relocation assistance included help with "Housing, childcare, eldercare, transportation, diversity/cultural amenities, spiritual communities, recreation, entertainment, etc."

Dual-faculty couples may be accommodated by those universities able to provide funding for the relocating partner. As one university described the financial assistance, it is "... a cost sharing arrangement between the two [hiring] departments and the Provost's Office."

### *Data*

Seventy-eight percent of respondents reported that they collected some type of data on the relocating partners receiving dual-career services (See Table 5). Of that 78%:

- 79% compile statistical reports (the type of data collected varied between institutions, e.g. "number of clients served annually" or "number of days in the program"),
- 29% noted they track demographic information in addition to the statistics, and
- 50% record the number of relocating partners that obtain jobs (and of that 50%, half also track the hiring organizations).

The data collected is most often used in annual reports (57%) with 14% also reporting on a monthly basis. One respondent reports on a quarterly basis.

Reports are sent to Provosts by 50% of respondents. Thirty-nine percent send data to a top administrator in the Human Resources Department. Reports are sent to Deans by 17% and to Advisory Boards and/or Chancellors by 11%.

### *Internal Marketing*

To insure that search committees as well as candidates are aware of the existence of dual-career programs on campuses, universities detailed the various methods utilized to market these programs (See Table 6). The tools most frequently used to publicize dual-career programs are websites (67%) followed by word-of-mouth/on-campus meetings (61%).

Brochures (44%), e-mail messages (39%), and in-house publications (33%) are other methods utilized by institutions to raise awareness of dual-career programs. Twenty-eight percent of respondents used letters and attended new employee orientations. Internal public relations efforts are directed primarily at Deans (50%) and department chairs (56%) but also at faculty (11%) and staff (17%).

Specifically, some institutions targeted candidates for positions by sending either acknowledgement letters and/or recruiting packets (28%). 50% of respondents used between one to four different methods for their internal marketing efforts while 33% offered between six to nine.

### *External Marketing*

Because the main goal of dual-career programs is to assist relocating partners in their job searches, the ability to network with organizations in the community is crucial. Table 7 provides detailed information about the various methods that respondents employ to raise awareness of dual-career programs in the community.

Attending local networking meetings and establishing websites were the top two methods utilized by respondents (39%). Of those respondents that attend local networking functions, all but one indicated that they have professional memberships with the sponsoring organizations.

When asked how they market externally, 28% indicated that they go to local businesses and visit with the managers. One respondent said, "HIT THE BRICKS! We regularly call on businesses, especially new businesses, to convince them that it's good business to do business with us."

11% work with the local media and have had articles about the dual-career programs published in local newspapers. Forty-four percent employ from one to three different tools for external marketing and 17% between four to five.

### *Employee Information*

There are four academic institutions that hire full-time administrators for the dual-career programs; all others hire part-time administrators (See Table 8). The average FTE is .37 and the median FTE is .20.

Fifty percent of the administrators have worked in the dual-career programs between 4 to 9 years. The average length of service is 4 years and the median is 3.5 years.

The dual-career programs in this survey have been in existence between 1.5 to 16 years. Sixty-one percent of institutions have had programs for five years or more.

One institution employs two full-time administrators and four institutions employ two part-time administrators. Seven institutions reported having part-time support staff assist the administrators.

## DISCUSSION

Wolf-Wendel et al. (2000) noted that further investigation was needed to determine the specific actions taken by academic institutions that addressed dual-career concerns. This paper attempts to address that gap in the literature.

An examination of the academic institutions that participated in this survey show that most are either top research institutions and/or are located in rural areas where job opportunities are limited. This reflects the study by Wolf-Wendel et al. (2000) which found that research universities were most likely to see the importance of responding to the needs of dual-career couples. In addition, they reported that academic institutions in areas with limited career options also viewed dual-career couple assistance as important.

Once again, the results from this survey mirror those from Wolf-Wendel et al. (2000) in regards to the issue of eligibility for dual-career assistance. In both surveys, the partners of faculty were given highest priority.

This survey revealed that dual-career administrators work with candidates in the recruitment stage as well as employees who had accepted a formal job offer. Intervention before relocation is supported by Martin (1999) who found that pre-move preparation including providing pertinent information reduced stress associated with relocating. Knowledge of job opportunities for the relocating partner should be an important part of relocation preparation.

It is more common for organizations to offer logistical assistance than family-related assistance. The top four relocation services identified by Eby and Allen (1998) meet logistical needs (i.e. home-selling assistance, real estate assistance, cost-of-living adjustments, and visits to the new area). They ranked spousal employment assistance and educational information fifth. Since most universities cannot compete on the first four relocation services, it behooves these institutions to seriously address the employment needs of relocating partners.

The overriding goal of the dual-career programs surveyed is to facilitate the job search process for relocating partners. The specific services provided through these programs address that goal in one of two ways. Either the relocating partners are taught various job search methods or they are assisted in networking with local organizations. This confirms the findings of Eby and Buch (1994) who said that job search techniques can impact the quality of reemployment. Therefore, services that help relocating partners improve their job search methods (such as those listed in this survey) are beneficial to offer.

Eby, DeMatteo & Russell (1997) found that spouses were sometimes unaware of services offered by dual-career programs. They suggested that organizations offering assistance to relocating partners may not adequately publicize these programs leading to underutilization. One respondent noted that the external marketing efforts were done to "... integrate the university

with the surrounding community and to develop the reputation that we are a rich, reliable source of talent."

Acknowledging dual-career concerns is one way organizations can attempt to influence recruitment and retention decisions. The programs at the universities surveyed utilize a number of techniques to deal with these issues. Each program is tailored to the circumstances facing each campus. Despite differences in time frames, contexts, and proposed methods, general themes emerged that are applicable to a wide variety of situations. Furthermore, many of the services identified will generalize beyond a university to other employment contexts. Greater recognition of dual-career concerns and greater willingness to intervene can have a positive impact for all types of organizations. Additionally, by dealing with this fundamental concern at the work/family interface, organizations can have a positive impact on couples and families.

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**Table 1 - Institutional Information**

Institution	Institutional Information		
	# Students	# Employees	# Faculty
B	42,000	8,500	2,500
Cornell University	19,000	9,200	1,600
D	60,500	18,000	2,700
H	14,000	3,000	930
Iowa State University	27,898	13,698	1,720
Johns Hopkins University	18,235	17,250	6,250
L	11,000	11,000	
P	58,059	13,429	3,500
Pennsylvania State University	41,445	10,974	5,500
Purdue University	38,208	14,052	2,365
T	20,000	4,000	
University of Guelph	15,000	2,600	700
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign	37,679	10,516	2,848
University of Iowa	29,000	10,990	1,712
University of Maryland	33,000	5,000	1,500
University of Michigan-Ann Arbor	38,972	21,583	3,408
University of Nebraska at Kearney	6,395	942	377
W	16,035	2,597	1,025

**Table 2 - Program Materials**

<b>Institution</b>	<b>brochure</b>	<b>web site</b>	<b>info packet</b>	<b>folder</b>	<b>article reprint</b>	<b>info @ co.'s</b>	<b>database of co.'s</b>	<b>directory of employers</b>	<b>community resource info.</b>
B	X	X							
Cornell University	X	X	X	X			X	X	X
D	X	X	X						
H	X	X	X						
Iowa State University		X							
Johns Hopkins University	X	X	X	X				X	X
L									
P									
Pennsylvania State University	X	X					X		
Purdue University	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
T	X	X							
University of Guelph	X	X	X					X	X
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign	X								
University of Iowa	X	X	X	X					
University of Maryland	X	X	X						
University of Michigan-Ann Arbor	X	X	X						
University of Nebraska at Kearney	X	X			X	X			
W	X	X					X	X	X

**Table 3 - Program Eligibility**

Institution	provide services to..			of ...			
	spouse only	family member	relocating partner	faculty	admin	staff	all employees
B			x	x	x		
Cornell University			x	x	x	x	
D			x				x
H			x	x			
Iowa State University			x	x			
Johns Hopkins University			x	x	x	x	
L			x	x			
P			x	x	x		
Pennsylvania State University			x	x		x	
Purdue University			x	x	x		
T	x			x		x	
University of Guelph			x	x	x		
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign			x	x	x		
University of Iowa			x				x
University of Maryland			x	x			
University of Michigan-Ann Arbor			x	x			
University of Nebraska at Kearney			x				x
W		x	x				

Institution	RP lived in area ...		get services after relocating for...			
	less than 2 years	less than 1 year	1 year	2 years	until they find a job	no time limit
B			x			
Cornell University	x		x			
D						x
H						x
Iowa State University						
Johns Hopkins University					x	
L					x	
P			< 1			
Pennsylvania State University		x	x			
Purdue University	3 yrs or less		x			
T				x		
University of Guelph						x
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign						x
University of Iowa	x		x			
University of Maryland						
University of Michigan-Ann Arbor						
University of Nebraska at Kearney	x			x		
W			x			

**Table 4 - Services Provided**

Institution	resume/CV	interviewing	cover letters	videotaping	salary negotiation	internal letters of support	job search resource library
B	x	x	x			x	
Cornell University	x	x	x			x	x
D	x	x	x		x		x
H	x	x	x		x	x	x
Iowa State University	x	x	x			x	
Johns Hopkins University	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
L	x	x	x				
P	x	x	x			x	x
Pennsylvania State University	x					x	x
Purdue University	x	x	x		x	x	x
T	x	x	x			x	x
University of Guelph	x	x	x				x
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign	x		x				x
University of Iowa	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
University of Maryland	x	x	x		x	x	x
University of Michigan-Ann Arbor	x	x	x		x		x
University of Nebraska at Kearney	x	x	x	x	x		x
W	x	x	x			x	

Institution	career coaching	community networking resources	job club	social situations	other
B	x	x			
Cornell University		x			
D					career management workshops
H	x	x			relocation assistance
Iowa State University		x			
Johns Hopkins University	x	x			
L	x	x			
P	x	x			
Pennsylvania State University		x			
Purdue University	x	x	x	x	relocation assistance
T	x	x			
University of Guelph	x	x		x	external job transition consultant
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign	x	x			
University of Iowa	x	x	x	x	career management workshops
University of Maryland	x	x			
University of Michigan-Ann Arbor	x	x			partial funding for academic partner
University of Nebraska at Kearney	x	x		x	career management workshops
W		x			

**Table 5 - Program Data**

Institution	<i>on relocating partners ...</i>				
	demographics	statistics	# obtaining positions	companies employed by	funding/budgeting
B					
Cornell University		x	x	x	
D		x			
H		x			
Iowa State University					x
Johns Hopkins University	x	x			x
L		x			
P			x		
Pennsylvania State University		x	x		
Purdue University	x	x	x	x	x
T					
University of Guelph					
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign					x
University of Iowa	x	x	x	x	
University of Maryland					
University of Michigan-Ann Arbor		x			x
University of Nebraska at Kearney	x	x	x		
W		x	x	x	

Institution	<i>data used in ...</i>		<i>send data to ...</i>				
	monthly reports	annual reports	Chancellor	Provost	Deans	HR	Advisory Board
B							
Cornell University	x	x		x		x	
D		x				x	
H		x	x	x	x		
Iowa State University							
Johns Hopkins University		x		x		x	
L				x			
P				x			
Pennsylvania State University						x	
Purdue University	qtrly					x	
T							
University of Guelph							
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign				x			
University of Iowa		x		x			x
University of Maryland							
University of Michigan-Ann Arbor		x		x	x		
University of Nebraska at Kearney	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
W		x				x	

**Table 6 - Internal Marketing**

<b>Institution</b>	<b>brochures</b>	<b>letter</b>	<b>e-mail</b>	<b>website</b>	<b>in-house publications</b>	<b>word-of-mouth /mtgs</b>	<b>new employee orientation</b>
B				x		x	
Cornell University		x	x	x	x	x	
D	x	x	x	x			
H	x		x	x		x	
Iowa State University							
Johns Hopkins University	x			x		x	
L							
P							
Pennsylvania State University				x		x	
Purdue University	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
T	x						
University of Guelph			x				x
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign	x				x		
University of Iowa	x	x		x	x	x	x
University of Maryland				x		x	
University of Michigan-Ann Arbor				x		x	
University of Nebraska at Kearney			x	x	x	x	x
W	x	x	x	x	x	x	x

<b>Institution</b>	<i>to candidates ...</i>		<i>sent to ...</i>			
	<b>acknowledgement letter</b>	<b>recruiting packet</b>	<b>Deans</b>	<b>Chairs</b>	<b>Faculty</b>	<b>Staff</b>
B						
Cornell University	x	x	x	x		
D						
H	x	x	x	x		
Iowa State University			x	x		
Johns Hopkins University					x	x
L				x		
P						
Pennsylvania State University			x	x		
Purdue University	x	x	x	x		x
T						
University of Guelph						
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign						
University of Iowa	x	x		x		
University of Maryland			x	x		
University of Michigan-Ann Arbor			x			
University of Nebraska at Kearney	x		x	x	x	x
W		x	x	x		

**Table 7 - External Marketing**

Institution	<i>market externally by ...</i>					
	attending local mtgs	professional memberships	going to business	website	articles	local media
B				x		
Cornell University	x	x	x			
D						
H	x				x	
Iowa State University						
Johns Hopkins University				x		
L						
P						
Pennsylvania State University	x	x	x			
Purdue University	x	x	x			
T						
University of Guelph				x		
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign						
University of Iowa	x	x	x	x		x
University of Maryland						
University of Michigan-Ann Arbor				x		
University of Nebraska at Kearney	x	x		x	x	x
W	x	x	x	x		

Institution	<i>attend networking functions at ...</i>					<i>belong to ...</i>				
	Chamber	SHRM	bus. women's group	ACA	PIC	SHRM	IACMP	CMI	Chamber	CUPA
B	x	x				x				
Cornell University	x	x	x			x			x	
D										
H	x		x							x
Iowa State University										
Johns Hopkins University				x			x			
L										
P										
Pennsylvania State University	x	x			x	x				
Purdue University	x	x		x		x			x	
T										
University of Guelph	x									
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign										x
University of Iowa	x	x	x			x	x	x	x	
University of Maryland										
University of Michigan-Ann Arbor						x				
University of Nebraska at Kearney	x	x	x			x		x	x	
W	x					x				x

**Table 8 - Employee Information**

Institution	FTE	# of years w/DCP	# of years in existence	FT	PT	support staff	certified in...
B	.10	1.00	10.00		2		
Cornell University	1.00	1.50	1.50	1		2 at .16	
D	.13	6.00	10.00		1	1 at .25	
H	.50	3.00	3.00		1	1 at .25, 1 at .125	
Iowa State University	.05	2.00	3.00		1		
Johns Hopkins University	.13	5.00	4.00		2		
L		3.00	6.00		1		
P	.12	4.00	4.00		1		
Pennsylvania State University	1.00	1.00	16.00	1			
Purdue University	1.00	6.00	7.00	1		1 at .5	
T	.25	8.00	8.00		1	1 at .25	
University of Guelph	.15	2.00	2.00		1	1 at .05	
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign	.03	2.00	10.00		2		
University of Iowa	1.00	9.00	9.00	2		1 at .5	CPRW, JCTC
University of Maryland	.13	4.00	4.00		1		
University of Michigan-Ann Arbor	.60	3.00	5.00		2		
University of Nebraska at Kearney	.25	5.00	5.00		1		
W	.31	5.00	10.00		1		PHR

Institution	reports to...
B	Employment Office
Cornell University	Recruitment & Employment Center, Human Resources
D	Center for HR Dev. within Human Resources
H	Human Resources
Iowa State University	Provost
Johns Hopkins University	Career Management Program
L	Provost's Office
P	Office of VP & Provost
Pennsylvania State University	Human Resources
Purdue University	VP of Human Relations
T	Office of the President
University of Guelph	Provost & VP Academic
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign	Provost's Office
University of Iowa	Provost's Office & WorkLife
University of Maryland	Sr. VP for Academic Affairs/Provost
University of Michigan-Ann Arbor	Provost's Office & Executive VP for Academic Affairs
University of Nebraska at Kearney	Advisory Board; Deans; Sr. VC Academic Affairs, AA/EO
W	Human Resources