

Dual-Career Couples

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You're in love. You and your beloved emerge from the library stacks to share coffee. You take long walks, passionately discussing the latest historiography. You move in together, tenderly commingling your libraries. And then you realize: what about the job market? It can be hard enough to find one good job, much less two. Welcome to the reality of the dual-career couple. Being a dual-career couple has its anxieties, but it also has fabulous rewards, as the poet Marge Piercy said: "What a richly colored strong warm coat/is woven when love is the warp and work is the woof" ("The Inquisition," 1985).

If you find frightening the idea of locating two good jobs, take comfort in the fact that you are quite far from alone in this situation. According to University of Kansas education professors Lisa B. Wolf-Wendel, Susan Twombly, and Suzanne Rice, about 35 percent of male faculty and 40 percent of female faculty are in relationships with other faculty members. (It's even more common in the sciences than in the humanities.) Similar percentages of faculty members have partners who are professionals with nonacademic careers. So—doing the math—only 30 percent of men and 20 percent of women job candidates have partners who are able to move without complications.

While the American Historical Association doesn't keep statistics on dual-career couples, it does note that the issue comes up "regularly." To that end, the AHA has issued guidelines to help departments manage fairly questions about dual careers (<http://www.historians.org/Perspectives/Issues/2002/0203/0203aha5.cfm>). As Wolf-Wendel, Twombly, and Rice observe in their 2004 book *The Two-Body Problem: Dual-Career-Couple Hiring Policies in Higher Education*, some situations have storybook endings, with both partners enjoying tenure-track careers at the same or nearby institutions. Other couples have to make compromises, perhaps commuting long distances or taking positions that are less than completely perfect. Rarely do two appropriate tenure-track positions open at the same university in the same year (although it does happen, something akin to lightning striking). These types of appointments are the result of luck, timing, and patience. A few universities—e.g., the Claremont colleges—have begun advertising with other nearby schools to show job candidates the full range of available positions in their geographic area.

A couple entering the job market together needs to be very, very clear on its priorities. Will you pursue one person's career, with the other following, or will you both go for positions simultaneously? Some advisers suggest that staggering careers so that one partner is temporally slightly ahead of the other can be helpful. If partners are in the same field but at slightly different stages in their educations or career paths, they can avoid competing with each other for fellowships, awards, and, ultimately, jobs.

Geographic mobility, the willingness to go where jobs are, can be key to finding positions. Each couple should have in mind how far apart physically they are willing to

be: a two-hour drive or a plane ride? A personal observation: cell phones, e-mail, and other electronic forms of communication render this situation less onerous now than twenty years ago, when my husband and I lived nine hundred miles apart. Some months our telephone bills were more than our rents! But the electronic communications don't quite cut it when you need a hug.

If you decide that you need to be together in the same place, several strategies can help. Increasingly, universities are creating mechanisms to assist the partners of new hires. Of the universities surveyed by Wolf-Wendel, Twombly, and Rice, slightly less than 10 percent have formal mechanisms for helping partners of new hires, but almost all schools have more informal ways to place partners within the same institution or in nearby institutions.

By far the most common approach is for schools to offer a non-tenure track or adjunct position, or to help locate one nearby. Non-tenure-track positions can include teaching, administration, research—name it. They are often highly rewarding. In large urban areas, in particular, adjunct positions may be fairly easy to come by at a multitude of institutions. Full-time instructor or lecturer positions may be slightly more difficult to obtain but are still quite feasible. In less populated areas, the partner's school may be the best source of such jobs. It would be a good idea to have clear in one's mind at how many institutions one is willing to adjunct before becoming a road warrior teaching at three or four different schools. Such positions pay less than tenure-track positions and have less job security, but the work itself is intrinsically worth doing.

Split and shared appointments are where two partners have one faculty line. These types of positions seem to be most common at liberal-arts colleges. The two terms are often used interchangeably, but they do differ. In a split appointment, each partner is half time; in a shared appointment, the two literally share one position. In a shared position, both are considered for tenure simultaneously, and either both are tenured or neither is. Split positions have numerous variations. In some situations, each half of the position has its own tenure, raises, and benefits. This strategy is particularly useful for couples with children, because it allows each parent time both for work and for child care. It can also be beneficial for the school, because each part of the split often works more than half time simply out of commitment to the profession. The primary downside, in addition to tenure questions, is that it brings in only one salary. Wolf-Wendel, Twombly, and Rice stress that a couple entering into an agreement with a university for a shared or split appointment insist that all details be laid out carefully in advance of accepting the position.

How can you and your partner help yourselves the most? One answer is obvious, if not a magic bullet: work hard and build up your resumes so that each of you is as competitive in the market as possible. A university is more willing to make accommodations if they really want you.

Many scholars advise telling a search committee early in the process if you absolutely must have a position for your partner. While institutions are often willing to help, most

have ad-hoc rather than formal processes for doing so, and it takes time to negotiate with other departments, deans, and so on. Most universities are big ships that turn slowly, and they can't just create positions ex nihilo. If you are willing to take a split or shared appointment, explain up front that the two of you are a package deal.

Be prepared to be patient. While most couples' searches come to some sort of agreeable ending, this does not usually come instantly. There may be years of physical separation or frustration as one spouse's career takes precedence over the other's. But the rewards are usually worth the effort. Having a partner one loves and work one loves can be the foundation for a most agreeable life.

Useful resources.

Almost all of the information in this article is taken from Lisa Wolf-Wendel, Susan B. Twombly, and Suzanne Rice, *The Two-Body Problem: Dual-Career-Couple Hiring Policies in Higher Education* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004). See also "Dual-Career Couples," *gradPsych*, Volume 4, Number 1, January 2006, CAREER Center, <http://gradpsych.apags.org/jan06/couples.html>

Not on the subject of dual-career couples specifically, but on the topic of women in the historical profession and work-life issues: Kerber, Linda. "Conditions of Work for Women Historians in the Twenty-First Century: Risking Our Dreams." *Journal of Women's History* 19, 1 (Spring 2006), 121-34.

A few experiences of dual-career couples.

Melissa Walker, Converse College: When we met, my husband was working in corporate finance, and I was writing my dissertation. We spent many hours talking about how to juggle our careers, and when I went on the job market, I carefully researched locations where he would be likely to find corporate finance jobs. I was offered a teaching job at Converse, a small college in South Carolina. The product of a small liberal arts environment, I knew that the Converse position was my dream job. Fortunately, upstate South Carolina is also a bustling hub for corporate headquarters, too, and Chuck was able to find a job quickly—and one a mile from our new home to boot.

But life has a way of messing with our neat plans. After two years in Spartanburg, Chuck was laid off in a corporate restructuring. He had become increasingly unhappy in the corporate environment anyway, and after months of soul searching, he decided to enroll in a Ph.D. program in economics at Clemson University, seventy miles away. For two years, he lived in a campus apartment during the week while completing his coursework. He commuted to Clemson in the later years while juggling TA-ships and graduate instructor jobs. He even did a one-semester sabbatical replacement job on my campus. We debated what we would do when he finished school, planning to go on the job market in search of two academic positions.

Meanwhile, I had earned tenure at Converse and settled into my institution quite happily. And we both had grown to love the Spartanburg community. By the time Chuck finished, we both knew that we did not want to move. Our roots here were too deep, and

we didn't want to start over in a new place. Chuck made the decision to stay in the area and seek positions locally. Fortunately, there are a dozen or so institutions in commuting distance, and Chuck is in a high-demand field. He was pretty certain that sooner or later, he'd be able to land something permanent.

Thankfully, Chuck was right. He had a one-year position at UNC-Charlotte, an hour and a half away, and then landed a full-time temporary position at University of South Carolina Upstate here in Spartanburg. Two years later, that position became tenure-track. I know that we're lucky. Few couples have the luxury of two tenured or tenure-track positions in the same town—in fact, at campuses only five miles apart.

Rebecca Sharpless, Texas Christian University: When my husband and I married, he was a full professor of history at Baylor and I was a graduate student at Emory (long story, yes indeed). We lived nine hundred miles apart (me in Atlanta, him in Waco) for the first six months of our marriage, and I moved to Texas when I finished my course work. While I was doing exams and dissertation, I taught adjunct at two nearby community colleges and then had a three-quarter-time appointment in a research department at Baylor. Immediately after I graduated, I became director of the Baylor University Institute for Oral History. I held that position for thirteen years, in a non-tenure-track capacity, and eventually also taught regularly in the Baylor Interdisciplinary Core and the Department of History. In 2006, I accepted a tenure-track appointment in U.S. women's history at Texas Christian University in Fort Worth, ninety miles and ninety minutes by car from Waco. The folks at TCU have been extremely nice to me, giving me Tuesday-Wednesday-Thursday schedules. Most weeks during the long semester, I go up on Tuesday morning and return to Waco on Thursday evenings, spending two nights in our apartment. When (if) Tom retires, we will move to Fort Worth permanently.

Kirsten Wood, Florida International University: I'm one of the lucky ones: I didn't get married until the year I was tenured, my husband already had a stable job in the same place, and our new faculty contract provided for 6 months paid parental leave. (This is not quite as good as it sounds: each faculty member can only take this leave once, and under the current contract, you cannot divide it in two or more periods if you plan to have more than one child.) Since my son was born in late August, taking the straight six months was unworkable, so I negotiated with my chair to have the fall term off and then teach half my regular load and do reduced service in the spring.

My spouse and I have worked out a combination of equal and "traditional" child-care responsibilities. The equal part: for example, we strictly take turns on bringing him to daycare, which he started at 16 months. We even keep score, loosely, on who has had the chance to attend a conference. The "traditional" part: generally, I take him to the doctor, I do almost all of the shopping for him, and I do very nearly all of the long-range planning, whether it's reading up on the next developmental stage, or planning for the summer, and so on. I also prepare almost all of the meals for us and the baby. Most of this "traditional" arrangement is a matter of choice to some extent—I generally like

shopping and cooking, and my spouse hates both-but it doesn't always feel equitable, and we haven't figured out how to resolve those intermittent frustrations.

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