I've Got the Job, But What About My Spouse?

The first time I heard the term "spousal hire" at a University of Wisconsin-Madison departmental meeting it was like a blow to the gut. My spouse and I, having gotten into the feminist fray when I was denied a full time position at Emory University because "I was married to him and he was a faculty member on the same campus," had been commuting between Wisconsin and Michigan for fifteen years, seeing each other only on weekends. He had been a visiting professor on my campus but had not been offered any of the full time openings he had applied for. I felt terribly about that, wondering if his credentials weren't up to par; later, I heard speculation that they hadn't hired him in hopes that I would leave, taking my activism on behalf of women faculty with me.
Spousal Hires (cont. from p. 1)

Writing about “Staying Power: Challenges in faculty recruitment and retention at Emory,” Amy Henson Brown notes that “Stanley Fish, liberal arts dean of the University of Illinois at Chicago, says “spousal hires are a highly valuable tool in his recruitment arsenal” and cites an April 13, 2001 Chronicle of Higher Education finding that in 1997 “35 percent of male faculty and 40 percent of female faculty had partners who are also academics” and that “many institutions extend offers to non-married partners and gay or lesbian partners.” *

Willingness to help a job applicant find work for his or her spouse is not uniform across academe: Brown summarizes a Journal of Higher Education survey in which “45 percent of research universities have spousal hiring policies, while only 20 percent of liberal arts colleges do.” Since a good many recruiters feel that “hiring spouses without a national search disadvantages other job seekers,” and that the practice “erodes the university as a meritocracy,” you should try to find out what the campus policy is before bringing up your spouse during your application process. (See “Spousal Hires” entry on Google)

“There wouldn’t have accepted a part-time position on the tenure track had I not been part of a package deal with my then-husband, so in hindsight, I can’t help questioning the wisdom of spousal hires. . . . Perhaps we should cease taking employees’ personal lives into account in making hiring decisions.” Anna Trubek, Chronicle of Higher Education

*See The Academic Exchange, September 2001

“The Trailing Spouse”
Some Pros and Cons

There is something about that expression which suggest the discomfort that negotiating your husband/wife/partner’s job evokes.

**CONS**

✓ One of us is far more qualified for a position on this campus than the other. What will happen in our relationship if I get tenure much faster? What will professional jealousy do to us?

✓ One of us is far more of a firebrand than the other: I love that about him/her, but won’t this get embarrassing and might he/she get us both fired?

✓ What happens if we get divorced?

**PROS**

✓ Academic togetherness seems to work for Nicholas McCord Schneider and Erica Ellingson, who share a tenure track job in astrophysical and planetary sciences at the University of Colorado in Boulder. How did they do it? He offered “half my position back to the university,” and his wife applied for it. They teach classes “alternate semesters,” the non-teacher taking over childcare while “doing research and applying for grants.#

✓ Without spousal hires, “we are in danger of losing our most precious resource, our scholarly capital.”

✓ Henry and I asked several colleges to hire us, in different departments, but none agreed. If we had not had to commute for nineteen years, we would have provided a calmer, steadier life for our daughters and ourselves. We would also have been much more active citizens of the campus and community.

WHAT SEARCH COMMITTEES WANT
From Walter Broughton and William Conologue in Profession 2001

Writing in a journal for English Professors, Sociology Professor Walter Broughton and English professor William Conologue provide useful guidelines for preparing for your campus interview. Although their samples are drawn from English and Psychology, their concepts are applicable for other types of job searches. "Something is obviously wrong," they argue, "when new Ph.D.s believe that before they can even enter the job market they must acquire the credentials that once earned tenure."

Do you really have to have all of those articles and even a book to be hired? In setting out to determine whether "the drive among graduate students to amass professional accomplishments is matched by the expectations of the search committees that seek to hire them," Broughton and Conologue come up with the following criteria for being selected during the first screening and then performing well during your on campus interview experience.

EVALUATING CANDIDATES

1. Potential for making a positive contribution to the institution as a whole. (Mean 5.36)
2. Candidate's Letter of application.
3. General teaching experience. (5.17 in English, 4.99 in Psychology)*
4. Letters of recommendation
5. Experience teaching courses related to the position description*
6. Fit between the applicant's research interests and departmental needs.
7. Potential for future research
8. Quality of the applicant's doctoral institution.
9. Quality of course evaluations
10. Awards for teaching.*
11. Transcripts.
12. Quality of journals in which the applicant published
13. Ability to incorporate new technologies in teaching
14. Number of publications
15. Academic service activities and experience (committee work etc)
16. Number of presentations
17. Previous experience as a student of faculty member in similar institution.
18. Book authorship (2.1)
19. Experience working with student clubs and groups
20. Community Service
21. Candidate's religious preference and/or commitment (1.44)

*Note how much more important teaching experience is than publishing a book, with the quality of your teaching outranking article publication as well. However, if you are applying to a doctoral institution, teaching is taken less seriously in the final selection, when only 23% of these institutions rank it as "extremely important."
The On Campus Interview

Now you have made the cut, and, arriving on campus, you will find that your "interpersonal skills and performances can be - and are - judged." Most important is your "performance at a colloquium and while teaching a class" (though there is some deviation about how important that is) but "The ability to relate to students and to faculty members and the candidate's personality all emerge, in that order, as important during the on-campus visit." The importance placed on your teaching performance as contrasted to your research and publications varies significantly if it is a doctoral institution, "where the percentage drops precipitously." *If you are fortunate enough to have a choice at this stage in your job search, you really need to think about whether you prefer a "teaching" college, which awards the baccalaureate only, and a full fledged graduate institution, with its entirely different culture and values.*

AND WATCH OUT FOR

Errors Which May Keep You From Being Hired

- **Poor Teaching**  "One never talked about teaching."  "Focus on release time/money - questions about ways to avoid classroom teaching."  "One taught one of the most boring classes I've ever seen. Another talked about how lazy, uninformed, and so forth our students are - of course, they're not."  "One candidate appeared to consider himself superior to the teaching required at our college (He seemed to think that nurturing basic writers would be beneath him)."

- **Poor Presentation of Research**  "Reluctance to engage in discussion of research area."  "Presentations which are too technical or too insubstantial."  "Did a lousy presentation. Was churlish during dinner."  "Presented a paper in an area that she was working on but [that] did not reveal range of research experience in the field."

- **Poor Interpersonal Skills**  "Behavior perceived as insulting, dismissive."  "During one of the interview questions, she threw up her arms and said, 'Jesus.'"  "One candidate was overly argumentative, even belligerent, during the interview with the search committee."  "One campus visitor ignored many important people and failed to thank those who helped him."

- **Ignorance of Hiring Institution**  "Not knowing enough about the institution."  "Emphasizing research over teaching. We are a teaching institution."  "Failure to demonstrate interest in our college or a general knowledge of who we are."

- **Narrow Focus**  "Some were unable to demonstrate an ability to move beyond a rather narrowly focused research agenda - this lack of range and flexibility hurt a few otherwise very strong candidates."
TOO MUCH SERVICE IN YOUR DOSSIER?
SO THAT’S HOW THEY DO IT # 4

By Charity Ilirsch

from WAGE (We Advocate Gender Equity). Spring 2003.
www.wage.org

Long-time WAGE members may remember some of the techniques of discrimination we've found (see the Fall 1994, Fall 1995, Fall 1996 WAGE Newsletters). There's the "white male shield" (a male is hired and not promoted at the same time a female is hired and not promoted so the university can argue that the woman is not singled out), letters soliciting evaluations which are very different for female candidates, female "candidates" who are interviewed for positions already promised to a male ... Another technique, exemplified in the following story, might be called "the catch-22."

This is the story of a woman who was hired at a new department. Because the department also had a new graduate program, the service load was very high with new graduate and undergraduate curricula to be developed, new courses prepared, new committees to be formed, etc. The woman was assigned a disproportionate amount of service and -- unlike some non-tenured male faculty membership was expected to complete the assignments. Male faculty members who refused or failed to work on service assignments were not penalized. In fact, these men were indirectly rewarded for their behavior because they had more time for research. The woman's service assignments gained her neither status nor financial reward -- yet it was made clear to her that she had to be a "team player" and help build the department. When she expressed concern that this work was impinging on her research time, she was told not to worry, the administration understood that faculty members in this department were expected to devote time to institution building.

In addition to this disproportionate service requirement, she was directed by her department to change the focus of her research. She did so and managed to publish her new work. However the service load and the change in research created a gap in her publication record. When her tenure review took place, although the department voted unanimously in her favor, a college committee and the administration concluded she had made a publication push only to get tenure and that her work was no longer "focused." She was denied promotion despite the fact that her file was as strong or stronger than those of the previous two faculty members (both male) tenured in the department. The rationale for this decision?: A push by the administration to have the university recognized as a Research I institution had led to an increase in expectations for tenure. The department has offered as comfort the idea that because the department is now functional, no other junior faculty member will get caught in this particular catch-22. I can't help but wonder if they would have used a male junior faculty member this way and expected him to be gratified to learn that the sacrifice of his career had spared another's!

What can one do to prevent this kind of exploitation? I doubt the chair or dean or whoever asks you to do such institutional work would appreciate your asking for a contract that states that because you are doing work for the department you are entitled to promotion, or that such work counts as papers published. But, perhaps, after a "suggestion" that you change fields, do unusual amounts of administrative work, whatever, you should write a letter to your chair confirming your understanding of what you have been asked to do, the fact that doing it will slow your production of publishable research, and in compensation this work will count as papers published. It might not keep you from being denied tenure, but it might give you a weapon when you take your case to court.
The NWSA Conference Academic Discrimination Advisory Board Coordinators have organized two sessions for the 2004 conference to be moderated by Dr. Sharon Leder and Dr. Ines Shaw:

- **Thursday, June 17, 3:30-4:45, For the Program Administrators’ Pre-Conference**
  “Successful Practices and Pitfalls in Mentoring Your Women’s Studies Colleagues for Their Promotion and Tenure and Your Own” for the Program Administrators Pre-Conference,

- **Friday, June 18 9.30-10.45AM**
  “Creating New Structures In Academe to Challenge Inequity.” Please check the conference program book to confirm date, time, and place.

- **Friday, June 18, 5.30PM**
  The Academic Discrimination Business meeting.

“Successful Practices and Pitfalls in Mentoring Your Women’s Studies Colleagues for Their Promotion and Tenure and Your Own” will explore positive and negative experiences of mentoring, for the mentor and the Women’s Studies faculty member coming up for tenure and/or promotion. Panelists will share knowledge of informal rules for advancement, political and substantive pitfalls to be avoided, and ways to have mentoring advance one’s professional development. The panelists, Leslie Sue Lieberman, Director of the Women’s Research Center at the University of Central Florida-Orlando, Helen Klebesadel, Director of the UW System Women’s Studies Consortium and Visiting Associate Chair of the UW-Madison Women’s Studies Program, and Sharon Leder, Professor Emeritus of English and Women’s Studies at Nassau Community College, will discuss how mentoring can be crucial in the preparation of women’s studies faculty for promotion and/or tenure. For the mentor as well, the time involved can be significant and needs to be recognized. In some institutions of higher education, informal and/or voluntary mentoring relationships are developed or encouraged. Others have mentoring programs in place in which a probationary or newly tenured faculty member is paired with an experienced faculty member who acts sometimes by assignment as a resource for information about institutional and teaching matters. The formalization of this relationship is a means of offsetting the limits of informal mentoring relationships; however, even in formal mentoring, there can be weaknesses or pitfalls that prevent even well-intentioned faculty and administrators from helping probationary or newly tenure faculty succeed.

Some of the common problems for probationary or newly tenured faculty are the following: the extent to which guidance will be offered may not be made clear; faculty can be unknowingly misguided by the mentor, not be sufficiently mentored, or not be mentored in an appropriate way. On the other hand, mentors also must be clear about what they can and cannot offer and understand how much they may expect of themselves. There are ways the work of
mentoring can receive more recognition so that the mentor's efforts contribute to her own promotion dossier. In addition, because a mentor is not going to be knowledgeable about everything, the concept of mentoring has to be expanded. For example, the probationary or newly tenured faculty can be told to look in the Faculty Handbook for the department's formal and informal criteria for promotion and tenure. However, she may not know whom she can address to clarify these criteria; who knows the ins and outs, who sits on relevant committees, and who can support a nomination effectively. Even a mentor who knows what some of the issues and problems are, or the appropriate and accepted ways to raise different kinds of concerns, may still need to seek other mentors.

In the session on “Creating New Structures In Academe to Challenge Inequity,” a panel will feature speakers who will explore the kinds of structures that can be put into place to monitor departmental and college-wide committees and college administrations so that these bodies are under pressure to take greater responsibility for their actions and are fully cognizant that their procedures and decisions are under public review. The panelists, Prof. Jeni Hart from the Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis / Higher and Continuing Education Emphasis of the University of Missouri-Columbia, Dr. Florence Seldin, New England School Development Council / Equity in Promotion and Hiring K-12, of Chatham, Ma, and Dr. Xu Ji Di of Educational Foundations will explore how too often feminist faculty and administrators who interview for positions or come up for tenure and promotion are encouraged to perceive the situation in individualist or personalized terms: Are my answers to questions, my letters of recommendation, my publications, or my student evaluations good enough? The feminist faculty member or administrator experiences all the responsibility and stress of having to prove her merit and self-worth. If the job, or the tenure and/or promotion are denied, the faculty member or administrator then all too often feels completely responsible for the negative outcome, regardless of whether the negative decision was indeed her personal failure or not. However, over the last three decades of reviewing cases of inequity, the Academic Discrimination Advisory Board has observed that the system itself has frequently not worked fairly and that the patterns of discrimination that characterize institutional committees and administrations are regularly re-enacted. What can make matters worse is that once a feminist faculty or administrator is not selected for a position because of gender or racial bias or has her tenure and/or promotion unfairly denied, it is frequently too late to rectify the situation, given the increasing climate of conservatism in the courts. Therefore, the reasons for why offices of Affirmative Action or Equal Opportunity on the academic campus have not been successful in serving the kind of monitoring function that leads to the prevention of inequities on campus will be assessed.

In the discussion period, panelists and moderators will interact with participants to explore further the topic of structures that challenge inequity. Participants at the session will be encouraged to offer experiences that have worked on their campuses and to present for collective discussion current situations of inequity that need resolution.
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