

Frequently-Asked Questions: Dual Career Issues in Academic Hiring

[Source: University of Michigan ADVANCE; this document has been edited slightly for application to hiring at UC Davis]

Can the dual career status of a candidate be discussed by the search committee?

Definitely not. The chairs of search committees (and search committee members) play an important role in helping all committee members ensure that dual career status is not a topic of discussion in evaluating a candidate. It is important to recognize that committee members may have good ideas about potential dual career solutions, but these should NOT play any role in the discussion of the merit or suitability of candidates.

When is the best time to encourage a candidate to raise a dual career concern?

It is illegal and inappropriate at any time to ask candidates any direct questions about their partner situation. However, it is very important to provide all candidates with information about the dual career program very early in the process—ideally before they even visit.

Once a candidate is invited for a visit, chairs and other administrators typically want the maximum amount of time possible to try to address dual career issues. On the other hand, if a candidate raises the issue early, this may prompt more attention to the issue than is advantageous to the candidate in the department's deliberations. Because any individual cannot guarantee the effect of raising the issue early, candidates should not be given specific advice about what to do. Instead, it is appropriate, if they ask about the issues, to point out the advantages and disadvantages to raising it earlier or later.

How does a candidate actually get help with dual career issues?

Ordinarily a department chair contacts the dean's office, which may contact an internal dual career office, or may request Partner Opportunity Program (POP) services from the Office of the Vice Provost – Academic Affairs (VPAA). Department chairs should be informed about the specific procedures used in their school or college. Search committee chairs and members should not make direct contact with the POP, dean's, or VPAA's offices.

Contact with the dean's office, and potentially a request from the dean for assistance from the VPAA's POP program, may occur before an offer is extended, but it is important that the department chair is clear about the current status of the search process.

Are dual career services from the VPAA's office only available for spouses of faculty?

No. Dual career services through the POP program are not limited to spouses, but are available to those described by a faculty candidate as a partner. They are not available to partners of post-doctoral fellows, graduate students, or staff.

Are dual career services from the VPAA's office only available when a candidate is first considering the University?

No. Under certain circumstances faculty already at the University can receive dual career services through POP, when recommended by a department chair or dean and subject to approval by the Provost's office.

What is the role of department and search committee faculty members in addressing dual career issues?

Depending on the partner's skills and interests, the department faculty may be key resources in identifying career possibilities both on and off campus. Moreover, department faculty can be encouraging or helpful in social and professional settings with the partner. It is crucial that the

partner is treated as an independent individual with career needs and potential, rather than as an appendage to a much-desired colleague. Partners are likely to be sensitive to all cues (in language, tone, and approach) that might suggest that departments and individuals are interested not in their qualifications and talents, but only in recruiting the faculty candidate who is their partner.

Does the department have an obligation to support administrative aspects of the POP services?

The VPAA's POP office works with the school or college and/or the department's administrative staff to assist with dual career issues. The department should be prepared to commit secretarial time as needed.

How can we be positive about the University's commitment to dual career needs and not over-sell the possibilities for a successful outcome?

Members of a search committee or other faculty involved in recruiting must balance two needs: the desire to be encouraging to candidates about the University's and the department's commitment to working on dual career issues, and the need to avoid creating the perception that we can guarantee the partner a job. In the context of concerns about the UC Davis, Davis and Sacramento area labor market constraints, it may be especially important to provide realistic but positive information about the job possibilities inside and outside the University (depending on the partner's field and interests).

What happens if the dual career arrangement that is worked out is only temporary?

It is important to balance the candidates' inevitable preference for permanent solutions and the reality that partners must in fact perform in a competitive job market. At the same time, it is important that the initial appointment be one in which the partner has a realistic chance of success, and that partners and candidates be informed about the long-term prospects of short-term arrangements. It is crucial that departments monitor the success of the dual career arrangement for the partner and identify difficulties as early as possible.

Additional information can be found at the following links from the VPAA's Partner Opportunity Program:

<http://academicaffairs.ucdavis.edu/programs/partner-opp/index.html>

http://academicaffairs.ucdavis.edu/local_resources/docs/work-life/Partner%20Opportunity%20Program%20handout.pdf