Arbeitsgruppe Wissenschaftspolitik:
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Titel der Studie:
„What can universities do?“
Dual-career policies at American universities

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1 Introduction: Anti-nepotism as a form of discrimination

This report is part of an ongoing research project on academic dual-career couples in Germany.¹ Within this project two working papers reviewed the research findings of North American (Rusconi 2002a) and of European sociology (Rusconi 2002b) on “Dual-careers”. This third report reviews the policies American academic institutions have implemented to help the recruit’s spouse/partner seek employment in the new location, if not even in the same institution.

The review of the literature revealed that dual-career couples in academia face several dilemmas: they have to decide which strategies are best in order to achieve professional fulfillment for both partners, they might make a number of sacrifices and compromises such as, for example, ‘tied’ or ‘commuting’ decisions and/or the postponement or renunciation of children. In addition, some universities make their situation even more difficult treating, for example, the ‘trailing’ partner as an ‘add-on’, not offering adequate positions, or having a prejudice against commuter partnerships. In recent years, however, the number of academic couples increased and more and more faculty members accept a university position only if their spouse/partner is able to realize as well his/her professional goals. Consequently, an increasing number of American institutions has realized the necessity to accommodate dual-career partners in order to successfully recruit and retain qualified candidates. A typical example is the University of Wisconsin (taken from its web-site):

“Increasingly, university professionals are part of dual-career couples. Thus, decisions to accept a university position are often made based on the availability of employment for a spouse or partner. The university, recognizing this fact, makes these Dual Career Hire funds available for departments to help find employment for talented spouses/partners of candidates being hired for position vacancies.”

Up until the early 1970s many academic institutions had strict anti-nepotism rules that prohibited couples from working together. Nowadays these policies have been reverted and are generally in violation of federal law, even if there is some evidence that these rules are sometimes still enforced “when it is convenient to cite them” (McNeil & Sher 2001: 36). According to the federal law on Recruiting and Hiring Practices, anti-nepotism policies are allowed only when they are applied without a gender bias: “an anti-nepotism policy which prohibits or limits employment of a spouse or other relative also could be illegal if it has an

¹ For further information see http://www.diejungeakademie.de/.
adverse impact on job opportunities for women” (McNeil & Sher 2001: 36). Consequently, American universities have largely dropped anti-nepotism rules because they are “in direct contradiction to affirmative action measures” (Dagg 1993: 4). Yet, apart from covert anti-nepotism rules, there are still other subtle forms of discrimination against dual-career couples in academia: one partner might be regarded as an ‘appendage’, there might be an unequal division of merit for collaborative work (Norrell & Norrell 1996). Often this happens at the disadvantage of female academics (for a review see Rusconi 2002a).

2 Review of policies in American Universities

2.1 Opinions on “dual-career” issues

Wolf-Wendel and her colleagues note that there is only little research on the policy aspects of dual career couples. There are especially “no national studies that systematically examine institutional policies and practices relating dual career couples in academe” (Wolf-Wendel et al. 1998: 3). Possibly this is due to the fact that, while today a considerable number of academic institutions have found solutions, there is still no general consent on which should be a general policy for dual-career academic couples. “Although most institutions have encountered the dual-career academic couples and faculty parents, few have taken formal steps to deal with the issue” (Norrell & Norrell 1996: 215). Many administrators regard dual-career couples as additional “problems” in an already complex hiring process (Smart & Smart 1990). Moreover, while administrators might acknowledge the benefits – for recruitment and retention – of hiring dual-career couples, the departments involved might not be as concerned but might be more interested in finding the one person who fits their needs best (Norrell & Norrell 1996).

Norell and Norell (1996) review family policies in higher education and note that some universities explicitly address the issue of dual-career couples. Yet, the solutions chosen are very different: in some institutions faculty fellowships are offered for a limited period of time, some have contacts with employers in the community, some provide career and placement services, other provide access to professional employment agencies or a central clearinghouse for academic positions. Some institutions offer only temporary one- or two-year appointments, while other offer only “courtesy appointments” which provide status and services (e.g. library privileges, computer/internet accounts, office space) but no pay and benefits.
According to a survey of chief academic administrators at institutions that belong to the American Association of Colleges and Universities (Wolf-Wendel et al. 1998)\textsuperscript{2}, 80% of the respondents regard that spousal/partner accommodation is an important issue. Administrators generally favor dual-career policies because they facilitate the recruitment and retention of the “best faculty”, especially in institutions located in isolated areas. However, only 20% of the institutions have dual-career policies.\textsuperscript{3} On the other hand, only 20% of the interviewed administrators state that they would “do nothing” to help partners find employment. This is especially the case of institutions located in metropolitan areas with sufficient employment opportunities, since administrators generally believe that there is no necessity of ‘special’ assistance. Other justify the absence of an institutional dual-career policy with the small number of employees on campus, or with the difficulties the implementation might bring with union contracts or state hiring policies. Research universities are the most likely to have institutional policies, probably because they are larger, have more resources and flexibility. Assistance is more likely to be provided to people of color, full professors and women.

Generally, institutions help in five different ways:

- Assisting the partner in finding employment outside the university by active methods (making contacts, sending resumes) or by more passive methods (giving information);
- Hiring the spouse in part-time, non-tenured track positions;
- Allowing job-sharing;
- Finding administrative jobs within campus;
- More rarely, institutions create a tenure track position.

The problems reported are also diverse. Principally the interviewed administrators mention communication difficulties, problems with departmental authority, concern about the quality of the partner, lack of resources. Those institutions without policies perceive the barriers as being more problematic: institutional size, lack of resources, faculty resistance, legal reasons, problems of equity and fairness are mentioned most frequently. When policies have been implemented, administrators believe that they have been successful in achieving recruitment and retention goals and have had a positive influence on the morale of faculty. Yet, the interviewed administrators are also aware of the problems which might arise when the arrangement does not work out, or when the department resents the new ‘imposed’ hire,

\textsuperscript{2} The response rate of this study was 360 out of 617 schools, i.e. 59% (Wolf-Wendel et al. 1998: 4).

\textsuperscript{3} Half of the institutions with policies state that the assistance would be offered also to unmarried domestic partners, whereby the partners’ definition varies.
or the couple divorces. Some of them note that temporary solutions are good for short-terms goals (recruitment), but that on the long-run the partner will want a full-time tenured job (Wolf-Wendel et al. 1998).

2.2 Examples of “good practices”

In successive research, Wolf-Wendel and her colleagues interviewed administrators, deans, department chairs, affirmative action officers, and academic couples of four institutions which have implemented different dual-career programs/policies (Wolf-Wendel et al. 1999). In the following pages I will review the principal results of this study.

Since 1970 Wildwood College allows job sharing. Each partner receives one-half salary, but both can apply separately for the professional development fund and for research support. In addition, each partner receives full benefits and, for the purpose of promotion and tenure, each partner is treated separately. They also have the opportunity of teaching extra courses or of full-filling some other institutional service. In this case they are paid in addition to their half-time salary. The fundamental requirements are that “both partners are qualified for a position, teach in the same discipline, and are willing to share a single job” (Wolf-Wendel et al. 1999: 6). Both administrators as well as faculty regard this policy as being very successful. The college meets the staffing needs, gets two faculty members for the price of one and when extra courses/services are needed they do not have to search outside the college. Dual-career couples are satisfied because they are employed in the same institution instead of commuting or of facing the risk of under-employment or unemployment. Moreover, they feel as “equally and fully contributing members of the faculty” (Wolf-Wendel et al. 1999: 8), while in other institutions partners are often classified in ‘real’ or ‘leading' academic and ‘trailing spouse’. Some couples really enjoy working closely together and job sharing is perceived as giving more flexibility, especially in case of illness or of an emergency. Neither administrators nor faculty report serious negative effects. Administrators are concerned about the lack of opportunities for non-academic professional partners, while dual-career couples are worried about their salary. Especially since they realize that they are paid for a part-time position, but in reality they work almost as much or as much as a full-time faculty.

In Heartland University a formal, written policy was implemented only in 1992. Prior to this date, dual-career couples have been treated on an ‘ad hoc’ basis. This institution provides support through two programs: the Dual Career Program and the Faculty Fellows Program (Wolf-Wendel et al. 1999: 12). The programs include married, unmarried, homosexual as well as heterosexual couples and apply to partners who are new in the community (up to one year after relocation). Candidates and administrative searches are informed of the existence of these programs before the on-campus interview. A “dual-career coordinator” (!) identifies
opportunities for the partners of the top three candidates. For those who are looking for employment outside the university the coordinator makes inquiries, distributes resumes, and eventually provides assistance arranging interviews. The Faculty Fellow Program provides one-year appointments in teaching, research or administration, office space and some benefits for academic partners. Faculty Fellows receive one-time stipend, 3/4 of which is funded by a pool of money created specifically for this purpose, while the remaining third must be provided by the dean hiring the trailing partner. A formal search process is not followed. Usually the dean of the department of the “primary hire” contacts the dean of the department where the “trailing spouse” might fit. Some departments have committees that review adjunct appointments and often the individuals will be interviewed. Frequently the departments supplement the stipend or extend the partner’s contract, yet it is up to the dean to do this. Administrators believe that both programs are necessary for a successful recruitment and retention of the desired candidates. Faculty members appreciate the interest and concern shown, and they feel welcomed. The major criticism relates to the Faculty Fellow Program: a one-year appointment might create “false hopes or expectations that a full-time tenure track position will be forthcoming,” while these appointments give no guarantee of a permanent employment (Wolf-Wendel et al. 1999: 19). Those couples who were unsuccessful in obtaining tenure track or other permanent positions were dissatisfied. In addition, there is some concern that Faculty Fellows might be perceived as “second class” academics, even when longer-term appointments follow this initial position. Most deans and department chairs agree that cross-colleges negotiation are tenuous and that solutions/appointments are easier when they take place within one college. At last, timing problems might arise when the Dual Career Office is not informed on time and cannot arrange interviews for the “trailing spouse” during the negotiation process.

The Midwest University provides support through two programs: the Spouse Relocation Assistance Program (SRAP) and the Bridge Program. “Although in practice, Midwest may accommodate unmarried couples – either heterosexual or gay and lesbian – the policy explicitly uses the word spouse” (Wolf-Wendel et al. 1999: 23). The first program assists spouses seeking employment in non-faculty positions, while the second program provides opportunities for qualified spouses seeking faculty appointments. Information brochures are given by the search committee to the top three candidates. Once a candidate accepts the position and indicates that he/she wants SRAP services, additional information is sent to the spouse. Thus, “in order to benefit from the SRAP services the primary hire has to have accepted a position at Midwest” (Wolf-Wendel et al. 1999: 24). The SRAP office provides couples with detailed information about the area, employment opportunities and other more personal individual needs (doctors, schools, etc.). The Bridge Program, established in 1992,
provides financial assistance for three years to the department willing to hire the “accompanying spouse.” However, this program is not widely publicized and aggressively marketed. Typically the primary hire’s department contributes to 1/3 of the salary, the department hiring the spouse pays another third and the remainder is given by the Provost. After this period the department has to cover the entire cost. “The understanding is that the unit employing the accompanying spouse anticipates having a tenure track position within the three year time period that this individual will fill” (Wolf-Wendel et al. 1999: 28). From an institutional perspective, the Bridge Program is successful in providing a competitive advantage in recruiting and retention. Problems might arise when one partner receives tenure while the other fails, however this has not yet occurred.

In the Big State University, a dual career couple policy was implemented in 1993. While it is not a written policy, it is a well regularized practice. Prior to this date the university hired couples using ad hoc measures. The policy was designed for spouses, but might apply for domestic partners as well. Moreover, this policy was designed for new recruitment, but in some cases dual career hires have been made to keep faculty members in the university. Given that the success of this arrangement depends on the willingness of the initial hiring department to contribute to the costs of the “trailing partner”, there is some evidence that “the policy was more likely to be utilized to recruit a “star” than to recruit an assistant professor” (Wolf-Wendel et al. 1999: 35). Basically the policy works by splitting the salary of the “trailing spouse” among the two departments and the Provost (each one third). First, the department making the “initial hire” must decide whether they want this person so much that they are willing to contribute to one-third of the spouse’s salary. In a second step the department in which the spouse should be hired must decide if they really want him/her in a faculty line, the person is then interviewed and gives a job talk and the department votes “as they would with any new hire” (Wolf-Wendel et al. 1999: 32). From an institutional point of view, such a policy was effective in the recruitment and retention of faculty members. Moreover, it improved the communication between departments and colleges. At last, respondents recognize that the second hire has often a “star quality” as well, and that one department gets a new member at only one-third the cost. Faculty members judge the policy positively and feel a strong loyalty

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4 Yet, so far there have been no accommodations for unmarried heterosexual or homosexual couples.

5 In some cases the two departments split the costs without involving the administration.

6 When the spouse is a more senior, well-known faculty member the costs can be very high. In one case the chair of one department reported that “the one-third that his department contributed to the salary of the spouse was ‘enough that it was a junior line’” (Wolf-Wendel et al. 1999: 32).
for the institution. Among the negative effects, some point out a “potential hostility felt by faculty in the department that hires the trailing spouse” (Wolf-Wendel et al. 1999: 37). Some faculty members are concerned of being “trapped” and unable to move to another institution, and some note that their chances to get a good raise are lower since the administrators know they are not mobile.

2.3 How do dual-career policies “gain currency”? 

Apart from these studies, further information on American academic dual-career policies can be found also in the internet (http://physics.wm.edu/dualcareer.html). This site provides links to institutional web-sites of American universities which have created diverse Spousal Hiring Programs. Many of these institutional web-sites introduce the problem with the increasing concern institutions have in recruiting staff who is member of dual-career families. In some cases the program is directed to both married as well as unmarried partners, while other use explicitly the word spouse. Some institutions provide a definition of who is considered to be a partner, for example the Northern Arizona University: “Living together for at least 6 months or being legally married, having a mutual and exclusive commitment to each other's well-being, being financially interdependent by sharing common assets and common debts, and both parties being of age for legal marriage.” The services offered are, in the majority of the institutions, limited in time (one or two years) and limited to partners of new faculty members, the so-called “new hires”. A typical example is the University of Ohio: “You must be part of a recruitment effort or have lived in the area for less than two years.” Yet, in at least one case the program is explicitly also used to favor retention: “When a candidate indicates that a spouse/partner hire would be a substantial factor in his or her decision to accept an offer or remain at the University” (Arizona University). Many institutions point out that no guarantee can be made for the partner’s employment, and that the program cannot ask for preferential treatment in the hiring process, nor will interfere with normal hiring procedures. The services offered are different. Some institutions provide only general information about the campus and the surrounding communities, a brief overview of the local employment scene, a listing of internet sites and publications. Others provide more active assistance such as: job search and networking assistance; access to job postings within the university as well as from universities, colleges, and other employers in the surrounding areas; resume writing assistance; assistance with interviewing techniques; letters of support. Some institutions might provide extra services for partners qualified for an academic job, such as: office space; adjunct faculty status in the appropriate department; temporary teaching-research fellowships; instructor or lecture line; shared position; one-half to full time tenure track positions (see for example University of Northern Arizona with the remark: “if available and
subject to the needs of the affected department/unit"). Finally, some few institutions provide extra funding for the hiring of the spouse/partner within the university. Usually, the spouse’s salary is split into three and such financial support is limited in time (generally three years) after which the department which hires the partner is expected to cover the entire costs. Moreover, usually it is the department chair/director of the ‘first’ candidate who has to find information about employment opportunities within the campus for the partner of his candidate. The web site of the University of Arkansas provides the criteria for making the decision of hiring a spouse/partner: “The spouse/partner in consideration has sufficiently high achievements and/or potential that he or she would have been a member of a "short list" for a position in the unit if a position in the area had been advertised. The spouse/partner has sufficiently high achievements and/or potential that the receiving department would desire to retain the individual even if the marriage or partnership dissolves or if the candidate leaves the University." Once the department agrees to hire the partner, both departments determine the elements of an agreement, “including terms such as salary, space, rank, startup needs, promotion and tenure or continuing status, or other status of the spouse/partner hire.” In addition, they should agree on the length and quantity of funding, whether or not hiring arrangements change over time, on what happens if the initial candidate leaves the university, under what conditions a term appointment should be renewed.

Other interesting information can be also found in the internet, at different sites, where academics share their information and problems with regard to dual-careers issues, policies in academia, openings for joint-appointments, personal experiences.7

3 Conclusions

The efforts made in recent years by a number of American institutions to accommodate academic dual-career partners are, of course, very welcome. However, the policies universities use are very different, as well as the consequences these arrangements might have on the professional achievements of both partners.

Job sharing probably provides most equity between partners, yet – apart from salary concerns –, the main problem is that academic work is only rarely done part-time, and thus the actual working hours often exceed those contracted for.

7 See for example: http://www.ohiou.edu/dual/overview.html; http://groups.yahoo.com/group/Academic_Couples/. But also the official website of the American Political Science Association: http://www.apsanet.org/.
Temporary contracts give the opportunity to look around and might be a good launching point for further career steps, yet they are only a short-term solution. Dual-career issue arise anew every time the appointment ends and/or the partner is offered a permanent position elsewhere. Similarly, “courtesy appointments” might be a suitable solution for a while, especially at certain life stages (child birth or during the last phase of a Ph.D.), but certainly do not provide equity between partners, nor allow the pursuit of a ‘real’ academic career.

Dual-Career Hiring Funds might be a successful solution if both partners achieve suitable positions which allow further professional development (e.g. tenure track). Yet, since the candidate’s department must contribute to the costs of his/her partner, the success of the agreement depends on the ‘bargaining power’ of the candidate. Moreover, problems might arise when one department feels ‘forced’ to hire a spouse/partner and this person feels unwelcome, an ‘add on’, or his/her work not taken seriously.

Obviously, no policy will ever solve all the problems connected with being a dual-career couple. However, notwithstanding the possible disadvantages dual-career policies might have, the efforts made by (at least some) American institutions are remarkable. Moreover, with the implementation of institutional policies dual-career issues have left the sole private sphere and become an ‘official’ issue for recruitment and, more rarely, retention.

The situation in Germany is different. The results of the survey of presidents and affirmative action officers in German universities – conducted by the Junge Akademie in 2001 – have revealed that over 60% of the participating institutions have been confronted with dual-career issues at a job interview for professor positions. Moreover, many institutions have offered different types of solutions to assist the spouse/partner find employment, some also within the same university. Despite the ubiquity of the problem, these solutions are taken on an ‘ad hoc’ basis and there is no general institutional dual-career policy (for a detailed description see Rusconi 2002c).

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8 The response of this survey was about 57 percent (183 universities and applied universities out of 322) for the presidents and about 48 percent (153 out of 322) for the affirmative action officers.


### Appendix: List of “Dual-career” policies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Policy ‘name’</th>
<th>Eligibility</th>
<th>Offers</th>
<th>Within-university arrangement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Job sharing</td>
<td>Both partners must be qualified for a position in the same discipline</td>
<td>One single position, i.e. each partner receives half salary</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dual Career Hiring Funds/ Bridge Program</td>
<td>Academic partners/spouses*, usually of “new hires”</td>
<td>In few institutions the funding is considered permanent, in others is limited in time (usually three years), after which the partner becomes a ‘normal’ faculty member (i.e. financial supports ends)</td>
<td>Another department has to be willing to hire the ‘trailing’ spouse. Usually the salary of the ‘trailing’ spouse/partner is split among the two departments and the Provost</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty Fellowships</td>
<td>Academic partners/spouses of “new hires”</td>
<td>Usually one-year appointment One-time stipend No guarantee of permanent employment</td>
<td>3/4 of the costs are covered by a special fund, the remaining by the department hiring the ‘trailing’ spouse/partner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Temporary teaching-research appointments</td>
<td>Academic partners/spouses</td>
<td>Usually one-/two-years appointments No guarantee of permanent employment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Courtesy appointments</td>
<td>Academic partners/spouses</td>
<td>Status and services but no pay and benefits</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dual Career Program/ Spouse Relocation Assistance Program</td>
<td>Partners/spouses of “new hires” Focused primarily on assisting ‘trailing’ spouses with finding employment in the community or in on-campus/non-faculty positions</td>
<td>• Job search assistance • Access to job postings • Central clearinghouse • Inquires with potential employers • Interviews assistance</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* “Academic partner/spouse” = partner holding an academic degree and searching for/working in adequate job positions.