



The overviews provided by our panelists for the Women in Science workshop on the Dual-Career Problem of Spousal Placement are available at:

[www.soils.org/membership/women-in-science](http://www.soils.org/membership/women-in-science)

[www.agronomy.org/membership/women-in-science](http://www.agronomy.org/membership/women-in-science)

[www.crops.org/membership/women-in-science](http://www.crops.org/membership/women-in-science)

## **Dual Career Challenges and Rewards**

**M. Susan Erich and Tsutomu (Stom) Ohno, University of Maine**

Stom and I finished our PhDs in 1983 and 1984, respectively. We both stayed on briefly at Cornell as post-docs, before both being hired as post-docs at the University of Minnesota in 1985, thanks to a fellow Cornell PhD on the faculty there, Paul Bloom. We are both soil chemists by training, so we applied to appropriate faculty jobs both separately and also, in a few cases, proposed being hired as a job-sharing couple. This was unusual at the time, and few Universities were at all interested in exploring this option.

In 1987 I was hired as an Assistant Professor at the University of Maine. There were no spousal accommodation policies at that time, although the department was generous in providing office space and other support to spouses, several of whom were supporting themselves on soft money in the late 80s. Stom wrote, and received, several grants to support his research and provide salary. Our first child was born in 1989, and in 1990 we proposed to our department that Stom and I formally share a faculty position. Our department chair and several senior faculty were hesitant, but the departmental peer committee chair was highly supportive and worked to make this happen. Both of us transitioned to 0.5 FTE later that year. Our goal was more equal sharing of child care and a more egalitarian relationship. Around the time our second child was born, I received tenure, and Stom was tenured shortly after. Although the documentation around our positions said that each of us should document half the productivity expected for a full faculty member to be tenured, we didn't really test that expectation. Instead we were aiming for producing a typical 1.0 FTE tenure package, or close to it.

Around 1995, we both began applying for positions at other Universities. Although our job-sharing arrangement worked well for us personally, allowing us to spend valued time with our children, financially it was difficult to support a family with just one salary. After the retirement of a colleague provided a salary line, our department decided to increase our appointments to 0.75. That level of salary, plus additional summer salary from grants, along with other workplace advantages convinced us to stop searching for other positions.

The University of Maine now has a formal partner accommodation program, which is highly competitive since only one partner receives a position each year. Each College can propose only one partner accommodation each year, so many deserving spouses and partners never receive consideration at the University level. The faculty member and the partner must both be highly sought-after and successful, and typically it's difficult for new PhDs to receive one of these accommodations. I was our department chairperson from 2013 to 2018, and during that time we hired 10 new faculty due to a number of retirements and other factors. Over half of the candidates we interview are interested in partner accommodation, so it is a major consideration when hiring. We are located in a small town with few opportunities for jobs for partners. During my term as chair despite much effort in this direction, I was able to arrange only one continuing position for a spouse of a newly hired faculty member. That faculty member's husband was a lecturer in Engineering at another University, a position that we seem to be perennially seeking to fill, so that worked well.

## TWO DUAL CAREER MOVES: THE PROCESS AND POTENTIAL IMPEDIMENTS

Paul Schwab, Texas A&M University

My wife, Kathy Banks, and I met as members of the faculty at Kansas State University. We both held tenure track, research and teaching positions; Kathy was in Civil Engineering and I was in Agronomy. After several years, we decided to pursue employment at larger institutions, and Kathy was offered a position at Purdue University. Purdue Civil Engineering was helpful in seeking spousal placement for me, and I participated in a full interview with Purdue Agronomy to convince them that they needed a fifth soil chemist. The members of the Agronomy Department were supportive, and we made a successful transition to Purdue. During my first year, one of my new colleagues confided that she, too, had a trailing spouse, but he was not successful in finding a position and was forced to look elsewhere. However, during my stay at Purdue, several couples were hired in the department.

Kathy became department head of Civil Engineering at Purdue, and in our 15<sup>th</sup> year at the university, she was offered the position of Dean of Engineering and Vice Chancellor of the Texas A&M System. Once again, I participated in a full interview to see if I could fit in the Soil and Crop Sciences Department. A prominent soil chemist, Richard Loeppert, had retired a few years before I interviewed and left the department without a soil chemist. The Soil and Crop Sciences Department, the College of Engineering, and the University were supportive of our pursuit, and we made this transition successfully.

Purdue and Texas A&M both have policies in place that provide a three-year transition in which the original department/college (engineering in our case), the university, and the spouse's department split the salary of the spouse. The decision ultimately falls upon the spouse's department to accept or reject the spouse. The negotiations are generally conducted at the department head level, recognizing that the favor of hiring a trailing spouse creates a more cordial relationship and increases the likelihood of future reciprocation.

My experiences at Purdue and Texas A&M have been positive, and I have witnessed several instances of couples being hired under the spousal placement policies. Unfortunately, an equal number of attempts have been unsuccessful.

## **Experience with Dual-Career Placement**

**SSSA Women in Science: Panel Discussion on the Dual-Career Problem  
8 January 2019**

**Jeffrey C. Silvertooth  
University of Arizona**

Considering time working as a full-time faculty member, an academic unit head, and as an Associate Dean, I have 32 years of collective experience at the University of Arizona (UA).

I served as a department head for 12 years and we encountered numerous cases that involved a need to review dual-career options. Similarly, I have served as the Associate Dean and Director for Cooperative Extension for seven years and we continue to encounter cases with potential hires, both faculty and staff positions that require dual-career considerations.

Technically, the UA does not have a formal dual-career policy. However, there is a clause in a non-competitive hiring policy that addresses spousal hires but it is very general. In my experience, we do have a culture at the UA that encourages every effort to accommodate new hires with dual-career needs or interests.

My general experience has provided for the development of the following points of consideration:

- There is an increasing tendency towards an expectation among recruited faculty to have a possible provision for a spouse or significant other.
- To be competitive for high quality candidates, it is increasingly important to be able to offer flexibility in dual career opportunities.
- If we are going to countenance such things (and we always do) the academic unit must accept the person as a peer—it's a matter of faculty governance and also the person in question's comfort in finding a good professional home.
- This can add a considerable expense to the hiring process where one hire, including a spousal accommodation, can result in a reduced hiring capacity. There are practical and fiscal limitations to the capacity of accommodating dual career needs.

## DUAL-CAREER CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES AT CORNELL UNIVERSITY

Harold van Es

### **My Personal Experience**

My wife has a PhD in Statistics and is considered a top teacher at the university and even nationally. We had just gotten married in 1987 when I was finishing up my PhD at North Carolina State University. She had graduated a few years prior and was in a faculty position at the College of Charleston. The CoC wanted to retain her and indicated that they would be willing to explore a position for me, probably in the Geology department, which would not have been the best career opportunity for me (although living in Charleston by the beach was admittedly attractive). We agreed that I was in a restricted field (how many places hire soil physicists?) with fewer job opportunities, while she a statistician could potentially be employed at any university. We therefore decided to first pursue a job for me under the assumption that she would likely be able to find professional employment in that institution. The College of Charleston was a fallback option since she already had a faculty position there. Luckily, I was offered a position at Cornell University.

In those days there were no considerations for dual-career needs. Moreover, dual academic careers were still relatively uncommon and it simply was not on universities' radars. My wife found a position as a statistical consultant at the University which was not very desirable as her passion was in teaching. After one year, she applied for a Lecturer position and has had a satisfying career in a nontenure track position. Recently, she was promoted to a Professor of the Practice position.

We had three children during my pre-tenure years and there were no policies for paternity leave, notably no extension of the tenure clock. This placed people like me at a considerable disadvantage.

### **Cornell Policies**

I have been in a faculty position at Cornell University since 1988 (31 years) and during my tenure have served on a number of search committees (chaired a few), and was department chair for five years (2007-2010). Ithaca is a small town and dual career accommodations are challenging. There has been an evolution of guidelines over the past decades and the following are notable:

- The university has a Dual Career Program within HR focused on faculty and high-level non-academic positions. When spouses are locating to Ithaca, the office provides assistance. Moreover, the office is also available to provide assistance in targeted academic recruitment efforts or retention issues in response to a specific request by a provost, vice provost or dean, or, in the case of a nonacademic recruitment effort, a vice president, or the human resource director of the college/unit.

- Recently, the Provost's Office developed a new policy that recognizes that female faculty candidates are often part of a dual-career couple and are more likely than male candidates to have a spouse or partner also looking for a faculty position. Under the new policy
  - The provost will shoulder most of the partner's salary for five years and facilitates hires between colleges: When one college hires a candidate, and another college hires that candidate's partner, the provost will pay 75 percent of the partner's salary for five years. The candidate's college will pay the other 25 percent. If one college hires both the candidate and her partner, it will pay both salaries.
  - The provost will pay up to 25 percent of the partner's startup costs, such as lab equipment and research materials; the hiring college will pay the remainder. The partner's college must guarantee the partner's job after the five years is up (if the partner performs well).
  - The new protocol expedites dual-career hires. Whereas a partner's hire used to take months – and Cornell lost choice candidates – now deans are required to move on proposals within a few weeks.
- The hiring process now includes guidelines (and oversight) to address diversity issues, including
  - Having diversity recruitment as an integral part of the hiring plan
  - Guidelines for best practices for faculty recruitment and bias prevention, including guidance on unlawful inquiries during the hiring process
  - Best practices for faculty mentoring post-hire (e.g., work-life balance issues)
- Policies for family issues related to child birth or adoption for both parents
  - 12-week family leave (per federal guidelines)
  - One semester of partial relief of duties (typically no teaching)
  - tenure clock extension for one year (either parent)
  - short-term disability for child or parent care options

There are also undefined opportunities around spousal accommodations, depending on faculty leverage with administration. Notably, faculty who are considered highly valuable to the institution that receive external job offers are often in a position to negotiate better spousal arrangements (e.g., from a nontenured to tenured position). This tends to be a better opportunity for diversity faculty.

**Name:** Thea Whitman

**Research Area:** Soil Ecology and Biogeochemistry

**Department:** Department of Soil Science, University of Wisconsin-Madison

**Academic History:**

BScH in Environmental Biology at Queen's University (2008)

MS in Soil Science at Cornell University (minor Applied Economics and Management) (2010)

PhD in Soil Science at Cornell University (minors Biogeochemistry and Microbiology) (2014)

Postdoc with Mary Firestone at University of California - Berkeley (2014-2015)

Assistant Professor at UW-Madison (2016-present)

**Dual Career History:**

2014: Accepted position at Madison; Met partner towards end of PhD at Cornell, long-distance while at Berkeley

2015: Partner finished degree at Cornell and found postdoc at Berkeley, both in Berkeley for 4 months

2016: Long-distance including short periods of remote working from Madison; Investigating possible positions in Madison

2017: Partner offered tenure-track position at other university; partner hire process initiated at UW-Madison; offer accepted

2018: Partner started as assistant professor at UW-Madison

**Observations:**

Although you have the most negotiating power before you accept the offer, post-hoc partner hires are possible.

Outside offers and conventional metrics of success always help.

The process can feel very opaque/nebulous/out of your control.

Timelines (offer acceptance deadlines / interview schedules / multiple offers) rarely match up conveniently.

## **Kang Xia – Virginia Tech**

After working as an assistant professor in soil chemistry for a few years, I married a soil microbiologist and thus started our journey as a dual-career couple. We decided at the start of this journey that living apart for our academic careers was not an option for us. At the time, I was on a tenure track position, while he was finishing his postdoc position almost 3000 miles away. A USDA early career grant allowed him to move to my institution as a soft money funded researcher. Although we were grateful that this institution gave my husband an office space and allowed him to share my research lab space, we realized that it was not a long term solution for his career because he was not allowed to supervise graduate students nor to serve on graduate student committee. When the possibility of sharing one tenure track position was presented to the administrators, we were told that this university had never done this before, did not know what to do, and thus was not willing to do anything. After several failed job searches, during which we tried the strategies of bringing up our dual-career situation at or after the interviews. Unfortunately, the overall response we received was that there was not an institutional dual-career program and the dual-career issue was a problem no one wished to deal with. Finally, we independently applied for and received offers on two different positions from another university. After working at that university for several years, due to family reasons we decided to move, as a dual-career couple again. I applied for a position at one university and he sent his application to another institution. We noticed that this time around the dual-career situation did not seem to be a surprise to the interviewing departments, at least in the two universities we applied for. Both universities had already instituted dual-career programs a few years back. During each interview, we made the search committee aware of our dual-career situation. Their responses were positive and helpful. We got offers from both universities, he as the spousal hire for one and I as the spousal hire for the other one. At the end, we decided to continue our journey as a dual-career couple at Virginia Tech. It has been 7 years since coming to Virginia Tech and we have been extremely happy with the working environment and the quality of life here.

### **Virginia Tech's Dual-Career Program**

[https://www.provost.vt.edu/who\\_we\\_are/faculty\\_affairs/faculty\\_recruitment/dual\\_career\\_program.html](https://www.provost.vt.edu/who_we_are/faculty_affairs/faculty_recruitment/dual_career_program.html)

This program was established in 2005 with the support of the NSF ADVANCE program and is administrated by the Office of the Executive Vice President and Provost. Virginia Tech recognizes that *“meeting the needs of today’s professional couples is a key factor in recruiting and retaining new faculty. Many prospective candidates for faculty positions at Virginia Tech have spouses or partners who are also seeking employment. The Dual Career Program hopes to bring a new level of support to couples and their families when considering new employment opportunities within the university”*. The VT Dual Career Guidelines for Department Heads, instituted in 2014, includes procedures: **1)** Inform candidates about VT’s Dual-Career Program during recruitment process; **2)** Identify existing and new position possibilities for spousal appointment (with candidate’s help); **3)** Target units evaluates and interviews the potential spousal candidate; **4)** Work with the targeted units and the Office of Provost to allocate potential position and shared funding; **5)** For assistance with employment outside of VT, the Dual Career Program Manager supported by the Provost’s Office and the Human Resources offers job search assistance for up to one year for spouses or partners of newly recruited faculty or administrators with services including: 1) General information on employment in the region; 2) Assistance to the client by reviewing resumes, cover letters or other documents related to the job search process; 3) Networking; 4) Job coaching or career exploration; 5) Interviewing skills; and 6) Job search strategy.



At the receiving end of a Dual-Career Program and later serving on many faculty search committee, I would like to emphasize that ***job search by a dual-career academic couple should not be treated as a “problem”***. It is a situation that both the dual-career couple and the hiring academic institution need to work together. Although each case is unique and the process of reaching to the final solution varies, a formal university level dual-career program is essential and provides general guidelines for all parties involved in this process. Out of the 2474 US private and public 4-year colleges and universities there are currently only 63 campuses have formal “dual-career program” (Higher Education Recruitment Consortium, <https://www.hercjobs.org/campuses-with-dual-career-programs/>). In order to meet the needs of today’s increasing numbers of professional couples and to compete for a diverse best and the brightest talents, establishment of such program at more institutions is obviously important.

**Below is a list of useful resources:**

1. Dual-Career Academic Couples: What Universities Need to Know (<https://stanford.app.box.com/s/y5bicy7o3cxwtmqy22iu>)
2. The Higher Education Recruitment Consortium (<https://www.hercjobs.org/>)
3. The A to Z of Dual-Career Couples (The Chronicle of Higher Education, Jul 4, 2011; <https://www.chronicle.com/article/The-A-to-Z-of-Dual-Career/128096>)
4. Preparing for an Academic Career in the Geosciences- Dual Career Couples <https://serc.carleton.edu/NAGTWorkshops/careerprep/jobsearch/dualcareer.html>