Dual-Career Academic Couples
Rewards, Challenges & a Few
Survival Tips

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“Meeting the needs and expectations of dual-career academic couples - while still ensuring the high quality of university faculty – is the next great challenge facing universities.”

_Dual-Career Academic Couples_  
_What Universities Need to Know_  
_Michelle R. Clayman Institute for Gender Research_  
_Stanford University, 2008_
University Recruitment and Hiring of Academic Couples is Increasing

- 36% Have Academic Partners
- 36% Have Employed Non-Academic Partners
- 13% Have Stay At Home Partners
- 14% Are Single

Partner Status of U.S. Academic Workforce

Dual-Career Academic Couples What Universities Need to Know
Michelle R. Clayman Institute for Gender Research, Stanford University, 2008
Dual-Career Academic Couples Benefit an Institution

Enhance Campus Diversity
Provide a Broader Spectrum of Role Models
Help Bring Talented Faculty to an Institution
Foster Social Interactions
Raise Awareness
Rewards & Challenges
For Dual-Career Academic Couples

Shared Interests & Work
Equality & Rank
Spheres of Influence
Mutual Career Success
Family Matters
Tending the Home Front
Shared Interests & Work

Understanding and Awareness of Career Challenges and Time Commitments

- Years in Training

- Mountains Climbed to Reach an Academic Position

- Understands the Meaning of: “I’ll be home late” or “I need to work this weekend.”

- Dedication to Making it Work
Shared Interests & Work

Understanding of a Field or Area of Specialization

- Often Speaks the Language
- Provides Critiques of Work or Creative Ventures
- Offers a Sounding Board for Work
- Frequently Knows the Players First Hand
Equality & Rank

Dealing with Issues of Equality

- Strive for Equality During Recruitment

- Collaborate but Recognize the Need for Individual Recognition for Each Partner

  - Publishing
  - Grant Funding
  - Credit for Effort
  - Attendance at Meetings
Equality & Rank

Dealing with Issues of Equality

-Tenure and Promotion

- Work to Make Each Individual a Strong Contender
- Prepare Starting Day One
- Collect Supportive Material for Each Dossier
- Make Connections to Faculty and Administrators
- Do Not Assume Favor Due to Your Partnership
Equality & Rank

Dealing with Issues of Rank

- Recognize the Ups and Downs of Each Individual
  - The Cyclic Nature of Careers and Duties
- Show a Willingness to Trade-off and Shift Focus to One Career or the Other at Difficult Times
- Recognize that Most Dual-Career Recruitments Bring Double Value to an Institution
- Educate Those Who Underestimate the Power of Two Career Couples
Spheres of Influence

Individual

Colleagues
Mentors
Collaborators
Students & Fellows
Administration

Colleagues
Mentors
Collaborators
Students & Fellows
Administration
Spheres of Influence

Expand Your Spheres

Colleagues
Mentors
Collaborators
Students & Fellows
Administration

Double the Advice
Greater Visibility For Each Partner
Broader Recognition of Each Partner
More Support
Spheres of Influence

Strive to Build Expanded Networks as Partners

-On Campus
  Get to Know Your Partner’s Colleagues, Mentors, Trainees, and Chair

These Individuals can be an Important Source of Support, Technical Help, and Advice

Access to Additional Administrators & Staff Can Be Helpful
Spheres of Influence

Strive to Build Expanded Networks as Partners

- In Your Discipline

  External Colleagues and Collaborators May Be Helpful to Both Partners

  Don’t Be Afraid to Recommend Your Partner For Service or Committees

  Consider Shared or Rotating Service on a Committee
Mutual Career Success

Identify and Strive for Success as Individuals and as a Couple

- Work for Success in Your Selected Areas of Excellence

- Identify Goals as Individuals and a Team

What is Important For Academic and Family Success?

Focus on Research
Do You Need to Build Your Research Program by Attending Meetings, Finding Collaborators, Getting More Paper or Grants?
Mutual Career Success

Focus on Service
Is Service Important to Your Career Goals and Growth? Will You Learn Something New by Serving? Will Your Service Make a Difference in an Area that is Important to You?

Focus on Teaching
Is Teaching Critical to Your Success and Advancement? Will a Specific Teaching Assignment Enhance Your Skills? Build Your Academic Portfolio? Will You be Teaching a Subject or to an Audience You Enjoy?
Mutual Career Success

Focus on Family
Is Your Family Strong? Do You Devote Sufficient Time to Family? Have You Built Traditions to Sustain and Enrich Your Family? Do You Build Creativity and Education into Family Time?
Mutual Career Success

Identify and Strive for Success as Individuals and as a Couple

- Recognize that Attaining Goals & Balancing Work & Family Will Always Be an On-going Process

- Realize that You May Need to Be Flexible to Accommodate Your Partner’s Goals

- Discuss Your Short and Long-term Goals Frequently

- Keep the Lines of Communication Open & Be Flexible to Change
And now for another point of view...
Commitment is Key

- Time for spouse and family is a high priority; nevertheless, you need to be there at work when they really need you.
- Family activities need to be part of the rhythm of daily life.
- Set a very high threshold for activities that compete with family time.
- Be involved in children’s day to day lives – school, and extracurricular activities.
- If commitment is there, other things will fall into place.
Minimizing Inevitable Work-Family Conflicts

• Build flexibility into work schedule to the extent possible
• Be very selective about off hours and out of town meetings. Come home a day early from trips, if possible.
• Be able to work at home occasionally
• Support colleagues when they have work-family issues
• Minimize routine household tasks to the extent possible
• Keep a family calendar of out of town trips, evening commitments, doctor visits, teacher conferences, school breaks, etc.
• Write spouse/family commitments in your own calendar
• Usually attend department social functions alone, unless children are invited
• Start early on time-sensitive assignments
Tending the Home Front

• Hire help, cleaning, garden work, and major projects
• Get recommendations from colleagues & local referral agencies
• Accept that your home may not be exactly like your neighbors’
• Be willing to compromise on décor including books, computers, tools of the trade, & your home office
• Assign tasks to fit each partner’s skills or enjoyment
• Reliable transportation is essential. Driving to work together is usually not practical
• Schedule home duties to fit your work schedule
Family Matters

- Schedule family time & visits with extended family as priorities along with work
- Long distance & local eldercare: look to colleagues for advice, help & support. Check federal, state and local rules.
- Recognize the importance of elder family members to children
- Don’t overlook family & friends for help
- Be flexible and have a backup plan
Maintaining the Marriage

• Both of us put the children first, we are there when they need us
• Divide household and child rearing tasks.
• We talk about things, but also have a lot of autonomy for the little stuff.
• Understanding what’s going on with the partner’s job is important.
• Spouse’s career is equally important. If there’s something she needs to do for her job, I’m not going to second guess it.
• In the big picture, most stuff probably doesn't matter. Try not to criticize how she does her tasks
• Watching a show together after the kids go to bed and lunch together on campus are good things
Staying Happy

• Get involved in varied and regular activities you enjoy and find fulfilling
• Eating dinner as a family is a good thing
• Small things together (bedtime reading, a walk) are good things
• Include the children in routine household activities whenever possible
• Be selective about extracurricular activities
• There are many great family activities in Indianapolis and Indiana. Younger kids like just about anything.
• Stay in contact with extended family
Take Care of Yourself

• Get plenty of sleep
• Get plenty of exercise and outdoor recreation
• Get involved in activities you enjoy and find fulfilling
• Eat a healthy breakfast
• Restrict junk food and fast food, prepare most meals at home
• Limit fat: Favor monounsaturated fat \( \geq \) polyunsaturated oils \( >> \) solid fats
• Consume mostly plant derived foods
• Favor fresh vegetables, fruits, whole grains, and nonfat dairy
• Restrict salt and refined sugar
Disclaimer

• We winged it
• We had no idea what we were getting into
• We blundered through the last $23^{1/2}$ years
• I’m a very lucky guy