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ISSUES IN THE HIRING AND TENURING OF BUSINESS FACULTY COUPLES: A SURVEY OF BUSINESS DEPARTMENT CHAIRPERSONS

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With a tight market for faculty in many areas of business, academic administrators are beginning to examine various options for attracting and retaining good faculty. One set of options is to hire faculty couples: either husband and wife in the same discipline or in different disciplines within business. This faculty couple, dual career arrangement offers a number of opportunities but can also create unique problems both for the couple and for the school.

Effects on the Couple

Opportunities. It is essential that both the husband and wife in the dual career couple achieve a sense of career accomplishment and satisfaction (Bird & Bird, 1987). Their unique dual career status may offer opportunities to business faculty couples for reaching career achievements through mutual assistance and support. If the couple is in the same or similar disciplines or even different but complementary disciplines, they can develop joint research and teaching projects. Further, they can constructively critique each other's work.

Not only can the dual career couple support each other professionally, but they can support each other personally by sharing experiences and concerns about their work and careers. In addition, they can attend academic conferences together. Further, their joint academic schedules allow them to take vacations together between semesters as well as during the summer.

Problems. Dual career couples in general may suffer strain from work-based problems, such as time involvement and the relative priority of each of their careers in their lives (Greenhaus, Parasuraman, Granrose, Rabinowitz, & Beutell, 1989). In addition, many couples are raising children and encounter problems of role strain in providing time and support for their children and for each other (Bird & Bird, 1986; Greenhaus et al., 1989).

Business faculty couples, in particular, who face a long and arduous road toward tenure and promotion, may find it more difficult to leave their work and professional problems at school. As one colleague, who is a member of a dual career couple, put it, "We have a basic rule that there is no discussion of work in bed." Moreover, multiple role-cycling may occur; that is, the roles of each or both partners demand increased attention as important

career points are reached, such as the final tenure or promotion evaluation year.

Even in academic settings, traditional sex roles play a large part in marital satisfaction among dual career couples (Nicola and Hawkes, 1986). Stress may occur when there is confusion about who is responsible for the various household and child rearing tasks. Marital stress may become compounded when traditional roles are upended. For example, the wife is doing the majority of the household tasks and yet her number of publications (or her consulting income) still exceeds the husband's (Hiller & Philliber, 1982).

Problems of individual identity may develop. Academic colleagues may react to the couple as a unit instead of as two individuals, expecting each to know what the other is doing. For example, they may become message carriers for each other and be expected to substitute for one another in meetings, advising, and other academic activities.

Characteristics of Couples. A study of faculty couples at the University of Utah found that more effective faculty couples were more inner-directed (more influenced by what they themselves thought and less affected by the opinions of others) but, at the same time, they were flexible about meeting their multiple responsibilities (Huser & Grant, 1978).

Moreover, there may be differences in role-related values across academic disciplines. The most egalitarian values (e.g., mutual support and sharing of decision-making responsibilities) have been identified among psychologist couples, while the least egalitarian values occurred among biologist couples (Wallston, Foster, & Berger, 1978). Similarly, there may be differences in role values between couples in behavioral business disciplines (e.g., human resources management) compared to couples in the "hard science" business disciplines (e.g., operations research).

Successful dual career couples have developed several strategies for dealing with their career and marital conflicts: better communication skills, better time-management skills, better coping skills, realistic goals to reduce role overload, and life planning to reduce multiple role-cycling (Hall & Hall, 1978).

Effects on the School

Relatively little research has addressed the effects of faculty couples from the perspective of the school, i.e., policies and procedures. In a survey of business school deans, we found that about 15% of faculty were faculty couple spouses (Scheuermann & Knouse, 1989). In addition, 43% of schools had offered some type of joint package to hire faculty couples. Yet despite an awareness of the importance of faculty couples, 83% of the schools had no formal policy on faculty couples concerning such issues as sharing a position, compensation packages, and tenure alternatives.

Opportunities. Faculty couples may provide a symbiotic relation that can benefit the school. If they are in the same discipline, they may be able to support the school as well as support each other by taking over the other's

duties (e.g., teaching, advising, or meetings) when one is absent because of sickness or to attend a conference. Some expenses, such as travel, may be shared. If they are in different business disciplines, business faculty couples can provide ties across departments in terms of informational and support networks. Again, by supporting each other, the faculty couple can provide support for their school.

Problems. Many academic procedures have been designed for faculty as individuals and do not apply well to faculty couples (Monk-Turner & Turner, 1986). For example, should their status as a faculty couple be taken into account when each is reviewed for tenure? What if one is awarded tenure and one is not? Should the one denied tenure be kept in a special position, such as lecturer, to retain the couple? If not, should the school try to secure employment in the vicinity for the one denied tenure to retain the couple?

Another procedural problem pertains to granting sabbaticals? Should sabbatical proposals be reviewed only on an individual basis? What if the husband and wife couple present a joint proposal? What if only one of the couple presents a proposal for travel and time off, should the other be granted time off to accompany the spouse? If time off is granted for the other, should this be with pay or without pay? Still another problem concerns benefits. Should options for life and medical insurance be offered for couples? Of course, there is the problem of academic scheduling. Should faculty couple status be a factor in assigning courses, committee positions, and advising duties?

The Present Study

While our previous study focused upon the dean's perspective on faculty couple issues (Scheuermann and Knouse, 1989), the present study surveyed department chairpersons, who do much of the recruiting and hiring of faculty. Therefore, they play a significant role in bringing faculty couples into the school. Moreover, as their immediate supervisors, they play a key role in assigning teaching and committee duties and in evaluating teaching, research, and service for pay raises, promotion, and tenure.

Several independent variables may influence attitudes of these chairs. For example, size may be a factor. Smaller schools may have fewer employment options and, therefore, must necessarily consider faculty couples. Type of program may be another factor. Doctoral programs may attempt to attract those couples in which one spouse, or even better, both spouses are published researchers. Conversely, nondoctoral programs may also look favorably upon hiring couples as an efficient way of using their scarce resources. In addition, highly marketable disciplines, such as accounting and finance, may have few hiring options in a tight applicant market and thus must consider faculty couples.

Methods

Subjects

One thousand business department chairpersons selected from school catalogues and academic directories of schools in the United States were sent a survey package. Three hundred eleven surveys were returned (31.1% return rate) — a respectable return rate for this type of national survey (Zikmund, 1984). Of the returned surveys, 294 were usable (the seventeen unusable surveys contained uncompleted sections). Table 1, which shows the characteristics of the returned sample, reveals that the various areas of the country and business disciplines were fairly evenly represented.

Table 1

Characteristics of Departments
of Chairs Who Returned the Survey

Discipline	n	Geographic Area	n
Accounting	47	Northeast	32
Business	68	Mid Atlantic	36
Economics	26	Southeast	70
Finance	16	North Central	78
Management	47	Mountain Plains	20
Marketing	36	Southwest	26
MIS, Quant.	17	Far West	22
Others	54	Other	27
Type of Program	n		
Doctoral	83		
Nondoctoral	211		
Other	17		

Survey

The survey asked the department chairpersons to respond to a number of items concerning their opinions on business faculty couple issues (the dependent variables). There were four items on employment decisions (hiring a couple to share a position, offering a couple a joint compensation package, offering a couple independent salaries but joint benefits, and offering a couple a total joint compensation package). Three items involved tenure decisions (offering joint tenure to a couple with separate positions, offering joint tenure to a couple with a shared position, and offering to keep on in some capacity a tenure-denied member of a faculty couple). Item scales ranged from 1 (Not very likely) to 7 (Very likely).

The independent variables were number of faculty, number of students, type of program (undergraduate only, masters, doctorate), and geographic area. In addition, the marketability of disciplines was derived by ranking disciplines by the average salaries listed in the AACSB salary survey (AACSB Newslines, December 1988). Thus the marketability of business disciplines was as follows (from high to low): finance, accounting, quantitative, marketing, management, and economics.

Results

Size

Table 2 shows the means and analyses of variance for the effects of size in terms of number of students on chairperson's attitudes. Department chairs from smaller schools (i.e., fewer students) were significantly more apt to consider hiring a faculty couple to share a position. In addition, chairs from smaller schools were significantly more apt to consider joint tenure for faculty couples with separate positions.

When size was measured as number of faculty, department chairs with fewer faculty were significantly more apt to consider keeping a tenure-denied member of a faculty couple in some capacity, $F(5,287) = 2.23, p < .05$.

Type of Program

Table 3 shows the effects of type of program on chairperson attitudes. Chairs of doctoral program departments were significantly less apt to consider hiring a couple for a shared position than chairs of nondoctoral programs. And doctoral program chairs were significantly less apt to consider joint tenure for a couple with separate positions than chairs of nondoctoral programs.

Geographic Area

The only significant differences among geographic areas were for the Southeast, which was most likely to consider keeping the tenure-denied spouse, $F(6,277) = 2.50, p = .03$.

Marketability of Department

There were no significant differences among the six disciplines ranked according to the AACSB salary survey. Therefore, department marketability did not seem to be a factor in attitudes toward faculty couples.

Discussion

Implications for Schools

The results show that there is somewhat of a trend toward more proactive faculty couple attitudes among chairs of smaller, nondoctoral programs. As-

Table 2

Size and Department Head Attitudes toward Faculty Couples

Item	Size (1000s of Students)						F (5,287df)	
	n	<5 (63)	5-10 (53)	10-15 (61)	15-20 (39)	20-25 (30)		>25 (47)
Hire shared position)		2.72	1.72	2.15	1.86	1.34	1.75	3.95**
Comp. package		5.91	6.15	5.90	5.89	6.52	6.15	<1
Joint benefits		2.88	2.75	2.64	2.70	2.28	2.55	<1
Joint total package		1.52	1.62	1.89	1.59	1.90	1.65	<1
Joint tenure (separate positions)		1.75	1.33	1.38	1.30	1.04	1.08	2.82*
Joint tenure (shared position)		2.47	2.14	2.50	2.18	1.68	1.95	<1
Keep tenure-denied spouse		3.52	3.16	3.33	2.79	3.28	3.73	<1

*p < .05

**p < .01

Table 3

Type of Program and Department Head
Attitudes toward Faculty Couples

Item	n	Doctoral Program (83)	Nondoctoral Program (211)	F (1,292df)
Hire (shared position)		1.63	2.16	5.76*
Compensation package		6.27	5.97	1.84
Joint benefits		2.52	2.73	<1
Joint total compensation		1.74	1.67	<1
Joint tenure (separate positions)		1.09	1.47	6.79*
Joint tenure (shared position)		1.94	2.28	1.62
Keep tenure- denied spouse		3.42	3.30	<1

* $p < .05$

suming that the larger programs and doctoral programs have more extensive resources, the commonality among these smaller nondoctoral programs may well be limited resources. This is reinforced by the geographic data showing a tendency among Southeastern schools to want to keep faculty couples

even if one is denied tenure. This may well reflect the limited financial resources of schools in Louisiana, Mississippi, Arkansas, and Alabama in the Southeast. With such resource constraints, the department head may be forced to consider alternatives, such as faculty couple arrangements, to traditional hiring and tenure approaches.

On the other hand, there was not a strong statement overall (i.e., high ratings) from these department heads on faculty couple policies. It may be that many administrators are aware of faculty couple issues but are purposefully avoiding the imposition of official policy statements. In effect, department chairs may desire the greater freedom to create individualized packages to attract and keep those faculty couples that they believe will best benefit the school.

Implications for Business Faculty Couples

This study would seem to show that faculty couples may have an edge in smaller, nondoctoral schools. They may find an advantage in negotiating favorable salary and benefits packages and also teaching and research arrangements in these schools.

There may also be an advantage for certain faculty couples in which one or both spouses is an established researcher or is in a discipline with a large demand for faculty. Department chairs may desire the flexibility of customized rather than standardized packages in order to court these highly desirable couples. As one colleague in such a highly desirable business faculty couple put it, "I would prefer enlightened administrators who understand the situation to the presence of hard policy."

Future Research

Thus far, research has addressed faculty couple issues from the administrative point of view (deans in our previous study, department heads in the present study). The next step would appear to be examining the attitudes of faculty couples themselves. Future research can address several questions. Do these couples prefer formal policy or enlightened administrators who can create customized arrangements? What are their preferences regarding hiring and compensation packages, and then, after they are hired, sabbatical and tenure decisions? Are there commonalities in attitudes for highly marketable couples (those in disciplines with a high demand for faculty and those who publish extensively) and for highly mobile couples (childless)?

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