

DUAL CAREER GUIDELINES FOR DEPARTMENT HEADS

Updated: August 2019

Virginia Tech is committed to responding to the needs of dual career couples within available resources in cases that are consistent with our mission and goals. These guidelines outline the basic conditions under which dual career hires should be considered.

OVERVIEW OF DUAL CAREER HIRES IN THE CONTEXT OF PERSON-SPECIFIC FACULTY HIRING

The faculty hiring that is most familiar involves a search process, initiated with the definition of a “position,” posting of an ad for that position, and formal applications reviewed by a search committee appointed to do that job¹.

Person-specific faculty hiring is a framework developed by the University of Michigan’s STRIDE program for the consideration faculty appointments that do not arise in response to a job application or posted position. This framework provides an overview of principles and practices regarding this type of hiring that can be used by department heads as they navigate the process of a dual career or other form of person-specific hiring.

At Virginia Tech, person-specific hiring occurs most often in the context of (1) consideration of faculty partners for dual career positions; (2) faculty appointments as part of the Future Faculty Development Program; and (3) faculty appointments through the Target of Talent program. Each of these circumstances is slightly different, but all of them share the feature that the candidate is not evaluated in the context of a pool of applicants for a position. In addition, hiring for person-specific positions typically does not have a conventional timeframe dictated by the norms of the discipline or the timing of the posting of the ad.

Person-specific hiring is undertaken, however, with the same long-term goal and expectation as other faculty hiring: that any individual hired is brought into a unit (or in the case of joint appointments, multiple units) as a full member, because of the belief that the individual can make a meaningful contribution as a faculty member. Therefore, the unit(s) must be prepared to take on responsibility for addressing that person’s needs for support and development like those of any other faculty member at a similar rank.

The employment preferences and needs of dual career couples vary from one case to another. Information about employment opportunities in the region may result in an appropriate placement for some. In other instances, referral to existing vacancies on the faculty or staff may provide an appropriate match between opportunity and the individual’s skills. In cases where a faculty position does not currently exist, and the individual’s credentials merit appointment to the faculty, it may benefit the university to allocate a temporary or permanent appointment to accommodate a dual career recruitment or

¹ From: <https://advance.umich.edu/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/handbook.pdf>

retention. The following guidelines address this latter instance:

1. Allocation of a position, either temporary or permanent, for a dual career partner should address demonstrated institutional and/or departmental needs and goals. Given limited funding, priority will be given to individuals with outstanding faculty credentials where the primary candidate is being recruited for a tenure-track faculty or senior administrative position;
2. There must be an appropriate fit between the qualifications of the individual and the available or proposed position;
3. Following an appropriate interview and evaluation process, an offer of employment to the partner shall be extended only if there is strong support on the part of the department where the position is to be located;
4. University search procedures allow an exemption to search for a dual career appointment to a faculty position. Requests for an exemption to a search are approved by the provost and president. Please note that searches cannot be waived for staff positions. Consult with Human Resources for procedural advice concerning staff positions.

Three primary principles underlie good unit practices in considering individuals for person-specific faculty hires¹:

1. **Transparency and consistency.** The unit has developed clear, transparent processes for handling hiring of this sort, which are accepted by the faculty. Ideally, these processes should be discussed and developed before any candidates are identified. Wherever possible, these processes should mirror those of hiring through the conventional search process.
2. **Respectful processes.** All discussions about the potential hire should be undertaken with the same concern for a respectful assessment of a potential colleague that would be present in any search, and all interactions with the potential hire should convey that tone of respect.
3. **Equal treatment.** Every stage in the process should be undertaken with the potential outcome in mind that the individual under consideration might become a colleague in the department, one who deserves to be accorded the same credibility and respect as any other member of the faculty.

IMPLEMENTATION PROCEDURES FOR DEPARTMENT HEADS

Informing Candidates about Dual Career Opportunities

There is a natural tension between the hiring department's need to know as soon as possible about a dual career hire and the candidate's possible reluctance in revealing that information if they believe that it might negatively affect their consideration. There are several strategies departments can use to encourage candidates to let them know of their needs earlier in the recruitment process, including:

- > Creating a link to the [Faculty Work/Life Policies](#) and the [Dual Career Program](#) websites in the posted position ad;
- > Distributing an information sheet or brochure about the dual career program to all candidates when they are invited to interview;
- > Assuring that a meeting is scheduled with all interviewing candidates and your college's [Work-Life Liaison](#). The liaisons are prepared to share information and discuss dual career opportunities with candidates.

Remember that it is illegal to ask a candidate directly about whether they are part of a dual career couple.

It is important to proceed with the interview and offer to the primary candidate even if the possibility of an appointment for the partner is not yet clear, or if it is decided that the partner is not suited to a position at the university. Do not discriminate against a candidate because of a dual career situation.

Identifying Possibilities for Appointment

The primary candidate lets the hiring department head know about the need for dual career consideration and supplies information regarding the partner's educational background, experience, and employment history. Suggestions for appropriate placements should be solicited from the candidate and/or partner. The primary department head identifies and investigates the best possibilities for employment by contacting the relevant department heads. It can be helpful to notify the Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs as these department head discussions take place. The relevant deans should also be kept apprised of any discussions.

In cases where staff positions are appropriate and of interest to the individual, referral should be made to Human Resources to review both opportunities and strategies for pursuing staff positions. Other employment options are described later in these guidelines.

Target Unit Consideration of Candidate

The target unit initiates an evaluation process, including a review of a vita/resume and references of the individual, and conducts an interview with the potential candidate. Units should develop a standard procedure for consideration of such candidates that is already in place before such a candidate is considered. It is best if more than one person is involved in making such decisions. For example in some units a standing review committee can evaluate all candidates who arise in this person-specific fashion; others may find that it's better to appoint an ad hoc review committee composed of individuals well-qualified to assess the particular candidate's potential. If there is an appropriate personnel or standing search committee in the department, this committee would normally be involved, as would other faculty members depending on the nature of the proposed position. If the candidate might be appropriate for a joint appointment with another unit, it is important to bring that other unit into the process as early as possible. The candidate's qualifications should be evaluated using criteria appropriate to the proposed role and credentials required in the field.

Communications, in this and other stages, should always be directly with the candidate (e.g., not through partners in the case of a dual career situation).

Visit Arrangements

Candidates for person-specific hiring should be brought into the unit for a visit organized in precisely the same way as any other candidate to the unit, even if they are already on campus or in the area. The visit should be announced in the same manner, they should meet the same people, participate in the same kinds of activities (job talks publicized in the usual manner and taking place in the usual location, meetings with students and faculty, tours of the space and campus, meals with faculty and students, etc.), and be evaluated by the same processes.

Deliberation Procedures

Ordinarily the same procedures for decision making used for other faculty searches (e.g., having the “review committee” make a report, executive committee approval, department vote, etc.) should be followed. In any faculty review process, individuals use many different standards in evaluating candidates for positions. In the case of person-specific hires, some faculty may be tempted to suggest particular standards they believe are appropriate to this kind of consideration but which are not broadly accepted by the faculty. Therefore, it is important for the department to have established understanding and norms about these issues. For example, a unit may be willing to consider dual career appointments (either for their own faculty hires or for other units’) because it recognizes both their importance for faculty recruitment and retention campus-wide, and that they present unique opportunities to augment the strengths of the department. If it has been decided to consider such appointments, then the fact that “we wouldn’t have searched for someone in this area” is not germane to appointing the person. Equally, our uncertainty that “this person might not have risen to the top of a national pool” cannot be relevant (since it is an uncertainty that cannot be addressed). Instead, more appropriate benchmarks may be: Does this person meet our standard for a colleague in the department? Does this person add value to the department in possibly unanticipated ways?

Negotiating the Offer

If the decision by the unit is to extend an offer, the goal is to hire a colleague who will thrive here. For that reason, negotiation should aim—like that for all faculty hiring—to maximize conditions for the individual’s success. It should also be conducted in a fashion that communicates respect and consideration for the individual, including attention to a reasonable timeline similar to that followed in standard searches (or explicit and regular communication about causes of any unusual delays). Once the decision to make an offer has been made, it is critically important to **communicate frequently with the candidate about the process of producing the formal offer.**

Making the Formal Offer

Cases where there is an Existing Position or Funding Available in the Receiving Department and/or College

Receiving departments (and/or colleges) that have available funds and/or positions and

are prepared to make an offer for a dual career partner may develop an appropriate job description (if not already available) and proposed offer and then seek an exemption to search, using the process in place by the [Office for Equity and Accessibility](#) in Human Resources. The search exemption includes a letter of explanation including a brief statement of how the proposed appointment benefits the receiving department and/or college and documenting the process used to review and evaluate the candidate. Attach the candidate's vita. The exemption request must be approved by the department head, relevant dean or senior manager, the provost, president, and the [Office for Equity and Accessibility](#). The formal offer may not be made until approval has been granted.

Cases where a New Position Must be Allocated and Shared Funding Arranged

In cases where the receiving department/college does not already have a position and/or adequate funds available to support the proposed appointment, the expectation is that the hiring and receiving departments (and colleges) and the provost may share in funding the position on a transitional basis. After the approval of the proposal, the provost typically commits bridge funding for up to three years at one-third salary (in limited cases, two years at half salary), with the remainder shared by the primary hiring and receiving departments or respective colleges. Permanent funding, in the case of a base-funded appointment, is the responsibility of the hiring department and/or college at the end of the transition period. Bridge funding available from the provost is limited and may not be available to support all requests. Typically the highest priority would be to support a faculty position in response to a tenure-track or tenured faculty hire or senior administrative hire. If the receiving department accepts bridge funding from the provost, the expectation is that the dual career appointment continues beyond the bridge period if the performance and accomplishments of the individual warrant continuation.

Departments requesting funding assistance should submit a written proposal through the responsible dean to the Provost's Office. The following information is needed to evaluate the request:

- > An explanation of the situation;
- > An explanation of how the university will benefit from the appointment and how the proposed appointment fits within the priorities of the receiving department and/or college;
- > The vita of the individual under consideration;
- > The proposed salary, type of appointment, and job description;
- > A statement indicating the source and amount of funds from the participating units, and the amount requested for bridge funding from the provost, and the time period involved in the transition; and
- > Information about potential future funding. (The goal is to move employees from temporary funds to permanent funds whenever feasible and appropriate.)

Upon approval by the provost, president, and the [Office for Equity and Accessibility](#), the receiving department head is authorized to make the offer to the dual career partner using the standard Terms of Faculty Offer detailing the nature and conditions of the appointment. Expectations should be stated very clearly so that any special conditions are fully documented for the record.

Standard review and appointment procedures should be used when appropriate and the level of review should be consistent with that accorded similar positions and types of appointments. For example, if the appointment involves a rank above assistant professor or includes tenure, then the appropriate departmental committee must approve such an appointment. To make an appointment with tenure, the university's approval process should be followed (see section 3.3, Faculty Handbook).

Every effort should be made to welcome the new faculty member in the receiving department and help make him or her become a full participating member of the faculty. Helping the individual succeed will serve both the department and employee, and help accomplish the primary goal of the dual career-hiring program, which is to recruit and retain talented faculty members.

DUAL CAREER ISSUES ASSOCIATED WITH RETENTION

Retention of talented individuals currently on the faculty can also be affected by employment opportunities for their partners. In the case where there is a determination that a dual career appointment is critical to retaining the faculty member, and it is in the university's interest to try to respond to this need, the process described above provides general guidance for how to proceed.

OPTIONS OTHER THAN TENURE-TRACK APPOINTMENTS

Affiliated Research Faculty (see section 6.7, [Faculty Handbook](#)): Status as an unpaid Affiliated Research Faculty member may allow a fully credentialed person to pursue grants and contracts as a member of the Virginia Tech faculty. The host department may provide lab or office space, or other resources as available, to support the individual's efforts to obtain sponsored funding or to continue his or her research. The request to establish an affiliated research faculty appointment is handled on a [P-85 form](#) approved by the host department, college, and Office of the Vice President for Research and Innovation. With the appropriate credentials and research faculty rank, the individual may serve as PI on a grant with permission of the department.

Research Faculty Appointments (see section 6.5, [Faculty Handbook](#)): Research faculty appointments are often an appropriate way to provide employment opportunities for well qualified academic partners. Full or partial bridge funding over several years can be provided with the expectation that the individual develop a viable research program and receive sponsored grants or contracts that cover salary and benefits beginning at a specified point in time. If the individual fills the need on an existing grant or contract, the procedure for hiring is similar to that described above – a position description should be developed, credentials evaluated, the individual interviewed, and a request made for an exemption to search. The Office of the Vice President for Research and Innovation is also involved in approval of such requests.

Other Restricted Appointments: Individuals may fill important institutional or departmental needs that are not yet defined or funded as permanent positions. These can be full or part-time, instructional or administrative/professional.

Enrollment in Graduate School: It is relatively common that a spouse or partner may prefer enrollment in a Virginia Tech graduate program rather than full-time employment. Such potential students must be admitted through usual departmental procedures and should be considered for whatever departmental funding is offered to all students. Where such funding is not available, the primary department may consider paying for a full or partial assistantship in the receiving department in order to facilitate the enrollment and support of the partner of the primary recruit.

Other Employment Opportunities: The Provost's Office has partnered with Human Resources to fund the position of Dual Career Program Manager to assist with employment outside of Virginia Tech. The Dual Career Program Manager offers job search assistance for up to one year for spouses or partners of newly recruited faculty or administrators. Departments may also refer current faculty members where retention is a concern due to spouse or partner employment issues. The Program Manager can provide general information on employment in the region, help identify appropriate employers and make connections with key contacts, critique resumes, cover letters and other documents for the client, help prepare the client for interviewing; serve as a liaison between client and hiring managers and act as a sounding board for job seekers in need of encouragement, support or focus. The program offers a variety of services:

- > General information on employment in the region
- > Assistance to the client by reviewing resumes, cover letters or other documents related to the job search process
- > Networking
- > Job coaching or career exploration
- > Interviewing skills
- > Job search strategy

For more information, please review HR's website at <https://www.hr.vt.edu/jobs/dual-career.html>

QUESTIONS?

Please contact Jack Finney, Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs, at finney@vt.edu.