Improving Faculty Retention: A Networking Program for Spouses/Partners Seeking Employment as Administrators at the University of Virginia

Murielle de Wekker, Ph.D.
Faculty Retention

• A critical factor: spousal/partner unemployment
  (Burke, 1988; Schiebinger, Henderson & Gilmartin, 2008; Wolf-Wendel, Twombly & Rice, 2000)

  Goal: Minimize STEM and SBE female faculty attrition caused by spousal unemployment
Finding Employment

- Socialization and networking are key factors (Calvo-Armengol & Jackson, 2004; Krauth, 2004; Topa, 2001)

- Networking: access to informal organizational knowledge

- Socializing: fellowship, encouragement and moral support
A Networking Program

- Spouses/partners seeking administrative positions at the University
- Pairing up newly-hired dual-career couples with other dual-career couples employed at the University
- First year of faculty appointment
## Networking Program Structure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Objectives</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>April</td>
<td>Call to UVa dual-career couples</td>
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<tr>
<td>May</td>
<td>Selection and “training”</td>
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<td>June-July-August</td>
<td>Invitations to newly-hired dual-career couples</td>
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<td>September</td>
<td>Pairing-up and first meeting over lunch at the Garden Room</td>
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<td>October</td>
<td>Panel</td>
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<td>October-November-December</td>
<td>Mentors and mentees meet over coffee</td>
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<td>December</td>
<td>First program assessment</td>
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<tr>
<td>January-February-March</td>
<td>Mentors and mentees meet over coffee</td>
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<td>April</td>
<td>Second program assessment</td>
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<tr>
<td>May</td>
<td>Assessment report</td>
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Multiple Benefits

- A simple idea with a high return on investment
  - Many benefits even if it does not generate employment
  - Increases faculty satisfaction re: spousal support
  - Engages and values dual-career couples employed at the University
  - Easy to implement
  - Leverages existing University resources
  - Cost effective
  - Low-risk initiative

- Addresses diversity needs
  International, same-sex and minority couples

- A retention strategy applicable to the entire dual-career population at the University (not just STEM and SBE female faculty)

- A recruiting tool
References


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Thank you!