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Problems

# Faculty Recruitment





# Faculty Recruitment

**I**N a competitive marketplace, how do you recruit the best scholars? What strategies work to attract a diverse pool of candidates? And how can offering benefits, like spousal hiring, both help and hurt recruitment efforts?

*The Chronicle's* editors have selected a series of articles and essays to inform higher-education administrators as they try to appeal to top scholars and develop plans for faculty hiring.

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# The Foolproof Recruiting Tool

Why endowed chairs often succeed in luring faculty talent

By AUDREY WILLIAMS JUNE

**W**HEN A full professor retired two years ago, the department of urban and environmental policy at Occidental College was faced with a choice. The small, tight-knit department could hire a junior faculty member, as is typical in such situations, or go after a senior scholar, someone who could immediately help chart its direction and shape its future.

But that would mean trying to pry someone loose from a place where he or she was already well established.

The search committee advertised the job, and members personally contacted well-known scholars to urge them to apply. One of them was Virginia L. Parks, an associate professor at the University of Chicago. She had been a faculty member at the elite research institution for more than a decade. Persuading her to move would take a powerful incentive.



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“We knew that she was a hot ticket,” said Peter Dreier, chair of the department and head of the search committee.

For Ms. Parks, an urban geographer, the possibility of moving to Los Angeles, where Occidental is located, was an intriguing one. She had gone to graduate school at the University of California campus there. It would be a natural backdrop for her work on labor, immigration, residential segregation, and racial, economic, and gender inequality in cities. Ms. Parks also knew that her background in community organizing would be an asset to a department with a scholar-activist bent.

Still, none of that was enough to get Ms. Parks to leave Chicago behind. Part of recruiting a senior professor, Mr. Dreier says, is that “you have to go out and convince somebody who is happy where they are that they’ll be happier where you are.”

And that often means offering top candidates an endowed chair, as Occidental did for Ms. Parks. These age-old symbols of academic status are an indispensable means for luring prized faculty members. Professors are attracted to endowed chairs because they provide prestige, consistent financial support, and validation of their scholarship and teaching. Administrators see them as an almost fail-proof recruitment tool that can help reshape departments and campuses, and bring in fund-raising dollars.

The endowed chair helped ease Ms. Parks’s ambivalence about moving. She joined the faculty last academic year as the inaugural Madeline McKinnie Endowed Professor. “This gives me a little bit more breathing room,” says Ms. Parks, now a full professor. With the endowment money, she can cover research expenses and ramp up her travel to scholarly meetings.

Her new position also makes a statement. “When you come in with an endowed chair,” she says, “it’s evident that you’re coming in at a certain level.”

**E**NDOWED CHAIRS have been a mark of distinction in higher education for centuries. In 1502 the mother of Henry VII established the Lady Margaret Professorship of Divinity at the University of Cambridge. The first endowed chair in America came about in 1721, with the Hollis Professorship of Divinity at Harvard College.

Now they are widespread, with colleges of all types amassing them in hopes of bolstering the number of top scholars in their ranks. Michigan State University is raising money for 100 endowed positions. Southern Methodist University has nearly doubled its number of endowed chairs since 2008, to 116. Tougaloo College, in Mississippi, wants to create an endowed chair in civil rights, and Saint Anselm College is filling the second endowed chair in its existence. With col-

## What Makes It an Endowed Chair?

Endowed chairs and professorships are valuable currency that colleges use to recruit and retain top professors. The chairs are typically offered to scholars who are leaders in their fields. The endowment money can be used to pay or subsidize their salaries as well as to develop innovative research and teaching ideas. It’s one of the highest honors a university can bestow upon a professor.

### But just what is an endowed chair anyway?

An endowed chair is an appointed faculty position, typically for a full professor, that is supported by a payout from a privately funded endowment. Usually a chair is created by a donor or donors who contribute money outright or pledge money for that purpose. That money, called the “principal,” is invested into a fund managed by professionals.

### How much money does it take to create an endowed chair?

It depends on the institution and the discipline. The University of Illinois Foundation has a \$2-million minimum for a named endowed chair, while Cornell University’s School of Chemical and Biomolecular Engineering requires \$5 million for a named chair that will support the salary and start-up costs of a “midcareer faculty star” charged with spurring growth in biomolecular engineering.

### How are endowed chairs named, and who decides what academic field a chair belongs to?

Chairs are almost always named after the donor or after someone the donor wants to honor. Donors also usually designate the academic field of the chair holder and the subject area they want the endowment to support.

### How does an endowed chair financially support faculty members?

The money in the endowed fund generates interest income annually. That income can be used to cover the chair holder’s full or partial salary, or pay for things like scholarly travel, research materials, and graduate-assistant researchers.

### How long can a faculty member hold an endowed chair?

Some endowed chairs rotate among professors every few years, others are permanent appointments, and some are renewable for successive terms.

The funding that comes with an endowed chair provides some “breathing room,” says Virginia Parks, an urban geographer who moved from the U. of Chicago to Occidental College last year.



DAVID ZENTZ FOR THE CHRONICLE

## What Works in Faculty Recruitment

Endowed chairs are just one key tool for faculty recruitment and retention. Colleges also lure or keep top scholars by offering:

### A FACULTY OR STAFF JOB FOR THE SPOUSE OR PARTNER.

With so many academics married to other academics, an increasing number of institutions have policies and programs in place to facilitate spousal accommodation. For instance, a commitment to making dual-career hires has helped the University of Florida recruit prominent professors as part of its new status as one of two “pre-eminent” institutions in the state.

### NEW LAB OR OFFICE SPACE.

Faculty work space is important to professors — especially scientists, for whom cramped quarters can curtail the amount of research they can do. The promise of new lab space was a key factor in one of the biggest recruitment success stories in academic science. Five years ago, the University of California at San Diego lost three National Academy of Sciences members to Rice University, which was working to lure renowned scientists to

its newly formed BioScience Research Collaborative. Peter G. Wolynes, a chemist, and José Onuchic and Herbert Levine, both physicists, were offered “prime space (to be built to our specs),” Mr. Levine wrote in an email to *The San Diego Union-Tribune* at the time. Colleges know that the quality of lab space is important to junior faculty members as well. Loyola University New Orleans, in a job advertisement for an assistant professor of behavioral neuroscience to begin work next fall, made sure to mention that its “state-of-the-art animal vivarium was recently built with brand new lab space and operant equipment.”

### LEADERSHIP OF A CENTER OR INSTITUTE.

Centers and institutes abound in academe, and leading one is a mark of distinction for a faculty member. The University of Pennsylvania lured Jason H. Moore, an expert in genetics and biomedical informatics, away from Dartmouth College last year. Mr. Moore

is now the first permanent director of the Institute for Biomedical Informatics at Penn’s medical school and is leading its push to be a national and international player in the field. A top neuroscientist, Randy Dean Blakely, was lured from Vanderbilt University to Florida Atlantic University, where this year he started work as the founding executive director of the FAU Brain Institute.

### EASIER RESEARCH COLLABORATIONS THROUGH CLUSTER HIRING.

The University of Washington, in 2012, hired away four high-profile computer scientists from top institutions as part of a plan to broaden its expertise in computational thinking. Carlos Guestrin came from Carnegie Mellon University, Jeffrey Heer came from Stanford University, and Emily B. Fox and Ben Taskar formerly worked at Penn. (Mr. Taskar died in 2013.) Dartmouth made its first hire this year in a faculty cluster that will focus on the challenges of globalization.

lege budgets increasingly under pressure — particularly at public institutions — endowed chairs and their self-sustained funding are more attractive than ever.

For professors, an endowed chair means they don’t have to worry about the impact of budget cuts on their work. That’s because the private donations that create an endowed chair are invested in a fund that generates annual income in perpetuity. The money can pay or subsidize the chair holder’s salary, cover travel to scholarly conferences, support graduate students, or underwrite research that grant-making agencies might not be willing to fund.

An endowed chair also confers a level of prestige to a faculty member’s career that few milestones in academe can match. “There’s a finite number of named chairs at any given time, and the faculty who have them are identified as being the elite group at a university,” says Kevin McLaughlin, dean of the faculty at Brown University, who himself holds an endowed chair as the George Hazard Crooker University Professor of English. “There’s a lot of cultural capital in having a named chair.”

Administrators see the endowed chair as a critical bargaining chip in faculty recruitment. Sometimes a coveted professor simply can’t be wooed without one. These positions can also stretch the general budget. At Brown, for instance, 17 percent of its budget for faculty salaries is offset by endowed chairs.

**“When you come in with an endowed chair, it’s evident that you’re coming in at a certain level.”**

Endowed chairs are also at the heart of many a capital campaign. One of the most striking examples at a public institution was at Berkeley, where a \$113-million challenge grant from the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation for 100 endowed

chairs exceeded expectations. It raised more than \$220 million, and donors gave enough additional money to pay for an additional 54 chairs. The money gave the university a competitive edge, but not just in recruiting star scholars. It also helped Berkeley stave off raids of its talent by other top-tier institutions.

**L**URING A few new senior professors can help transform a department.

Justin Schwartz traded his endowed chair at Florida State University for one at North Carolina State University. He also became head of the department of materials science and engineering there, and started working on a plan for burnishing N.C. State's reputation in organic electronics, in part by hiring a top scholar in the field. He knew that his chances of success hinged on having an endowed chair to offer as a deal sweetener.

"No one's going to be a star at one place and then go to another place to be demoted," says Mr. Schwartz.

He approached Franky So, an endowed professor of organic electronics at the University of Florida, and invited him to campus for a seminar. He showed Mr. So his plans for distinguishing the department's work in his field. He knew that Mr. So — who had been courted by Duke University a couple of years before — already thought highly of the Research Triangle area, where N.C. State is located. And Mr. Schwartz had one other card to play: an endowed chair.

Mr. So started at N.C. State in 2015 as the Walter and Ida Freeman Distinguished Professor. "Without an endowed chair," Mr. Schwartz says, "we would not have been able to get him."

Adding several endowed-chair positions can jump-start an entire campus. The University of Connecticut at Storrs has used these chairs to lure senior professors, who are among the 400 new and replacement faculty members it has hired over the past five years. One of the positions went to Manisha Sinha, whose book on the history of the abolitionist movement was recently published to rave reviews.

Ms. Sinha had been at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, most recently as a professor of African-American studies and an adjunct professor of history. The chancellor and provost at UMass were "very committed" to keeping her, she says. They matched Connecticut's offer and said they would double the one year of leave Ms. Sinha is taking now to write her next book. UMass also pledged to revive a vacant endowed chair to give to her.

It wasn't an easy choice. But the collegiality of Connecticut's history department appealed to her. And the larger endowment for the chair there meant that she would have more money for re-

search expenses, hosting conferences, and inviting speakers.

"Making a change seemed like the right thing to do," says Ms. Sinha. "It gives you new energy academically and professionally."

Sometimes endowed chairs can help a professor realize a long-held goal. Fred A. Bonner II held an endowed chair in the graduate school of education at Rutgers University at New Brunswick, where administrators were "completely supportive" of his research on academically gifted black males in postsecondary institutions, he says. Yet Mr. Bonner never forgot the promise he'd made to himself when he was a doctoral student at the University of Arkansas at Fayetteville. He wanted to work at a historically black college or university and, eventually, lead one.

Then Prairie View A&M University, an HBCU in the Texas A&M system, came calling. The university wanted to raise its research profile, in part by hiring faculty members who were standouts in

**"No one's going to be a star at one place and then go to another place to be demoted."**

their fields. Prairie View administrators made a strong case for Mr. Bonner to leave Rutgers, offering him an endowed chair of educational leadership and counseling — and his own research center.

"I just thought a deal like this would never come along again," Mr. Bonner says. He started work at Prairie View in 2015.

The endowed chair has given him what he calls an "unfettered opportunity" to pursue research. Last month he took three graduate students to the University of Notre Dame to help him evaluate a diversity program there. "You know the money you need is going to be there," he says. "That makes a major difference."

Mr. Bonner's endowed chairs have also held a larger meaning for him as a scholar in a field where validation in the form of financial and institutional support isn't a given.

"The beauty of me having an endowed chair," he says, "is it really gives other scholars of color, particularly African-American scholars, the opportunity to see that when you do solid work, it doesn't have to be about traditional issues for you to be a top-tier faculty member."

**E**VEN THOUGH endowed chairs can offer an advantage in the market to recruit and retain professors, their results can be uneven.

Sometimes the offers work as expected: Nearly all of a cluster of cinematic-arts faculty at the University of Southern California who received endowed chairs 11 years ago are still at the institution.

And sometimes they don't. James Levinsohn received an endowed chair from the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor in an effort to keep him from going to Yale. In the end, it didn't keep him there. At Yale, he is director of the Jackson Institute of Global Affairs and holds an endowed chair. The Johns Hopkins University, perhaps to get ahead of the possible poaching of its own professors, has awarded some of its newly created Bloomberg Distinguished Professorships to faculty members who are already at the institution, including two Nobel Prize-winning scientists.

But there are never enough endowed chairs to go around. And that can be a source of tension for administrators to manage.

"In our department, we have a lot of people now who have been promoted to full professor and continue to thrive," says Mr. Schwartz, of N.C. State. "I tell them to keep working so they can make the case that they deserve an endowed chair." And then, he says, it's up to him and his institution's fund-raising staff members to make sure the mon-

ey for a chair is there when that time comes.

Administrators at Brown know that time will come, at some point. That's why they're raising money for endowed chairs as part of a \$3-billion capital campaign and keeping some endowed chairs

**"You know the money you need is going to be there. That makes a major difference."**

unfilled, to be used as retention tools. Some portion of the faculty at Brown will get job offers every year, Mr. McLaughlin says. When that happens, the institution has endowed chairs at the ready. "We don't want them to feel like they have to go out on the market to get a chair," he says.

Officials at Brown also realize that the arms race doesn't apply just to senior scholars. They've even named assistant professors to endowed chairs designated specifically for emerging stars on the tenure track. ■

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## *4 Steps Toward Making Endowed Positions More Equal*

**T**HE WIDESPREAD USE of endowed-chair positions to recruit and retain faculty members has been well documented in academe. These prestigious appointments, highly valued by professors and institutions, are often the highest honor that colleges can bestow. They frequently come with more pay, more resources, and more influence. Unfortunately there is evidence that they are not being occupied equally by all groups.

Earlier this year, I led a study that analyzed the makeup of endowed chairs and distinguished professors in departments and colleges of education. We found that these positions were largely being

filled with older white males who had attended elite graduate schools. While all minorities were underrepresented to some degree, women were greatly underrepresented.

### **ADVICE**

**NICHOLAS D. HARTLEP**

For example, Hispanics earn 6.5 percent of doctorates in education but hold just 3 percent of endowed chairs; African-Americans earn 13.4 percent of doctorates in education but hold just 11.4 percent of endowed chairs; and Asian-Americans earn 5 percent of doctorates in education but hold just 2.3 percent of education endowed chairs. Most striking, however, is that women earn 70 percent of doctorates in education but make up only 40 percent of endowed chairs in the field.

These numbers indicate that faculty members and administrators need to do a better job of diversifying the highest level of academe — particularly when it comes to women. Research has found that women more often must leave their institutions to get an endowed chair, while men more often receive them for retention purposes. What will be required to make a change at the top of the faculty ladder?

First, white, male endowed professors will have to be an active part of the process. Correcting the individual disparities that we see in endowed positions requires their intervention because closed networks maintain the status quo in higher education — like hiring like. This means that men will have to advocate for the hiring of internal and external female candidates for endowed positions.

Second, women and professors of color who hold endowed positions must speak out about their own experiences. What experiences were formative to their professional and career development? Who mentored them and how? Recent scholarship by African-American endowed faculty members illustrates that the paths to becoming an endowed professor for women and people of color are manifold. Professors everywhere know how navigating the academy is difficult work, but those who are underrepresented in their disciplines have an even more acute awareness.

Third, early mentorship programs should be established to improve the pipeline. Currently work is being done that advocates for earlier and more focused mentorship when it comes to developing future faculty members of color. For example, the RISE for Boys and Men of Color's Grad Prep Academy is a national project that prepares undergraduate men of color for doctoral study and research-related careers in five fields: education, health, human services and social policy, juvenile and criminal justice, and work-force development. By focusing on minorities, the academy helps men of diverse backgrounds gain social and professional mentorship and create social ties that will help them be successful researchers.

Earlier recruitment of undergraduate students will potentially build up the pool of diverse graduate students, which helps equalize a racist and sexist pipeline. Research has found that this pipeline is most effective when it begins at preschool. As the pool of diverse Ph.D.s continues to grow, and with the right mentorship, more professors will be eligible to become endowed.

Finally, institutions should be using endowed chairs as a tool for diversifying. One example is Murray State University, which uses its Ashland Oil College of Education Endowed Professorship to “augment and support the salary and activi-

ties of a position within the College of Education to attract qualified African American candidates from the public schools.” Meanwhile, other research-intensive universities are taking steps in the right direction. For example, in 2014, Roland Mitchell was named the Jo Ellen Levy Yates Endowed Professor in the School of Education at Louisiana State University. Mitchell is the first African-American to hold an endowed chair in the university's school of education.

**O**UR RESEARCH also showed a sign of progress on that minority front. For the highest-research-activity universities, the years between a person earning a Ph.D. and being named to a current endowed position were fairly uniform across race, but for all other institutions, there were significant differences in length of time, with whites having the most years and Asian-Americans having the least. This could indicate that these universities are making efforts to recruit more endowed professors of color.

But what about progress in terms of gender? Among universities with the highest research activity, women tended to have fewer years between earning a Ph.D. and being named to a current endowed position than did their same-race male counterparts. However, this pattern did not hold for all other institutions, wherein women tended to take more time to be named to an endowed chair than their same-race male counterparts did; the exception being white females, who took less time than white males.

Most people recognize that colleges need to hire more diverse professors as a demographic imperative: to right the imbalance and mismatch between those who teach and those who are taught. However, there is also a democratic imperative: Those in the academy should focus on getting more women and faculty of color in elite and influential professorships.

More research on endowed professorships is certainly warranted, but more is not needed to act. We can do that right now. As Marybeth Gasman, a professor of education at the University of Pennsylvania, in a recent op-ed reminded colleges that complain that there aren't minorities in the faculty pipeline: We can make the pipeline. We can grow our own. ■

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Paul D'Anieri, provost at the U. of California at Riverside, has pushed the idea of cluster hiring.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY TODD BIGELOW FOR THE CHRONICLE

# The Promise and Peril of Cluster Hiring

By BETH MCMURTRIE

**I**N 2014, the University of California at Riverside announced a hiring initiative to add 300 faculty members to its ranks. As part of that ambitious effort, it planned to hire groups of people to work on interdisciplinary research, raise the university's profile, and improve the diversity of the faculty.

Riverside's professors were excited. The university had long toiled in the shadows of more-prestigious UC campuses and had suffered budget cuts in recent years. This hiring spree, with an emphasis on innovative work in clusters of disciplines, would help rejuvenate the campus.

But just a few months later, the process began to unravel. After 26 cluster proposals were chosen last spring from dozens submitted, professors complained that the selection process was opaque. They didn't think the clusters aligned well with existing departmental hiring plans. And they worried that added layers of review would result in failed searches.

Last month, following the release of a faculty survey that detailed these and other problems with the cluster initiative, Chancellor Kim A. Wilcox hit the pause button. Beyond the 76 approved positions for hire this year, he put new cluster hires on hold until the process could be improved.

Riverside's experience illustrates both the promise and the peril of cluster hiring, which has been growing in popularity across academe. Indiana University and the Universities of Illinois, Notre Dame, and Central Florida are just some of the places that have engaged in cluster hiring in recent years.

On the one hand, its appeal is clear. Recruiting groups of people from diverse disciplines to tackle global problems such as climate change or perform cutting-edge research in areas like neuroscience can gain publicity, produce important work, increase collaboration across campus, and attract new sources of money.

On the other hand, because it operates outside the traditional boundaries of hiring — departments deciding their direction — cluster hiring can add layers of red tape and confusion. Some faculty resist cluster hires because the process cedes control typically held by departments to senior administrators. Clusters can be hard to manage because new methods for evaluating service, research, and publication records must be devised. And clusters can be complicated to sustain. Researchers and administrators move on; priorities change.

Administrators at colleges that have tried cluster hiring say it helps to start slowly and from the ground up. Without faculty buy-in, as well as time to review effectiveness, cluster hiring won't work, or at least won't work as well as it could. It also helps, they say, to build on existing disciplinary strengths and established interdisciplinary work, rather than starting something from scratch. Without those elements, plans can quickly go awry.

**R**iverside's cluster-hiring effort is the brainchild of its vice chancellor and provost, Paul J. D'Anieri, who arrived in July 2014, just a few months after Mr. Wilcox announced that the university would be hiring 300 new faculty members. It was Mr. D'Anieri's idea to set aside a portion of those hires to build interdisciplinary teams, acknowledging the university's strategic plan to raise Riverside's profile, particularly in research. He also wants to in-



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**Professor Timothy Lyons says he was “thrilled” by the cluster idea at first but had concerns about how the plan was rolled out.**

crease faculty diversity on a campus where about 30 percent of students identify as Chicano or Latino.

To finance the new hires, Riverside is relying on a combination of rising enrollment and tuition increases, along with unallocated recurring revenue thanks to conservative budgeting during the recession, Mr. D'Anieri said.

Professors were intrigued by the cluster idea, which encourages them to think innovatively and across disciplines. “I was thrilled about it,” says Timothy Lyons, a professor of biogeochemistry. “It immediately made sense to me.”

Mr. Lyons was one of many faculty members who responded to the provost's request for proposals, suggesting a cluster on planetary science and astrobiology that would build on his work with NASA and with faculty members in the fields of astronomy, physics, and earth sciences.

The first sign of trouble, he and others say, was a lack of detail from the administration. Faculty members found the proposal guidelines vague and the evaluation process unclear. Deans ranked proposals coming from their faculty members, while a separate, anonymous committee, made up of faculty members from across the campus, did its own rankings. Mr. D'Anieri reviewed those evaluations and

consulted with other senior administrators to come up with the final selections, which he announced last spring.

That list didn't make sense to everyone. Mr. Lyons's proposal, for example, was not selected, he says, despite receiving strong evaluations. Yet other, weaker, proposals had made it to the top, he says. He was not alone in his assessment.

Mr. Lyons challenged the provost in a town-hall meeting last May. He said the provost was not getting "a full sense for the level of dissatisfaction" among faculty members concerning perceived biases by the administration, which were thought to have led to a number of the best proposals being overlooked, including some "rising stars of excellence" on campus.

Mr. D'Anieri tried to be reassuring by saying that if executed well, the clusters could make Riverside a "star nationally." But, he added, "there were, to put it bluntly, winners and losers in this process. And I have no doubt that people whose proposals weren't supported will be upset, and I would say even should be upset. But given the resources that were at our disposal, we made the best choices we could. And I'll stand by them."

How upset the faculty members were became clear a few months later. Jose Wudka, a physics professor and chair of the Academic Senate, said that as search committees formed, he began hearing more complaints. Where was the campus going to house all these new faculty members? What kind of infrastructure would be in place to ensure that the cluster hires could work together?

Search committees struggled to coordinate their work with individual departments. Departments complained that all new hires were going toward clusters while their own plans were put on hold.

In December the senate surveyed the faculty to get a clearer sense of the dissent. More than 300 people, or about half of the faculty, responded. Nearly 40 percent said the time provided to prepare a cluster-hiring proposal, about two months, wasn't adequate. About three-quarters said the selection criteria for proposals weren't clear and the evaluation process wasn't transparent. Sixty-nine percent said it was not an appropriate replacement for departmental hiring.

The comments were blunt: "A good number of the faculty feel more disaffected and marginalized by the process." "Administration seems to be making this up as they go along which does not inspire confidence." A member of the faculty-evaluation committee called the results "haphazard." Another called it a "power grab by the provost."

"Please," wrote one person, "for God's sake, take this slowly."

The faculty senate sent a series of recommendations to the administration last month. Among them: more consultation with the faculty, a "more measured launch" of new initiatives, a transparent

### THE APPROACH

As part of a plan to hire 300 additional faculty members, the University of California at Riverside decided to embark on a series of cluster hires to raise its national profile, diversify the faculty, and tackle important areas of research.

Faculty members were asked to submit proposals that were to be evaluated by their deans as well as by a campuswide faculty committee. The provost, in consultation with others, made the final selection for the first round of hires. That included 26 approved clusters. The areas of research were grouped into seven broad categories: food science, next-generation technologies, human health, environmental science, education and social policy, creative and performing arts, and innovation in business and the social sciences.

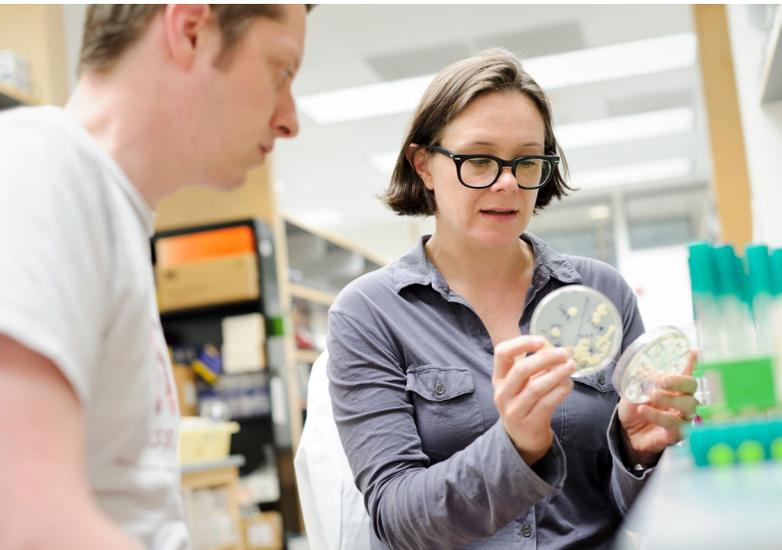
### WHAT WENT WRONG

Many faculty members were upset by the process and the results. According to a survey, they found the proposal criteria vague and confusing, they didn't have much time to put together proposals, they thought the evaluation process was opaque, and the final choices didn't make sense to some. They feared that the cluster-hiring strategy had supplanted departmental hiring strategies. Search committees were unclear on how to move forward. The plan as a whole, some said, lacked strategic cohesion.

### THE WAY FORWARD

The faculty senate has asked the administration for more consultation, limited trials, more transparency, better management, and better follow-through for new initiatives. The administration has agreed to slow down the process, and some communication issues have been resolved. But faculty members remain concerned about how cluster hiring will mesh with existing departmental hiring plans.

— Beth McMurtrie



JEFF MILLER, UW-MADISON

**Audrey Gasch, an associate professor at the U. of Wisconsin at Madison, is part of a genomics cluster there. The university has hired about 140 scholars in almost 50 clusters since 1998.**

proposal review and selection process for future cluster hires, and more support for faculty members hired into clusters once they're on campus, including sufficient space and staffing.

Mr. D'Anieri has taken the criticism in stride, saying that while some problems could have been avoided if the university had rolled out the cluster-hiring process more slowly, "we have a pretty urgent need to move forward."

Enrollments, he says, are expanding, the campus is growing, and the faculty needs to expand along with it.

He rejects the notion that the process lacked transparency or was a power grab. "Every faculty member on campus was eligible to put in proposals," he says, noting that some junior faculty members got their proposals approved, something that would not have happened under the traditional hiring system.

Robert A. Hanneman, a longtime faculty member in the sociology department, agrees that some of the dissension may be coming from more-senior faculty members. "Here the process was taken out of the departments, and it allows younger and other faculty marginalized by the power structure to have greater input." At the same time, he says, he is skeptical of the need to use cluster hiring, which he finds faddish, to generate more creative work. "There are good, traditional mechanisms for doing it," he says. "What would probably be a lower-risk, lower-cost strategy, like creating interdisciplinary programs" on a smaller scale.

Mr. Wudka says faculty members are somewhat reassured by the administration's decision to put a pause on cluster hires but remain concerned about

where this leaves departmental hiring plans.

"Cluster hiring tried to force departments to think outside the box, and in that sense it was very successful," he says. "But it not only forced departments to think outside the box, it pushed them outside the box and said, OK, stay here."

**R**IVERSIDE's plan is more ambitious than most, but cluster hiring is never easy. Proponents, however, say it's worth the headaches if done carefully.

Florida State University was an early adopter of cluster hiring, unveiling its first proposal in 2006. W. Ross Ellington, associate vice president for research, said the university was looking to raise its profile through faculty hiring, but in a way that could get the most value for the money. The plan was to hire as many as 200 people over five years.

But then the recession hit, the provost retired, and the president moved on. In the end, FSU was able to create just two clusters from that first plan. Despite the roadblocks, the university has found success as clusters continue to develop under a new administration, says Mr. Ellington, in areas such as energy and materials, coastal and marine research, and brain health and disease.

Robert Mark Isaac, chair of the economics department, helped start one of the first clusters, in experimental social science, in which economists and political scientists apply methods such as game theory to designing tax policy and a variety of other social-science challenges.

Mr. Isaac says the cluster has been popular, attracting other Florida State faculty members who are not officially part of the nine-person group but are interested in the work. "It did really make FSU stand out," he says.

Still, he says, change is constant. "The idea that you are going to hire a certain set of people that will create wonderful stability and niceness is upside down," he says. "The more successful the cluster, the more it's necessary to have a long-term strategy for people coming and going."

The University of Notre Dame laid the groundwork for clusters with a series of joint hires in the mid-2000s, says Robert J. Bernhard, vice president for research. Three years ago, it began a cluster program to hire 80 faculty members in 10 areas of research. Proposals came from faculty members, and a cross-disciplinary committee chose the winners, yet Notre Dame still experienced pushback from professors who didn't see how clusters fit their departments' strategic plan.

At the same time, says Mr. Bernhard, young faculty members seem to find the idea of working in groups particularly appealing. "Many in my generation were raised to be independent contributors," he says. "Our younger faculty are looking for, Where is the best group for me to join?"

Skeptics counter that proponents of cluster hiring

often overlook the opportunity costs. If all your energy is going into a small set of splashy hires, what are you not working on instead?

Jerry A. Jacobs, a sociology professor at the University of Pennsylvania, wrote a book, *In Defense of Disciplines*, partly to counter the idea that higher education needs strategies such as cluster hiring to do interdisciplinary work. He notes that the top 25 research universities run, on average, 100 research centers each, most of which are interdisciplinary. “People have this idea that professors are sitting there isolated in their silos, cogitating on problems and not talking to anyone. But somebody is in these research centers.”

Mr. Jacobs also worries that administrators forget that strong interdisciplinary research is built on strong disciplines. In other words, don’t neglect your departments. Abbas Benmamoun agrees. Vice provost for faculty affairs and academic policies at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, he says its plan to build clusters in areas such as sustainability and health and wellness will be designed around existing strengths. “Strong departments want to collaborate with strong departments, and strong faculty want to collaborate with strong faculty,” he says. “I cannot emphasize this enough.”

**O**NE of the biggest questions surrounding cluster hiring is: Does it work? Over all, experts say, little research has been done on whether cluster hiring brings in more research money and raises an institution’s profile. How well it tackles the world’s most pressing problems or produces innovative research has also been difficult to measure.

One report said faculty diversity, often a stated goal of cluster hiring, improved among most of the 10 institutions surveyed. A study by Erin Leahey, a sociology professor at the University of Arizona, found that scholars who engage in interdisciplinary research publish less often but are more highly cited than average.

Perhaps the most scrutinized cluster-hiring program has been that at the University of Wisconsin at Madison. Starting in 1998, the university has hired about 140 faculty members to fill nearly 50 clusters. Michael Bernard-Donals, vice provost for faculty and staff programs, says that early challenges, such as determining service loads or the best way to evaluate publication records, have largely been worked out. It helped, he says, that the campus rolled the program out over a five-year period, enabling leaders to iron out kinks along the way.

Researchers in these clusters have brought in about the same amount of money as their peers have, he says. The real impact has been to foster new academic programs, raise the caliber of the faculty, and enable people across campus to engage in interdisciplinary work. Early innovators — clusters in nanotechnology or genomics, for example — helped spark

new research in fields like engineering, agriculture, and life sciences. Today about 500 of Wisconsin’s 2,000 faculty members are involved in interdisciplinary work, he says, even though only a fraction of them are part of a cluster.

But it’s not as if administrators’ work is over. “What we’re facing right now is what to do with the clusters where excitement has subsided some, or there’s less cross-disciplinary exchange, or the faculty have reverted to disciplinary research,” Mr. Bernard-Donals says. Still, he adds, “if there are clusters that haven’t functioned as well as we’d like, we’re still getting a tremendous bang for the buck.”

Back at Riverside, both Mr. D’Anieri and faculty members are hopeful that tensions will subside as the problems are worked out and new hires begin arriving on campus. “At some point you lick your wounds. You just take a deep breath and say, we as a department and maybe even as a college are going to benefit from this,” says Mr. Lyons, the biogeochemistry professor.

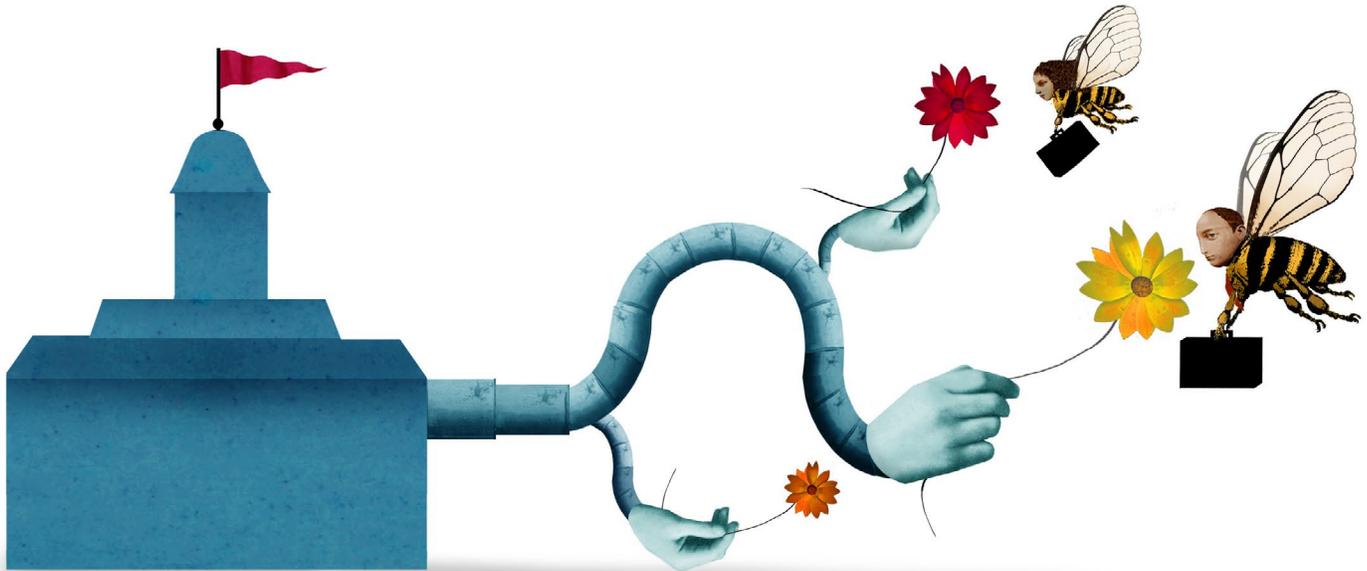
A slew of search committees are working to fill positions in areas such as genomics, next-generation technologies, neuroimaging, indigenous studies, and business analytics research. Among the first hires: Xiaoping Hu, a professor of biomedical engineering from the Georgia Institute of Technology and Emory University, who will run a new neuroimaging center. “To some extent the results will speak for themselves,” says Mr. D’Anieri. “If we’re able to hire great people, people will look back and think of this as being a great thing.” ■

*Originally published on March 13, 2016*



TODD BIGELOW FOR THE CHRONICLE

# Trouble Recruiting Top Faculty? Promote Collaboration



MICHAEL MORGENSTERN FOR THE CHRONICLE

**A**T the Graduate Center of the City University of New York, the last week of February began with the announcement that Cathy N. Davidson and Ken Wissoker, from Duke and Duke University Press respectively, would be joining our faculty. It ended with the news that Paul Krugman, from Princeton University, would be doing the same. “One of the country’s academic power couples” is how *The Chronicle* described Davidson and Wissoker; she is arguably the most innovative contributor to debates about technology and education, and he the most influential commissioning editor in the humanities. Krugman, a Nobel laureate, *New York Times* columnist, and blogger who alternates barbs with

graphs, has an unrivaled presence in American economic and political debate.

“How did you recruit them?”

I’ve lost track of how many times I’ve been asked the question, nearly always posed in a tone of incredulous wonderment. The fact is, we recruit from the Dukes and Princetons as a matter of course. Over the last five years, for example, we’ve welcomed faculty members from every Ivy League institution save Dartmouth and Columbia. But only academic insiders know this, and I freely concede that it’s a reasonable question. Opposite moves—from public to private—oc-

ca-  
sion no such surprise.

It is little wonder, I suppose. In wealth, compensation, and status, the data document clear dis-

## ADVICE

### CHASE F. ROBINSON

parities between private and most public research universities. There is also the familiar narrative of decline: Public education, one constantly reads, is “under siege,” “in crisis,” and “at the brink/tipping point.” In the market for rare talent, disparities in salaries and teaching conditions necessarily privilege wealthy private institutions, and the result is more or less one-way traffic from (presumptively) bootstrapping public to (manifestly) well-heeled private. That it should move in the opposite direction, at a time when states are reducing support for higher education, runs counter to the narrative.

It’s not that we outspend the competition; our budget is too tight for that. Nor is it location. New York City is a vortex of culture, capital, people, and ideas, but it actually cuts both ways, and not merely because of prohibitive costs: Working in a city of this size and density is not to everyone’s taste. Some prefer college greens and ivy-covered walls. We have other constraints as well. We’re a small part of a huge university (CUNY has an enrollment of some 270,000 degree students), with an indistinct name. And although we’re located across the street from the Empire State Building, it’s really our neighbors in Morningside Heights and Greenwich Village who cast the longest shadows.

All universities have particular strengths, and for us the single most important is our focus upon graduate education, especially Ph.D. training. At least in the humanities and social sciences, research universities typically ask their faculty members to teach and mentor undergraduate, master’s, and Ph.D. students and to serve on committees that support those very different populations of students—and much more besides. Our faculty members work as hard as any, but our narrower mission allows them to integrate teaching and research more closely. We are also very fortunate to draw upon the enormous strength of CUNY colleges, and those faculty members are invaluable to our departments and students.

**W**E’RE successful for two more reasons, and neither is unique to us.

The first is that we regard our public character as an asset to be trumpeted rather than a handicap to be overcome. Hire after hire has responded to the mission that the Graduate Center volubly affirms: to create and disseminate knowledge, through research, teaching, and public events, for the public good. At a time when private education is increasingly beyond the reach of many people, when average student debt among college seniors who borrow has reached nearly \$30,000, and, consequently, when education is seen as a private benefit, the mission resonates more than ever. Our faculty is justly proud to be involved in the gratifying venture of educat-

ing ambitious and diverse students in a university, such as CUNY, that maintains the public trust. In this respect, the public university’s scale is its ally: The teaching carried out in a small graduate seminar carries on in undergraduate classes taught by our graduate students as part of their training.

Second, we have learned that fortune is the residue of design. No one can predict when a prized scholar becomes free to move, but we have seen on numerous occasions that investment in areas of conspicuous promise delivers recruitment returns. The digital humanities, technology and education, and the interdisciplinary study of income inequality are cases in point; the theoretical sciences are another. It is in large measure because we have been cultivating those fields over the last few years that our new colleagues are joining us. We have built, and they have come.

That sounds trite, but it’s worth emphasizing that scholars respond to opportunity and, increasingly, to the promise of collaboration. Interdisciplinarity can be overhyped, but we have put in place structures that transcend and complement departmental organization, placing students, postdocs, and junior and senior faculty members together in research-driven seminars. So what we’ve been building are not buildings, but communities and partnerships. Last year a candidate for a position in the humanities was keen to meet with a recently hired computer scientist, who had been drawn to the Graduate Center a year earlier in part to work with a political scientist who had herself joined us two years earlier. The computer scientist is now co-teaching with the political scientist. And the humanities professor is now at the Graduate Center.

In sum, we have been heeding what might be called the Tao of LeBron. When LeBron James decided to leave Cleveland and enter the free-agent market, teams responded by maximizing payroll flexibility in order to offer the most generous terms. Why did he go to the Miami Heat, a relatively small-market team? The answer he gave at the time has since been proved correct twice: It was because in Miami he could find an assembly of complementary talent—the promise of collaboration—that maximized his chances for success.

Exceptionally talented academics also have choices, and they make them in ways that maximize their odds for success. The promise of both intellectual ferment and broad impact is one choice. Opportunities for substantive and interdisciplinary collaboration are another. ■

*Chase F. Robinson is interim president of the Graduate Center of the City University of New York.*

*Originally published March 24, 2014*

# A Boom in Academic Poaching

By PAUL BASKEN

How does an arms race for talent affect academe?

**S**EAN J. MORRISON, professor of pediatrics: \$10 million. James P. Allison, professor of immunology: \$10 million. Nancy A. Jenkins and Neal G. Copeland, deans of cancer biology and genetics, respectively: \$7.5 million each.

Such are the recruiting packages that lured four researchers — along with their labs and staffs — to Texas. They've joined 80 other leading cancer researchers who have moved to the state's universities and institutes over the past five years, thanks to a \$250-million spending spree on science superstars.

It's part of a strategy to make Texas a clear leader in studying cancer — to attack one of humanity's most devastating diseases and, hopefully, bolster the state's economy in the process. Key goals include creating jobs and raising the quality of research universities, said Wayne R. Roberts, chief executive of the Cancer Prevention Research Institute of Texas, a state-chartered agency known as Cprit.



SCOTT DALTON, THE NEW YORK TIMES, REDUX

The U. of Texas' M.D. Anderson Cancer Center used a \$10-million package to recruit James Allison, a professor of immunology, from the Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center. The move was part of a \$250-million spending spree that has lured more than 80 top cancer researchers to Texas.

“Overarching it all,” he said of his agency and its mission, “is to cure and to find ways to mitigate cancer.”

At a time when American research universities face growing financial pressure, driven largely by cuts in federal and state financing, Texas stands as an anomaly — and, perhaps, a role model. By laying out millions of dollars to lure premier cancer scientists from other universities across the country, the state is drawing criticism and skepticism as well as envy and emulation.

Some embrace the practice as recruiting; others deride it as poaching. Either way, it's a tactic pretty much as old as universities themselves. The quest to accumulate the most-celebrated scientific minds has always come with benefits both financial and emotional.

But in recent years, the economic value of the strategy has moved to the fore. Beyond Texas, sever-

al other states have made an explicit practice of figuring out which fields of scientific research are most important to their economic futures, and then giving their universities money to go out and hire both established scholars and rising stars in those fields.

“What is new” about poaching, said C. Michael Cassidy, president and chief executive of the Georgia Research Alliance, which distributes about \$16 million a year in state money, “is doing it as a broad economic-development strategy.”

With that approach come new stresses on campus. The University of California at San Diego sued the University of Southern California in July over its recruitment of a leading researcher of Alzheimer's disease. Carnegie Mellon University saw a budding business partnership go sour this year when Uber Technologies Inc. hired away 40 of its researchers and scientists.

The climate has become so disorienting that com-

plaints and compliments about academic poaching can sometimes be heard from the same corners. In New York, for example, the state's medical schools have grumbled publicly about Texas' behavior. At the same time, they are urging their own legislature to try a similar plan.

### A 'BOLUS OF SUPPORT'

In offering recruitment money, states like Texas "aren't necessarily investing in new people," said Jo Wiederhorn, president and chief executive of the Associated Medical Schools of New York, a consortium of the state's 16 public and private medical schools. "They're just stealing from other states."

They are doing so within legal and ethical bounds, she hastened to add. "If a state has enough foresight to see that this is going to be the new economy, and they can strengthen their economy through doing this, then there's nothing untoward about it."

From 2002 to 2009, New York State tried its own hand at aggressive academic recruiting. Its Faculty Development Program spent more than \$35 million helping medical schools attract and retain researchers. That's on top of the \$300 million dished out since 2007 by the state's stem-cell-science initiative, second only to California's \$3-billion effort in that field.

But that kind of money has largely dried up in recent years — and Ms. Wiederhorn and leaders of the state's medical schools are pressing lawmakers in Albany for more. The main proposal would provide \$50 million a year for faculty recruitment, to be matched by at least \$100 million from the schools.

"It's really designed, we believe, to level the playing field for New York medical schools," Lee Goldman, dean of medicine at Columbia University, said of the lobbying campaign.

Texas' commitment to recruitment has certainly changed cancer research. Bolstered by oil-industry wealth, the state set aside \$3 billion over 10 years, beginning in 2007, for the cancer institute. The disease made for a politically popular cause at a time of cuts in cancer spending at the federal level, especially with the Texas native Lance Armstrong, then a cycling star, leading public appeals.

To a large degree, it has worked, as shown by the movement of so many high-profile scientists to Texas institutions, which must cover at least half the cost of the recruitment packages. Total packages typically run from about \$2 million for a junior researcher to \$10 million for established stars like Mr. Morrison and Mr. Allison.

Mr. Morrison, a professor of pediatrics who left the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor in 2011 to join the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center, said the money had let him significantly expand his work, which includes starting a clinical trial for melanoma. "These are things that wouldn't have happened, period, anywhere, in the absence of that

bolus of support from Cprit," he said.

### SEARCH FOR SUPERSTARS

California, which made its \$3-billion commitment in 2004, also limited its program to a specific field. It chose stem-cell research, seeing that as a promising avenue of medical investigation that was then largely blocked at the federal level.

Other states work with much more modest sums of money, and with correspondingly tighter focuses.

An example is Utah, one of several states using Georgia's 25-year-old program as a model. Rather than try to compete broadly with Texas for cancer researchers, the Utah Science Technology and Research project, at its two major research universities, has sought to place world leaders in eight specific niches, such as identifying the proteins associated with cancer of the liver.

"I can't win the fight to be the best in cancer, for God's sake," said Ted McAleer, a former executive director of the agency, which has an annual budget of about \$20 million. "I've got to pick an element of cancer that we can be the best at."

Beyond their choices of academic specialties, states face other strategic questions: Should they emphasize the construction of lab facilities or the recruitment of scientists to fill them? Should they concentrate on promising young talent or established stars? Is it wiser to pursue economic growth through the

**"If a state has enough foresight to see that this is going to be the new economy, and they can strengthen their economy through doing this, then there's nothing untoward about it."**

academic grass roots or through existing companies and industries?

Utah chose to emphasize facility construction — \$200 million went to new buildings at the University of Utah and Utah State — before recruiting mostly young researchers. Florida, Massachusetts, and Virginia are trying to help their universities recruit senior researchers. Arizona has a decade-old strategy for broadly building its biosciences industry that em-

phasizes attracting companies and cultivating entrepreneurs.

The Texas cancer institute has incorporated all of those strategies. But halfway through its planned 10-year run, it is under political pressure because of concerns that some of its money is being mismanaged, and that its public mission is being sidetracked by parochial commercial interests.

Against that backdrop, Gov. Greg Abbott signed legislation in June allocating \$40 million more to help public universities poach top talent from out-of-state research institutions across all academic fields.

Ironically, that matches advice offered by New York. During a recent visit to the University of Texas' M.D. Anderson Cancer Center, the vice dean of science at New York University's Langone Medical Center, Dafna Bar-Sagi, heard concerns that Texas' \$3-billion fund wasn't proving to be generous enough for some coveted scientists.

"It's not very easy for them to recruit," said Ms. Bar-Sagi, a professor of biochemistry and molecular pharmacology at NYU, "because people still need to move and live in Texas." She said she had told her Texas hosts that they might overcome researchers' reluctance to move there by hiring a few superstars whose presence could then lure others.

That suggestion points to a criticism of Texas' poaching efforts: Millions of recruiting dollars have given the state's medical schools "very few key thought leaders and a lot of average investigators," as David A. Brenner, dean of medicine at the University of California at San Diego, put it.

A desirable locale has certainly worked for New York City, Ms. Bar-Sagi said. For a long time, researchers — like many other people — feared the place as unsafe. But with a drop in crime and a boom in big gifts to universities from wealthy New Yorkers, the city is now in a "golden age," she said, that makes researchers eager to come.

#### **'LIKELY TO LOSE'**

The greatest inequity in recruiting might come not from variation among states' recruiting budgets — which in many states benefit both public and private colleges — but from the underlying gap in wealth between the public and the private institutions.

For example, Stony Brook University, in the State University of New York system, received \$6 million from the state's Faculty Development Program to hire eight researchers, which led to six start-up companies, 21 patents, and \$39 million in federal grant awards, Ms. Wiederhorn's medical-school consortium told state lawmakers in 2012.

Now, with the expiration of that state fund, Stony Brook is struggling to recruit, said Ms. Bar-Sagi, who left the public university in 2006 to join NYU. "If you have someone who is very good at a state university, you're likely to lose this individual."

Convincing lawmakers that that's a problem,

however, can be a tough sell.

Hard data on the effectiveness of researcher recruitment is elusive. An analysis by colleges in New York found that every \$1 of spending on research produced \$7.50 of economic benefit. The Georgia Research Alliance has calculated the ratio at almost five to one, with \$600 million in state funds leading to \$2.6 billion in federal and private investment.

The longer-term benefits of recruiting star scientists may be even larger, once gains in student quality, institutional reputation, and other categories are factored in.

But lawmakers typically want hard short-term numbers, said Jennifer K. Ozawa, associate director of technology-based economics at SRI International, a nonprofit research institute that advises states on their recruitment programs. That attitude often leads to program budgets tied to "easiest to measure" yardsticks, such as federal research grants, patents, and new companies, she said.

States also have trouble with the nuts and bolts of executing a recruitment strategy, Ms. Ozawa said. Many try to define for universities how much money new researchers should bring in, how closely they should work with industry, and how commercially oriented their work should be. "The big picture is one thing," she said, "but getting the details is something else."

Beyond New York, some campus officials on the losing end of the recruitment game are remarkably stoic. The departure of a star researcher can hurt, but it isn't the end of the world, said James O. Woolliscroft, dean of medicine at the University of Michigan, which lost Mr. Morrison to Texas.

The academic world is very small, he said, and many if not most scientists who leave Michigan continue to have relationships with the university. He noted that Francis S. Collins, director of the National Institutes of Health, maintains strong ties to Michigan two decades after he left.

The University of Colorado at Boulder has it especially bad. It's one of the country's least-supported public institutions, getting about \$60 million from the state for its \$1.4-billion annual budget. In a typical year, the provost, Russell L. Moore, sees several dozen faculty members receive out-of-state recruitment offers.

Still, Colorado manages to compete for young talent because of its reputation in areas such as aerospace and geosciences, and because of a cooperative faculty ethos that encourages sharing big-dollar equipment, Mr. Moore said.

"As bothersome as it can get sometimes," he said of the pressure from outside recruiters, "I'd hate to say we're all going to stand down, because then I'm afraid that wouldn't provide incentive for our best scholars to do what they do." ■

*Originally published July 23, 2015*

# How One University Closed the Gender Gap in STEM-Faculty Hiring

By AUDREY WILLIAMS JUNE

**F**OR MANY years, Montana State University had a gender-diversity problem that seemed intractable: Women weren't well represented on the faculty as a whole, and in the fields of science, technology, engineering, and math, male professors outnumbered women roughly four to one. Yet today the number of female faculty members in STEM is approaching what some would call critical mass. Every year since 2012, the university has hired an equal number of men and women — or close to it — for tenure-track jobs in those fields. Of 72 hires, 36 have been women.

How did Montana State pull off such a shift? A five-person interdisciplinary team of faculty and administrators, fueled by a \$3.4-million grant from the National Science Foundation, made some purposeful tweaks in the search process.

“It’s a process. It takes very careful, strategic planning.” They developed and carried out an intervention that included training faculty to recognize implicit bias, sharing tips on how to recruit diverse candidates, and making sure finalists could have a confidential conversation about Montana State’s work-life policies with a “family advocate” unaffiliated with the search.

“The most common question I hear is, If I could do one thing to achieve gender diversity on the faculty, what would it be?” says Jessi L. Smith, a professor of psychology at Montana State and the principal investigator on the NSF grant. “But it’s a process. It takes very careful, strategic planning.”

In the male-dominated STEM fields, the gender gap has been particularly stubborn. More women are earning Ph.D.s in science and engineering fields — about 17,000 in 2014, roughly double the number in 1994 — and they now represent 42 percent of those new doctorates. But the faculties in some STEM fields don’t reflect their presence. In engineering, for instance, women made up about 15 percent of the faculty in 2013, the latest year with available data. And about 20 percent of computer-science professors are women.

The dearth of female faculty members means that many young women don’t see role models up in front of their classes. Some research has suggested that women who have completed graduate school show disproportionately low interest in pursuing an academic career at a research university. When women do become academic scientists, they often face discrimination in the department or the lab. Some find it tricky to balance life with work and start a family. And science loses out on the problem-solving skills

of an inclusive faculty.

“When we started, we had multiple departments that had one woman or even no women at all,” says Ms. Smith, who has been at Montana State since 2006 and was the first woman in the psychology department to earn tenure and, later, a promotion to full professor. “We’ve made great strides since then.”

### SHORTLISTS AND OFFERS

Montana State has recognized the reality that faculty members aren’t usually trained to recruit and screen job candidates. That’s particularly apparent when it comes to attracting a diverse slate of applicants.

Casting the intervention as a form of support for faculty with search-committee duties was important, Ms. Smith says. The group that led the effort didn’t want it to be seen as a mandate for diversity. Still, some faculty members questioned whether a focus on gender diversity would result in lower standards for women.

The first year, 2012-13, brought 23 searches for STEM faculty. In 14 of them, the search committees were randomly selected to participate in voluntary training (all accepted). Researchers collected data to document the process and outcomes.



CHATANIKA STOOP

Waded Cruzado, president of Montana State U. (front left, in blue blazer), poses with some of the university’s female professors of engineering, mathematics, and the sciences.

The search committees with the training produced shortlists that were about 41 percent female, compared with about 14 percent for the other committees. And the trained committees were about six times as likely to offer a woman the job.

And candidates themselves responded positively: Women were six times as likely to accept an offer from a committee that conducted an intervention search. The limited rollout resulted in 10 women and seven men hired in 2012-13 (as often happens with academic searches, some didn't pan out in that cycle). The following year, when the intervention was applied to all STEM searches, 10 men and 10 women were hired into tenure-track jobs.

"At first glance I was disappointed because I thought that the majority of hires would be women," Ms. Smith says. "But in retrospect I'll say that if we'd had 80- or 90-percent women hires, then somehow those old stereotypes of lowering the bar would have taken over."

Before the intervention, the computer-science faculty at Montana State was all male. John Paxton, director of what recently became the Gianforte School of Computing, had been committed to adding women to the ranks, but four searches failed to yield a

ing for people to apply, the computer-science department reached out to potential candidates personally. Search committees also learned how to word job ads "in such a way that a broader set of people can see themselves in the position," Mr. Paxton says.

This month the computing school will again be an academic sponsor of an annual international conference for women in computing and an exhibitor at the event's career fair. That gives Mr. Paxton and his colleagues access to a database of attendees, a key recruiting tool to help fill at least two current openings.

Montana State's booth at the conference two years ago attracted Brittany T. Fasy, who is now on the faculty. The university wasn't on her radar at the time, but Ms. Fasy ultimately applied, and so did her husband. The department hired them both as assistant professors. Such hires could help smooth the way for more women there.

"If you looked at the composition of our faculty before," Mr. Paxton says, "we were saying one thing, but our faculty was illustrating something different."

## WORK-LIFE BALANCE

Recruiting female faculty members to Montana State has hurdles beyond the gender gap. The institution has seen some gender-discrimination battles, in the past and more recently. Some professors believe the institution's small-town location in a sprawling, rural state is an automatic drawback for men and women alike. One obstacle the intervention process is designed to combat is concern about work-life balance.

Jia Hu, who started at Montana State in June 2013, recalls her visit to the university. "I wasn't even sure if talking about kids was something I could do," she says. "I was hesitant to ask people about it." Now such discussions, between all candidates and a family advocate who doesn't weigh in on the hiring decision, are a given. "That's great," says Ms. Hu, an assistant professor of ecology and mother of two. "It just shows that Montana State understands that people have families."

The share of tenure-track women in STEM at Montana State has jumped from 18 percent in 2012-13 to 28 percent in 2015-16. But the grant money that supported the university's efforts will run out in August. The challenge now is to secure the resources needed to keep the momentum going. Discussions about the program's future are underway.

"One way to change a culture is to put new people in it, but if all we're doing is hiring new, vulnerable, junior women faculty, that cannot be where the process stops," says Ms. Smith, the principal investigator on the grant. "If we can create a culture where both men and women in a department feel committed to equity and diversity, that's what we want." ■

*Originally published October 7, 2016*



MSU PHOTO BY KELLY GORHAM

**Sarah Codd, a professor of mechanical engineering at Montana State, works with a graduate student in the Magnetic Resonance Lab.**

female hire despite an offer to at least one. He followed the new approach, and last fall, computer science hired two female tenure-track faculty members.

"We had good intentions, but we just didn't have the right knowledge," Mr. Paxton says of earlier efforts. "You don't know what you don't know until you know it. Then it's obvious."

Rather than just posting job openings and wait-

# A Drive to Diversify the Faculty Yields Results

By AUDREY WILLIAMS JUNE

Innovative  
recruiting  
has helped  
the Rochester  
Institute of  
Technology  
hire more  
minority  
professors

**S** EVEN and a half years ago, when Robert Osgood ambled toward a Rochester Institute of Technology booth at a conference for minority doctoral students, he was not yet ready to go on the job market. But M. Renee Baker, the booth's lone occupant, was ready for him.

Mr. Osgood was still two years away from getting his Ph.D. To Ms. Baker, though, it was the perfect time to sell him on an academic career at Rochester. She whipped out her cellphone and called the chairman of the biological-sciences department to talk with Mr. Osgood on the spot. To his surprise—"I thought there was no way she would reach them," he says—Ms. Baker handed him the phone so he could chat. That phone call was the start of a long-running relationship between Mr. Osgood and Rochester that led to his accepting a job there in 2008 as an assistant professor of medical sciences.

"You have to act like a talent scout all the time," says Ms. Baker, executive director of the office of faculty recruitment and retention at Rochester. "If we stay in touch with them the longest, hopefully we'll be the ones to win out in the end."

For Ms. Baker, that kind of aggressive outreach is key to faculty recruiting—particularly when it comes to diversifying the ranks. On-the-road recruiting is just one part of a multipronged effort to attract African-Americans, Latinos, and Native Americans to a campus that specializes in fields, like science and engineering, from which those groups are largely missing. And with its recent efforts, Rochester has had measurable success. In 2002, the year Ms. Baker was hired, 35 tenured or tenure-track professors were members of these underrepresented minorities. Today that number has more than doubled, to 78.

To be sure, other institutions are actively recruiting minority professors and women, including Rochester's better-known competitors. A recently released report from one of them, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, underscores how difficult the path can be. It concluded that progress was "uneven" and that, among other goals, the university must do more to recruit and retain such faculty members.

"We're competing against the big boys," says

Lynn Wild, Rochester's associate provost for faculty success. "We want to get the best people out there that we can."

#### **A FOCUSED EFFORT**

By all accounts, Rochester's first champion of minority recruiting was Albert J. Simone, the college's previous president. In 2001, almost a decade after his arrival, it became clear that the institution's diversity efforts had fallen flat. In a speech the following year, in which Mr. Simone challenged the university to do better, he said that the institution's earlier efforts to recruit African-American, Latino, and Native American professors, were "unacceptable." The president decided that Rochester needed someone whose job was to diversify the faculty.

When Ms. Baker was hired, few institutions em-

**M. Renee Baker (left) and Douglas Merrill (center), of the Rochester Institute of Technology, kept in touch with Robert Osgood for years before he accepted a job there.**



ployed someone whose sole job was to “beat the bushes for faculty members” with a focus on recruiting minority candidates, she says. Her post is more common now, but what she and her staff do to unearth promising young scholars is exceptional.

They contact diversity offices, multicultural associations, and department chairs at historically black and Hispanic-serving institutions that grant Ph.D.’s and ask for their help in promoting Rochester to would-be professors. Ms. Baker and her staff mine the Internet year-round for lists of Ph.D. students or postdoctoral scholars and then collect contact information to alert promising minority and female scholars of positions at Rochester in their fields. They also sift through scholarly journals and conference programs in search of papers presented by minority academics.

Every name they cull and every in-person contact they make goes into a database of about 2,800 entries. Most notably, every fall Rochester brings two dozen or so graduate students and postdocs to the campus for its Future Faculty Career Exploration Program, which gives them an in-depth look at what life as a faculty member at the university and in the city of Rochester would be like. That longtime staple of academic recruiting—posting an ad in a scholarly journal—falls short of the mark in the worst way, Ms. Baker says. Some established scholars won’t apply for advertised positions, she says, unless they’re personally contacted about doing so.

“You have to make a phone call and say, We want you here, and this is what you can add to our institution,” Ms. Baker says. And although recruiting at academic conferences can be fruitful, many promising scholars may not make it to every meeting. “You can’t wait until you get to the conference and see who’s there,” Ms. Baker says. “You’ve got to be networking with people who have expertise in the areas that the institution needs.”

Daryl G. Smith, a professor of psychology at Claremont Graduate University and an expert on diversity issues in academe, agrees. What more colleges must do, Ms. Smith says, is think seriously about what they want their faculty ranks to look like and the skills and expertise those professors should possess, and then go out and find the people who fit the bill. Says Ms. Smith: “My urgency about faculty diversity is that we’re pretty far along in hiring the next generation of faculty, and we’re not where we need to be.”

### A ‘CULTURE SHIFT’

Before moving to RIT, Ms. Baker worked for more than 20 years in human resources for two city governments, and some of her methods have a decidedly nonacademic feel. “I’ve had people tell me that we were misleading people because we didn’t have anything open at the time when we were talking to them,” Ms. Baker says. “They don’t always under-

stand exploratory interviewing for what is to come.”

Part of Ms. Baker’s job is to educate deans, department chairs, and faculty members on the importance of building relationships for the long haul. “This was a definite culture shift,” says her colleague, Ms. Wild.

Some professors were especially dubious about the future-faculty program that Ms. Baker created and that is now the college’s signature recruiting tool for the underrepresented minorities it wants to attract: an all-expenses-paid trip to Rochester for graduate students who are within one or two years of completing their doctoral work (postdocs are welcome as well). Participants in the program, which accepted its first class in 2003, must apply to attend the four-day event, and they have come from institutions including Stanford University, the Georgia Institute of Technology, and the University of Maryland-Baltimore County.

On the program’s jam-packed agenda: a chance to sit in on classes, deliver a research talk, and meet with deans, professors, and RIT students to learn more about the institution and its current and future job openings. The visitors also rub shoulders with community leaders at a dinner held at the president’s house and take a bus tour of the city.

“Getting people here on campus to learn more about us was key,” says Ms. Baker, “Sometimes they haven’t thought about what the opportunities are here. This gives us a chance to show them.”

Douglas Merrill, a professor and director of the Center for Bioscience Education and Technology at Rochester, was among those who were skeptical of the program at first.

“I thought it was doomed to failure when I first heard about it,” he says. He couldn’t figure out how RIT would stay on the minds of people who weren’t job hunting at the time and for whom jobs might not have been available anyway.

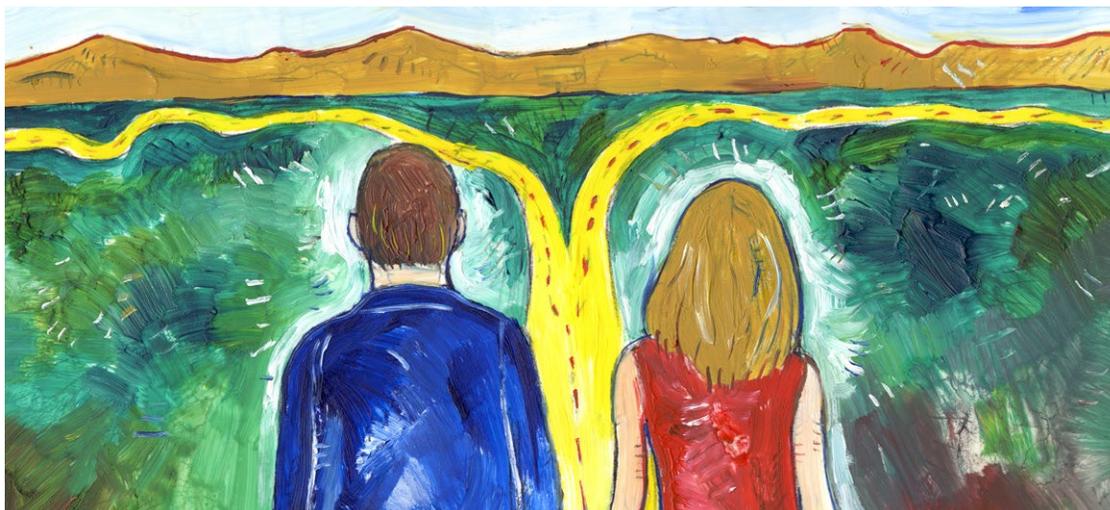
But for Mr. Osgood and nine other alumni of the future-faculty program who are now his colleagues, memories of Rochester and the institution’s meticulous follow-up efforts did the trick. Mr. Osgood, an alumnus of the program’s first class, took a job at Rochester after completing a three-year postdoctoral appointment. In the interim, he was invited to the campus periodically to do presentations on his research. He and Mr. Merrill, who was on the other end of the phone at the conference seven and a half years ago, kept in touch as well.

“The whole time RIT was saying, We want you here, we really need you here,” says Mr. Osgood, comparing Rochester’s approach with those of two other institutions where he thought he might work. “That message never changed.”

Mr. Merrill, meanwhile, is no longer a skeptic. “This has just succeeded beyond anyone’s imagination,” he says. ■

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## *The Intricacies of Spousal Hiring*



BRIAN TAYLOR

**A** YEAR ago, I had a revelation about spousal hiring in academe. At the time, I was dean of faculty in the arts and sciences school at the Johns Hopkins University. It had just named a new president, and as part of his briefing materials, I was drawing up capsule biographies of the most eminent faculty members in my division.

In choosing them, I thought of nothing but their standing in their respective fields. But I naturally included information about their relationship to Johns Hopkins. And when I finished, I realized, to my astonishment, that of the 17 I had picked, no fewer than eight had spouses who also taught at the university—seven of them as tenured professors.

Spousal hiring is often described as a “problem” to be solved, or as “the next great challenge facing universities,” to quote “Dual-Career Academic Couples,” an influential 2008 report published

by Stanford University. But when I looked at my list of names, I realized that for Johns Hopkins, at least, spousal hiring was not a challenge that we needed to face in the future. It was one we had already faced, even though we hadn’t quite realized it.

The same is true, I suspect, at many other colleges and universities. That means discussions of spousal hiring, which have long focused on the desirability of the practice, should now turn to the question of how to manage it fairly and effectively.

Recent experiences have shown me just how difficult managing the process can be. During nearly three years in the dean’s office at Johns Hopkins, I oversaw scores of faculty-recruitment cases, over a third of them in-

volving some sort of spousal issue. Of course the particulars varied enormously—which is why I didn’t fully grasp the overall pattern until my little exercise for the new president. The spouses in

### ADVICE

## DAVID A. BELL

question ranged from new Ph.D.'s in the humanities looking for nothing more than an occasional teaching opportunity, to senior scientists hoping for huge start-up packages, thousands of square feet of lab space, and full professorships.

Because of those variations, the university preferred to handle each couple on a case-by-case basis. It had no formal policies or procedures, no special grant money to draw on, and no staff to help out with spousal hires, except for a small office buried in the recesses of the human-resources bureaucracy. (The office kept such a low profile that some of my counterparts in other divisions did not even know of its existence.) At the time, I thought that an ad hoc approach was appropriate, and that we did a good job of handling the issue over all. In retrospect I am not so sure.

I should confess that spousal hiring is an issue that I have faced in a personal context as well. Like 36 percent of American academics (according to the Stanford report), I myself am half of an academic couple. A historian of France by training, I met and married my wife, an immunologist, when I was an assistant professor and she was a postdoc at the same institution.

Since then she has switched jobs three times, and I have done so twice. We have managed, at each turn, to get good positions at different institutions within reasonable daily commuting distance. But we know we have been ridiculously fortunate. And even so, my wife made the sacrifice of looking for jobs only where there might be opportunities for someone in my small, specialized field. When the most recent opportunities arose, we did, in fact, engage in protracted negotiations for a spousal hire, although we didn't end up making use of one.

My experience in the dean's office confirmed my impressions as to the need for spousal hiring. Johns Hopkins simply could not have built its faculty without a willingness to create positions for spouses and partners.

In case after case, that willingness was, by far, the single most important factor in recruitment. We could increase a salary offer by tens of thousands of dollars a year; provide lavish research accounts; promise a scandalous number of sabbatical leaves—none of it mattered if it meant that a candidate still faced the prospect of a long-distance commute or a major professional sacrifice by a spouse.

Hiring spouses brought other, less obvious benefits as well. At small universities like Johns Hopkins, departments are often terribly resistant to move into new fields, for fear of weakening what they see as their always-fragile areas of core expertise. Spousal hiring provided a useful means for opening up those new fields, adding to the university's intellectual diversity. And, of course, it helped significantly with gender diversity as well.

The Stanford report cites both of those factors as important reasons for making spousal hires.

I also saw, quite clearly, the costs of not making spousal hires. As a dean, I dealt with many more faculty problems resulting from long-distance commuting marriages than from two professors living and working together on the same campus. Faculty members for whom we had been unable to provide spousal hires sometimes had their primary residence hundreds of miles from the campus and came to teach at Hopkins only two or three days a week. They constantly turned down committee assignments, often ducked out of office hours, and were largely absent from the community. Some of them regularly requested unpaid leaves of absence to spend more time with their partners and children, leaving their colleagues to cover their teaching and service.

Critics of spousal hiring often charge that the practice drags down a university's academic quality, but my experience as dean laid that concern to rest for me. To start with, we never forced a spousal hire on a department or approved the hiring of a spouse who we felt could not pass through the

## **As a dean, I dealt with many more faculty problems resulting from long-distance commuting marriages than from two professors living and working together on the same campus.**

university's rigorous tenure process. After seeing the pattern of spousal hiring in my report to the new president, I drew up a list of the partners in question, wondering if it would look like a rogues' gallery of our weakest professors. In fact, in terms of both stature and productivity, it seemed like an entirely random selection. The Stanford report notes that faculty members recruited as part of spousal-hire arrangements have a level of productivity on par for their institutions.

Yet while my experience as dean left me feeling that spousal hiring is clearly beneficial for colleges and universities, it also convinced me that the purely ad hoc, case-by-case manner in which Johns Hopkins—and many other institutions—have handled it leaves a great deal to be desired.

Most obviously, it has meant that we never even

ask if we should be making the same efforts for all of the faculty members we want to recruit, or only for those we want the most. It is worth noting that while eight of the 17 senior superstars I profiled for the new president had spouses on the faculty, a far smaller proportion of assistant professors did. Yet the superstars generally needed spousal hires much less, for they were less likely to have school-aged children, and could more easily afford two homes and long-distance commutes. That was a troubling inequity.

The ad hoc nature of our spousal appointments also increased the resistance of some departments to hiring the partners. In theory, departments had nothing to lose and much to gain from such appointments, since we generally promised that a spousal hire would be an “add on” budget line. But faculty members warned darkly that future deans might not honor the current dean’s promises, and raised endless questions and complaints.

One department wanted to bar a prospective spousal hire from taking on graduate advisees. It demanded an additional office for the person, even though it already had several vacant ones, and insisted that its own budget not be charged for office furniture, a new computer, or even stationery for the hire. By the end, I was expecting to get bills for pencils. One distinguished professor told me that while he had nothing against his new colleague, he feared that the hire would single out his department as a “dumping ground.”

Not only does such behavior cause dissension within departments, but it also increases the psychological toll on the spouses themselves. People hired in such deals naturally find it hard not to ask if they really deserved the job. They wonder if their new colleagues resent them. They worry about receiving the same degree of institutional support as someone hired in a regular search.

In my experience, the concerns on both sides tend to dissipate after a few years. If a new faculty member pitches in, does the proper share of teaching and service, and proves an interesting, productive scholar, then quite soon colleagues generally forget the circumstances under which he or she was hired. But the more resentment that is expressed at the start, the harder it is for the process of acceptance to take place.

There is no way to smooth over all the potential difficulties involved with spousal hiring. But I feel strongly that formal policies and procedures can help, having worked without them. Even a simple statement by university leaders that they support the practice of spousal hiring, and that individual departments are expected to cooperate where pos-

sible, could have eased some of the tensions I experienced as dean.

Making money available is important as well. Ideally an institution might have a number of floating budget lines dedicated to spousal hiring—helping to relieve worries about decanal treachery. But even a smaller pot of money that a dean can draw on would be of use.

**If a new faculty member pitches in, does the proper share of teaching and service, and proves an interesting, productive scholar, then quite soon colleagues generally forget the circumstances under which he or she was hired.**

And, wherever possible, a senior administrator should be formally responsible for the issue. He or she can act as a broker for all potential candidates who might need a job for a spouse, helping to ensure equity between new Ph.D.’s and senior superstars. A senior administrator could also, just as important, act as an advocate for spouses after they are hired, ensure proper mentoring, and guard against the sorts of slights that can easily poison the environment.

Such steps will not solve all the problems that come with spousal hires. But in an academic universe where most universities have accepted the need for the practice—even if they don’t fully realize it—it is precisely that sort of streamlining, and help around the edges, that now matters the most. ■

*David A. Bell, formerly dean of faculty in the arts and sciences school at the Johns Hopkins University, is a professor of history at Princeton University.*

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# Faculty Couples, for Better or Worse

By ROBIN WILSON

The practice of hiring couples can create a tangled web of relationships that overwhelms a department

**T**O LURE TOP professors to this somewhat isolated Midwestern town, the University of Missouri often hires two by two.

For academic couples, landing two faculty jobs on one campus is a dream. For the university, the hiring strategy is an effort to establish an ideal workplace, one where professors are as happy in the lab as they are at home—in part because they are relieved of the common academic burden of a commuter marriage.

But the practice of hiring couples can create a tangled web of relationships that overwhelms an academic department, infusing it with a couple's worst personal drama. Here, a contentious divorce and a bitter tenure dispute turned the philosophy department into a battleground, with shouting matches, allegations of extramarital affairs, and even charges of sexual harassment brought by an adjunct against her own faculty husband.

“Academic couples in the same department can be heaven and hell,” says Philip Robbins, an associate professor of philosophy who split up with his wife, a former adjunct instructor in the department who charged him with sexual harassment—something he denies. “It’s wonderful if you can get two jobs in the same place, but when it goes wrong, it can go very, very wrong.”

Like many academic departments here, and nationwide, the philosophy department is full of faculty members with spouses either in the department or elsewhere at the university. Twelve of the department's 17 tenured and tenure-track professors are married to other faculty members or professional employees on the campus. Four of those are married to others in the department. Nearly every faculty search, it seems, ends up involving a professor with a spouse or partner who needs a job.

Just this year, the department hired two young philosophers, a married couple, when it had been looking for only one. To make the deal work, university administrators provided a portion of the salary to hire the female philosopher using a fund meant to help diversify the faculty, since women are underrepresented in the discipline.

"You have to do a lot of negotiating, and begging, and pleading," says Robert N. Johnson, chairman of the philosophy department. "Once you decide you want to hire someone, you want to get them, and if that means solving a two-body problem, that's what you have to do."

When an academic department here wants to offer a job to a candidate with an academic spouse, the university frequently creates a brand-new job. While Missouri has no official policy on hiring couples, the administration often pays a portion of the spouse's salary for the first two years from a special "bridge" fund; then it is up to the department where the spouse lands to pick up the tab. Professors say the understanding here is that de-

**"Once you decide you want to hire someone, you want to get them, and if that means solving a two-body problem, that's what you have to do."**

partments should be prepared to take on a partner and, in return, another department will do the same for them down the line.

"We in the Midwest, who are on the way to nowhere, have problems persuading people on the coasts to live here," says Andrew Melnyk, who served as chairman of philosophy before Mr. Johnson.

Indeed, other campuses located in regions where they are the only research university typically follow practices similar to Missouri's when it comes to spousal hiring. Institutions in larger cities with many other universities nearby are not as quick to accommodate couples. The same goes for departments at the very top of the prestige scale, where

every faculty job is filled by an international search of the best researchers in the field.

More than a third of research-university faculty nationwide have other academics as partners, and of those, nearly 40 percent are coupled with someone who works in the very same department. The data come from a 2006 study of 9,000 research-university professors by Stanford University's Clayman Institute for Gender Research. They show that more women than men are part of an academic couple; 40 percent of female faculty members are, compared with 34 percent of males.

It's not uncommon for professionals in other fields to become partners: Half of female doctors marry other doctors, studies show. But, unlike in academe, there is usually more than one place in town for dual-career partners in the same profession to find work. As more women pursue doctoral degrees, the number of academic couples nationwide is expected to rise. Graduate school is a natural mating ground for people who spend years studying a discipline they are passionate about alongside their intellectual peers at precisely the time in their lives when many are also looking for love.

"This new generation of scholars seems to be partnering earlier, and they are both interested in finding successful careers," says Andrea Rees Davies, director of programs and research at the Clayman Institute.

"It's wonderful if you can get two jobs in the same place, but when it goes wrong, it can go very, very wrong."

Jeffrey L. Harrison, a professor of law at the University of Florida, has written about the pros and cons of hiring academic couples on his blog, *Class Bias in Higher Education*. Hiring a couple to work in one department can bring personal problems into the workplace, he says. And the risks of something going wrong are greater if the couple

is hired pretenure. "I think you are rolling the dice when you hire untenured couples, on how it will play out," he says. "You're risking a real soap opera if one gets tenure and the other doesn't."

**C**jobs for spouses without a search means that other qualified Ph.D.'s are missing out. At Missouri, though, there seem to be few people willing to criticize the practice. Perhaps that's because practically everyone here is married to someone else. Since Columbia is headquarters to few major industries, it can be challenging for even the nonacademic partners of professors to find work. So the university often finds jobs on its own campus for lawyers, accountants, journalists, and



DAK DILLON FOR THE CHRONICLE

Alexandru Radulescu and Marina Folescu are the latest faculty couple to join the U. of Missouri's philosophy department.

medical personnel.

As dean of arts and science here, Michael J. O'Brien is one of the chief engineers behind the university's practice of hiring couples. He has been married to two women at the university himself (his first wife died in 2005). He recalls a time a few years ago when the mathematics department alone had five faculty couples, which meant that 10 of its 40 professors were married to others in the department.

"We don't lose people because of the couple issue," says Mr. O'Brien. "Hiring couples is the best strategy to get great people."

The university is aware that hiring couples can create conflicts, he says. "But our experience has been, in the vast majority of cases where we do partner accommodations, they've been highly successful. Without accommodations, we wouldn't have attracted some of the best minds that we have."

Over all, 22 percent of Missouri's tenured and tenure-track faculty members, or 488 people, have a spouse or partner either on the faculty or within the rest of the university's employee ranks. Of

those, 10 percent of Missouri's professors are married to other professors here.

While the philosophy department at Missouri has gained some top hires because of the couple quotient, it has also lost some for the same reason. In 2011, it landed Christopher Pincock, a talented scholar in a rare subfield, the philosophy of mathematics. Faculty members here acknowledge it may have been hard for the department to attract Mr. Pincock if he hadn't been interested in moving from Purdue University to join his wife, Tansel Yilmazer, whom Missouri's College of Human Environmental Sciences had recruited a couple of years earlier. Eighteen months after he arrived, though, Mr. Pincock was gone when he and Ms. Yilmazer both got jobs at Ohio State University.

The department also lost Brian Kierland, who had followed his partner to Missouri in 2003, a couple of years after she got a job teaching Russian here. But he returned to his hometown and Boise State University in 2008, a few years after they split up.

Mr. Johnson says that over all, adding facul-

ty spouses to the mix has been good for the department. “One of the hardest things to get as a young faculty member is feedback,” says the chairman, who is himself married to the interim director of Missouri’s master’s program in public health. Spouses provide built-in colleagues to discuss one another’s work.

Hiring academic couples, he adds, has also broadened the philosophy department’s coverage of the discipline.

But the practice has also left deep scars. “Even if a couple gets along fine, if there is a problem in their family life it’s going to impact the department doubly as opposed to if you just had one of them as a member,” says Peter Vallentyne, a philosophy professor here.

He still believes that hiring couples generally holds more pluses than minuses, but Mr. Vallentyne doesn’t deny the costs. “If you ever thought there was a good chance that what’s happened here would happen when you hired a couple,” he says, “you’d never be in favor of it.”

**W**HEN the department made Mr. Robbins an offer in 2007, it had just lost its top candidate for the job: A scholar it tried to attract by also offering his wife a tenure-track post. The couple took jobs at the University of Oxford instead.

During the interview process, Mr. Robbins hadn’t mentioned a spouse, but when the department extended him a tenured offer, he asked for a job for his wife, Sara Bernal, then a Ph.D. candidate in philosophy at Rutgers University. The dean quickly agreed to put up \$24,000 for Ms. Bernal to teach four courses a year for two years as an adjunct instructor, and the couple accepted the jobs, moving to Columbia from Washington University in St. Louis. The hope, says Mr. Melnyk, who was the department chairman at the time, was that Ms. Bernal would quickly finish her dissertation and the university would offer her a tenure-track post.

Mr. Robbins and Ms. Bernal met in a course on logic, when she was an undergraduate and he a graduate student at the University of Chicago. He is seven years older and earned his doctorate in 2000. During most of the roughly 10 years they’d been married before landing here, Ms. Bernal had been following him to academic appointments—in Mexico City, in Vermont, and in St. Louis. When they arrived at Missouri’s Strickland Hall, where the philosophy department is based, they had a 2-year-old son and a rocky relationship. Ms. Bernal was overwhelmed by motherhood, she says now, and depressed by the dim prospect that she’d ever finish her doctorate and have a scholarly career of her own.

It didn’t take long for the marriage to unravel. In July 2009, close to two years after they’d arrived, Ms. Bernal was arrested for shoplifting, a hab-

it she said she’d acquired as she became more and more despondent. Shortly after that, she wrote an account of shoplifting roughly based on her own experiences that she gave to Mr. Robbins in the hopes, she says, that it would get his attention and save their marriage. But instead, in October 2009, Mr. Robbins asked for a divorce.

Over Thanksgiving the following month, Ms. Bernal spent the holiday out of town with her son and another man. When she later told Mr. Robbins, he was livid and, according to both of their accounts, he told her: “I know a lot of people, and I will talk to them, and you will never have a career in philosophy.”

Ms. Bernal says she was concerned enough for her safety after that remark that when she returned to Columbia, she spent a couple of hours at a local shelter with her son. Mr. Robbins says “she had no reasonable cause” for concern.

It was after this episode that Mr. Robbins began circulating the story on shoplifting to some of his friends and colleagues, including Mr. Melnyk, with the implication that Ms. Bernal was both unstable and unfit to teach. She fired back by e-mailing Mr. Melnyk accusations of an improper relationship she claimed Mr. Robbins had had with a female undergraduate while he was an assistant professor at Washington University. Mr. Robbins says the accusations of impropriety are untrue.

As their conflict escalated, both Mr. Robbins and Ms. Bernal used their department chairman as a referee, complaining to Mr. Melnyk about what the other had said in texts and e-mail messages and ask-

**As their conflict escalated, both Mr. Robbins and Ms. Bernal used their department chairman as a referee, complaining to Mr. Melnyk about what the other had said in texts and e-mail messages and asking him to make the other stop.**

ing him to make the other stop. Mr. Melnyk did manage to barter a fragile truce for a while, asking the two not to contact each other during work hours. But they eventually violated the agreement,

and they both began complaining to Mr. Melnyk again.

A pivotal moment came in the spring of 2010 when Ms. Bernal visited Mr. Robbins's office to retrieve some books and stepped on a table in her stocking feet. He told her to get her "germy feet" off his furniture, they both said, and threatened to call campus security if she didn't leave.

Ms. Bernal knew their colleagues had heard the shouting. "I marched right down the hall to Andrew's office," she says, "and said, 'This behavior is against the rules and I'm going to do something about it!'"

In the fall of 2010, Ms. Bernal filed a grievance with the university, accusing her estranged husband of sexual harassment and the university of failing to maintain a positive work environment.

By then, however, her academic appointment at Missouri had expired, and a university panel threw out her complaint because she was no longer an employee. Ms. Bernal also filed a similar complaint with the Missouri Commission on Human Rights, which investigated and gave her the right to sue, but found no evidence of her charges. After a bitter custody battle, the couple's divorce became official last year.

Mr. Robbins says he regrets bringing his marital problems into the office, but with both him and his wife working on the same corridor, it was nearly impossible to avoid. "When something like this is going on, you can't ever get away from it," he says. "It's one thing to have someone screaming at you at home, but then you've got it at the office, too. It is very easy to go on quarreling with someone."

Mr. Melnyk says he was shocked at the couple's hostility. "I tried to tell them to stop, that two wrongs don't make a right, but I was really powerless to remedy the situation," he says. Using her accusations of harassment to punish him would have been contrary to university policy. "Being mean to one's soon-to-be ex-wife doesn't fall into any categories."

Mr. Melnyk has been married for 25 years to a woman who is an adjunct assistant professor of English here and who previously worked as an associate director of the university's honors college. But nothing had prepared him for being pressed into duty as a marriage counselor.

"I know way too much about this divorce," he says.

He successfully kept the rancor from affecting the department's students and most of the other faculty members. But sometimes there wasn't much he could do to keep the dispute from spreading. In one case, for example, Mr. Robbins asked another professor to exclude Ms. Bernal from a philosophy workshop, which the other professor agreed to do until Mr. Robbins changed his mind. Ms. Bernal found out about it when Mr. Robbins copied her on an e-mail message to the other professor, retracting

his request that she be excluded.

Ms. Bernal says the dispute with Mr. Robbins cost her a career in philosophy. She has dropped her plans to earn a Ph.D. and is now planning to

**"It's wonderful if you can get two jobs in the same place, but when it goes wrong, it can go very, very wrong."**

pursue a medical degree. "If I had had some kind of ongoing professional community in Columbia, as opposed to a department in which I no longer wanted to step foot," she says. "I'd have hung on with more determination."

**I**F the reverberations from the Robbins-Bernal divorce spilled over into the chairman's office here, the ramifications of Sara Rachel Chant's tenure denial went far beyond that. Ms. Chant and her husband, Zachary Ernst, were recruited in 2006 from two faculty jobs at Florida State University. The philosophy department here wooed them with higher salaries, they say. The department also paid to transport Ms. Chant's horses from Florida and agreed to allow her dog—Alexander, a Great Dane—to accompany her to the campus.

But from the first day they arrived at Missouri, they both say, Mr. Melnyk clashed with Ms. Chant. He offered her one of two philosophy offices located one floor down from the department's headquarters, in the women's-studies department. She says he made comments about her body, her clothing, and about how her good teaching evaluations probably were based on her looks, not her accomplishments in the classroom.

"There's a huge long laundry list of things I'm accused to have done," says Mr. Melnyk, who denies any allegations of gender bias or harassment. "In some cases, I simply didn't do these things. In other cases, I did but my motivation wasn't discrimination and had nothing to do with her gender."

Mr. Ernst went up for tenure first, in 2008, and got it without a hitch. But when it was Ms. Chant's turn three years later, the department voted her down. Most of the other decision makers up the line, all the way to the university's chancellor, agreed with the department's decision. They said Ms. Chant had failed to design new courses, that her syllabi weren't detailed enough, and that she had cowritten too many publications with her

husband rather than publishing articles she alone wrote in top journals, Ms. Chant says.

To complicate matters, a few years before Ms. Chant came up for tenure she had had an affair with a philosopher outside Missouri, and Mr. Ernst, who was crushed at the time, is said to have told a colleague here that he actually wrote most of his wife's work. Mr. Ernst now says that's something he never claimed, but Ms. Chant says she believes that it was a factor in her tenure proceedings.

By the height of Ms. Chant's tenure battle, a few years after the affair had ended, Mr. Ernst had become a more outspoken advocate for her case than she was herself. He accompanied her to administrators' offices to wage appeals. And he dashed off a treatise he put on Facebook, accusing the philosophy department of sexism.

"I have a very large, nasty ax to grind with my department," he wrote in the essay he posted on Facebook. "If you want a good picture of the ax, try to imagine the heaviest, most blunt, blood-soaked ax in the world's worst horror movie." The essay was widely circulated on the Internet as an example of difficulties facing women in philosophy and even ended up on New APPS, a blog about art, politics, philosophy, and science.

"This has been very damaging to the reputation of the department," says Mr. Melnyk, who says several philosophers read Mr. Ernst's post and made negative comments online about the department.

Ms. Chant filed a grievance in 2012, accusing the department of gender bias, sexual harassment, and of creating a hostile working environment. The university found no merit to her complaints. In a meeting with Missouri's chancellor, Ms. Chant says, he acknowledged she was a "first-rate" researcher and an "excellent" teacher, but told her he wasn't sure that would continue. She says she challenged him by presenting a lengthy plan for her future research, and eventually he reversed his original decision and granted her tenure late last year.

Even though both husband and wife now have tenure, securing them lifetime jobs at Missouri, the battle isn't over.

Ms. Chant, who is working on her research this

semester in Florida, editing a collection of essays to be published next year by Oxford University Press and preparing a philosophy talk she'll deliver this month in Helsinki, filed a lawsuit last month charging the university and the philosophy department with sexual harassment and gender discrimination.

Neither she nor her husband want much to do with their department. Ms. Chant, who will return to Missouri next semester, says, "I am trying to have one last semester which involves as little contact with my colleagues as possible."

While Mr. Ernst is here teaching classes this semester, he refuses to go to department meetings or speak to his philosophy colleagues. "I don't take part in any business or functions," he says. "I'm not friends with any of them, it burned a lot of bridges. As a couple, when something ugly happens, you're in the same boat."

**D**OWN the hall from the philosophy-department office that Mr. Ernst never comes to are the offices of a brand-new pair of scholars the philosophy department hired this fall. They represent the ideal that Missouri administrators still say defines the majority of couple hires.

The husband and wife are aware of the problems couples here have experienced. But they say that faculty members here assured them that the poor track record of some couples before them didn't mean they would face the same fate. To Marina Folescu and Alexandru Radulescu, two new Ph.D.'s, the benefits of having two jobs on the same campus overwhelm any downsides and offer a much brighter situation than the alternatives.

"When we were on the job market, panic would set in," says Ms. Folescu. "Each of us envisioned the possibility that one of us would get a job and the other would follow that one around for awhile, or maybe forever."

With two equal jobs on one campus, "we don't have to worry about commuting to and fro," she says. "Now we can walk to work together and talk philosophy." ■

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# Helping New Faculty Get Housing

By LEE GARDNER

Many newly hired professors have trouble finding an affordable home. Here's how a handful of colleges help.

**C**ONGRATULATIONS, you've just landed a tenure-track faculty position halfway across the country. You've been to the campus once, for your interview, and now you have to find a place to live before classes start.

Moving expenses aside, your new institution probably won't help you. Many freshly minted assistant professors end up relying on their own resources and tips from new colleagues when trying to get a feel for neighborhoods, school districts, and the local rental or real-estate market.

Rough landings aren't a new problem, and these days, the privilege of a full-time academic job may diminish any sympathy. But the trouble isn't going away, and with escalating rental and home prices, things may get worse. Yet most colleges offer no financial assistance or guidance, even in booming markets.



ANDRÉ CHUNG FOR THE CHRONICLE

**Terence Hannum, an assistant professor of art at Stevenson U., is renting now but hopes to eventually buy a home near campus, outside Baltimore.**

“This is a problem that’s kind of slipping through the cracks,” says John Barnshaw, senior higher-education researcher at the American Association of University Professors. Benefits as a percentage of total compensation for full-time faculty members have grown marginally, on average, over the past five years, according to the AAUP. But institutions generally put those increases toward keeping up with health-care or retirement costs, Mr. Barnshaw says. Formal programs to help new hires relocate remain rare.

Only a small share of employers, about 5 percent of those surveyed this year by the Society for Human Resource Management, offer “housing counseling” to new employees. But expectations of colleges, where faculty members often remain for their entire careers, can be higher.

An assistant professor’s salary may appear generous to a new Ph.D., but that doesn’t prevent “a little bit of sticker shock” at the cost of living in some areas, Mr. Barnshaw says. Is it worth paying a premium to live near a campus or better to go miles away, where housing may be more affordable? What about schools, transportation, and the commute? That soft knowledge can be even more valuable than financial help in the short term.

Four years ago, Terence Hannum accepted a position as an assistant professor of art at Stevenson University, outside Baltimore. Stevenson of-

fers full-time employees who qualify for a Maryland mortgage program as much as \$5,000 toward a down payment and closing costs. But Mr. Hannum, who was moving with his family from Chicago, wasn’t ready for that. “I’d been an adjunct faculty member for seven years,” he says. “How am I going to buy a house?”

He knew little about Baltimore’s neighborhoods or schools. The university paid his relocation expenses, and his new colleagues offered advice, but from Chicago, he was left to sift through scams and shady properties on Craigslist. “Time was just being whittled away,” he says. “It became very stressful.”

He settled on a suburban rental house but soon came into conflict with his landlord. After a somewhat tense year, he and his family moved to another rental house.

Mr. Hannum looks forward to taking up Stevenson’s offer of help buying a home. “It’s a great thing,” he says, “for the future.”

#### **PUSH FOR HELP**

Finding a place to live can be difficult anywhere, but in some cities, it’s become downright forbidding. The median list price for rental properties in Boston has increased by 30 percent in the past five years, according to the real-estate-database compa-

ny Zillow. The median sale price for a home there has risen by 41 percent, to \$551,000, over the same period. In San Francisco, the list price for rentals has gone up by 53 percent, and the median sale price by 59 percent, to about \$1.1 million.

The picture is similar in Washington. One local institution there, American University, has joined with the District of Columbia's Office of Planning in its Live Near Your Work program to offer grants of up to \$12,000 to full-time faculty and staff members who want to buy homes in the city. But that program is an outlier.

George Washington University, for example, offers no home-buying or rental assistance to its faculty members, though it maintains a limited amount of free residence-hall space for "faculty in residence" who work to promote student engagement. The university has lost good candidates over the years because of cost concerns, says Charles A. Garris Jr., a professor of engineering and executive chair of the Faculty Senate.

Megan C. Leftwich, an assistant professor of engineering at George Washington, tapped into an informal network. When she and her family moved from Los Alamos, N.M., in 2012, they rented the home of a fellow academic who had gone on sabbatical. After six months, they found a house to buy in Silver Spring, Md., just outside the city. Searching for housing "is a little overwhelming at first," Ms. Leftwich says, "but it isn't impossible."

Faculty members at the University of California at Santa Cruz, just south of Silicon Valley, have struggled for decades to find affordable housing. A faculty advisory committee argued in 2001 that the university was in the midst of a "housing crisis" and needed more on-campus faculty housing and better financial-assistance programs. In the years since, the university has added more employee housing, going from 130 units in 2000 to 239 units for sale or rent today. More on-campus housing has helped, says Nancy Chen, a professor of anthropology who contributed to the 2001 report. But it remains "very difficult to find housing that's close to the university," she says, "unless it's actually university housing."

#### **'GREAT PEACE OF MIND'**

A few colleges, however, make a virtue of offering help. The University of Southern California, for one, runs a suite of programs designed to ease employees' entry to Los Angeles, where the list price for rentals has increased by 8 percent in the past year, and the median sale price for homes has risen by 45 percent in the past five. Some faculty members are eligible for loans or renewable subsidies to help buy a house or pay rent. Full-time faculty and staff members can also apply for a grant from the university of up to \$50,000 to buy a house in certain areas surrounding the campus.

Such programs give USC an edge in attracting star professors, people there say. "If we're recruiting somebody who might be at Harvard, for example, and they come out here and see that they have a challenge purchasing in the Los Angeles market," the perks can matter, says Lisa G. Rediger, an employee-housing administrator at the university. Across town, the University of California at Los Angeles doesn't offer such enticements, although the University of California system does offer mortgage loans to tenure-track faculty.

Ms. Rediger's office also connects new hires with relocation specialists and offers them advice on school districts and traffic. "Sometimes they don't even know what all their needs are," she says.

When Morgan S. Polikoff took a job as an assistant professor of education, in 2010, USC connected him with a real-estate broker to help him and his partner figure out where they might want to live on their budget. The university then subsidized their housing for three years; they rented an apartment before buying a house. "Plenty of people make it work on way less, but it was very, very helpful," Mr. Polikoff says of the subsidy.

ce alone can make a difference, even in smaller markets. When Christian Anton Gerard applied last year for an assistant-professor job in the English department at the University of Arkansas at Fort Smith, he was surprised that his on-campus interview included a two-hour tour of the town with a local broker. He was offered and accepted the job, and he worked with the same broker over the summer to find a home.

The initial tour "provided a great peace of mind for me, even not knowing if I had the job," he says. The message was clear: "This was a place that was going to look out for me."

The Fort Smith campus is a former community college that joined the university system in 2002. Asking local brokers to meet with finalists for full-time jobs doesn't cost the university anything. It's part of a longstanding effort to hire and retain good professors, says Paul B. Beran, the chancellor.

At any job interview, "two interviews are happening," he says. The university is interviewing the candidate for the job, and the candidate is interviewing the institution, to figure out "whether or not this is a place they want to be."

In tiny Sewanee, Tenn., the University of the South rolls out a different kind of welcome mat. The university owns 134 houses and townhouses — about a quarter of Sewanee's private homes — and rents them, at a profit, to faculty and staff members. Some professors have lived in university-owned homes for decades. The university recently had to change the rules governing the rentals, in fact, so that retirees wouldn't stay so long, and new hires could move in. ■

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