



HIRING DUAL CAREER COUPLES: PRINCIPLES & PRACTICES

INTRODUCTION

The recruitment and retention of world-class faculty often depends upon support for the accompanying spouse/partner of the recruited individuals. MSU and the Provost’s Office welcome and encourage spousal/partner hires to help recruit world-class faculty. In accordance with university [policy](#), MSU regards spousal/partner hires as a legitimate exception to the normal practice of competitive recruitment. Candidates being considered for spousal/partner hire must nevertheless meet the qualifications and standards for the position.

This document is a summary of the key principles and practices when recruiting a tenure-system faculty member who may be interested in a spousal/partner hire. It also describes the process steps for requesting funds and/or an exception to the posting process from the Office of the Vice Provost for Faculty and Academic Staff Affairs (VPFASA).

OVERVIEW OF SPOUSAL/PARTNER CATEGORIES

The spouse/partner of a prospective faculty candidate may be interested in a variety of career options. Provided is an overview of the types of options and the individuals and/or offices who can aid in navigating options:

The spouse/partner is interested in...	Individuals/offices who can assist in identifying positions...
1. Positions outside of Michigan State University	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Director of the MSU Higher Education Recruitment Consortium (see the Resources section for contact information)
2. Faculty and academic staff positions within MSU	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Office of the Dean of the initial candidate • Office for Faculty and Academic Staff Affairs
3. Administrative (staff and executive) positions within MSU	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Office of the Dean of the initial candidate • Office for Faculty & Academic Staff Affairs • Human Resources

Please note that most of this document outlines practices and processes related to positions within MSU (categories 2 and 3). MSU’s Higher Education Recruitment Consortium (HERC) Director may be able to assist with identifying opportunities outside of MSU (category 1), however, there is no guarantee of placement.

ELIGIBILITY FOR POSITIONS WITHIN MSU

Tenure system faculty are eligible for consideration for an arrangement for their spouse/partner at MSU. Ideally, both partners in a dual career couple are hired competitively, but in many cases, this may not be an option. Spouses/partners may be considered for a faculty or academic staff position or an administrative position at MSU.

DECISION PROCESS

The decision to pursue a spousal/partner arrangement within MSU rests with the Office of the Dean. The Dean takes the responsibility for looking across the university for possible spousal/partner arrangements. Requests are evaluated on a case-by-case basis, including consideration of available funding. If the Office of the Dean authorizes the request, the Office of the Dean will attempt to identify an appropriate hiring unit within the University to accommodate the spouse/partner. If the potential hiring unit agrees to consider an appointment for the spouse/partner (taking into consideration available funds and/or need), it will invite the spouse/partner for a full interview and deliberate according to the norms of a competitive search for the identified position.

FUNDING

Direct Hires: In cases where a position does not already exist within MSU, typically, the salary for the spouse/partner will be shared equally (i.e., 1/3 split) for the first three years by:

- the Provost's Office,
- the department/school of the original candidate, and
- the hiring unit of the spouse/partner

The Provost's Office funding is limited to the initial three years. These three years of support are intended to give the spouse/partner time to secure permanent employment either at MSU or outside of MSU. The spouse/partner is therefore strongly encouraged to search widely throughout mid-Michigan for a suitable position during this time frame. If the spouse/partner remains in the position they were initially hired into at MSU then, after the initial three years, the entire salary of the spouse/partner will be the responsibility of the spouse/partner's hiring unit. In such a case, it is imperative that the hiring unit plans for the success and sustainability of the spouse/partner hire after the initial three-year funding end date.

Occasionally, the department/school of the original candidate and the hiring unit of the spouse/partner come to an arrangement in which Provost Office funding is not needed to support the position.

Vacant Positions: The above cost-sharing arrangement is not available for vacant positions as departmental/school/unit funds are already available in these cases.

WHEN TO DISCUSS SPOUSE/PARTNER ARRANGEMENTS

Search committees, unit administrators, and HR administrators may receive questions from candidates regarding whether there is an opportunity for dual career support at MSU. It is unlawful for any employee of MSU to ask questions of candidates that elicit information based on one's marital status during the pre-employment process. Care must be taken when entering into these discussions so as not to inadvertently elicit information about a candidate's marital status. Any discussion on dual career support prior to an offer being made should be limited to a general statement that the university works diligently to support dual career couples and welcomes discussion from the candidate at the time of offer.

Sometimes candidates are not aware that dual career support is a possibility, or they are reluctant to inquire. A practice utilized within the College of Agriculture and Natural Resources is for the chair/school director to send a letter (Appendix 1) to identified finalists (typically assistant professors) that encourages them to think about resources and other factors that might help them succeed (e.g., salary, start-up funds, physical space, professional development opportunities, dual career support). The letter also encourages them to feel comfortable to enter the discussion with the chair/school director on the resources/factors (if they are offered the position), and to identify the priority they place on each in the context of their career goals.

The department chair/school director may initiate conversations and/or negotiations regarding specific spousal/partner arrangements after a candidate has been selected and an offer of appointment has been made. The department chair/school director should submit the CV of the spouse/partner to their dean.

EXPLORING PARTNER ARRANGEMENTS WITHIN MSU

After assessing the qualifications of the spouse/partner, the Office of the Dean will determine whether to pursue an arrangement. If it is decided that an arrangement should be pursued, the Office of the Dean will establish the type of position for which the spouse/partner may be considered (e.g., faculty/academic staff or administrative staff) and work to identify possible hiring units within the university. The Office of the Dean may reach out to their applicable FASA liaison for assistance in exploring opportunities when spousal/partner hires are being considered.

The Office of the Dean approaches the dean's office/unit leadership of a potential hiring unit to explore the arrangement and indicate the funding arrangement involved. The Provost's Office encourages collaboration amongst the deans with the principles of reciprocity and mutuality. The potential hiring unit is highly encouraged to explore possibilities, although they are not required to accept a spouse or partner. Each spouse/partner will be evaluated by the potential hiring unit based on their own qualifications, skills, and expertise. Reasons in which a unit may decline often include the lack of need, incompatible qualifications for a suitable position, or lack of funds, although requests should be given all due consideration.

If an arrangement has potential, the spouse/partner interview process should follow the same interview process and deliberate according to the norms customary of a competitive search for the identified position considered.

FACULTY AND ACADEMIC STAFF APPOINTMENTS

Spouse/partners may be interested in arrangements for faculty and academic staff appointments. This typically includes, but is not limited to, the following categories:

- tenure system faculty
- fixed term faculty and academic staff (e.g., instructional and/or research)
- academic specialists (e.g., advising, curriculum development, teaching, research, outreach)

EXECUTIVE AND STAFF APPOINTMENTS

Spouse/partners may also seek arrangements for an executive or administrative staff position within MSU. Sometimes with executive and administrative staff positions, there is not as much opportunity for an immediate potential arrangement. As above, the Office of the Dean will work to identify where (and if) there is need for a person with the qualifications of the spouse/partner.

If a suitable staff position needs to be created, the Office of the Dean must consult with the Office of the VPFA. For staff positions, the Office of the VPFA will send the arrangement request to Human Resource Employee Relations (HR ER) for their consultation with the applicable union.

Additionally, spouses/ partners are encouraged to consult the HR website to identify available positions to which they might apply. They may also wish to consult directly with the Office of Human Resources (517-353-4434) regarding position opportunities. However, there is no guarantee of employment for open, competitive positions.

OFFERS OF HIRE TO THE SPOUSE/PARTNER

If a spouse/partner is offered a position at MSU, they will receive a separate offer from the original faculty candidate. The offer made to the spouse/partner is contingent upon acceptance of the offer made to the original faculty candidate. This statement must be included in the offer letter to the spouse/partner. The offer should provide clear expectations around the responsibilities of the position, length of appointment, what will happen after the appointment has ended, and that reappointment beyond the end date (if applicable) is subject to available funds, future needs of the unit, and performance.

RESOURCES FOR THE HIRED SPOUSE/PARTNER

The hired spouse/partner is entitled to appropriate unit resources (e.g., computer, IT and staff support, professional development, supplies) to successfully fulfill their responsibilities consistent with any other non-spouse/partner hire. Both leaders in the hiring unit of the spouse/partner and the department/school or unit of the original faculty candidate should explore, discuss, and ensure suitable and appropriate resources are available for the hired spouse/partner.

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

If a spouse/partner arrangement is made, both leaders in the hiring unit of the spouse/partner and the department/school or unit of the original faculty candidate may want to clearly specify and establish to what degree each unit will provide support, e.g., salary support, time frame, basic staff support, supplies, computers and related IT support, professional development, travel, contract and grant support, indirect cost sharing, plans for sustainability, etc. Units are highly encouraged to document the arrangement in a Memo of Understanding (MOU) with all impacted units signing the agreement.

NO OPPORTUNITIES AVAILABLE

While the University is committed to facilitate support for faculty candidates, it is not always possible to find a spousal/partner arrangement. In some cases, if a potential opportunity for a spouse/partner does not immediately exist, the interested parties may agree to take future steps to try to find an arrangement within MSU. In these cases, the original faculty candidate should work with the Office of the Dean and the department chair/school director to specify these steps.

The timeline for these cases may extend beyond the timeframe for the original faculty hire. In such cases, any offer letter to the original faculty hire may not guarantee employment for their spouse/partner. The faculty candidate's department chair/school director will be responsible for continuing the search for a position for the spouse/trailing partner.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST IN EMPLOYMENT AT MSU

The hiring unit of the spouse/partner should assess and address any conflict of interest in employment considerations due to the spouse/partner arrangement. If the spouses/partners are to be employed in the same unit/MAU, in addition to completing and submitting the [Conflict of Interest in Employment Form](#), plans for navigating any conflict of interest within the unit/MAU should be developed, documented, and shared with both spouses/partners. The unit's FASA liaison may be of assistance with concerns around conflict of interest and the development of management plans.

Relevant Policies:

- [BOT 402: Conflict of Interest in Employment | Board of Trustees | Michigan State University \(msu.edu\)](#)
- [Conflict of Interest in Employment \(msu.edu\)](#)

REQUESTING SPOUSAL/PARTNER FUNDING FROM THE PROVOST OFFICE

If the arrangement requires centrally funded financial support for a spousal/partner arrangement, the Office of the Dean of the original faculty candidate should submit a request through the [Request for 1/3 Salary Support for a Spouse/Partner Hire Microsoft Form](#) with the following information:

- the name of the original faculty candidate, the position and department/school/unit for which they have been offered a position

- the spouse/partner’s credentials and CV
- the position and hiring unit for which the spouse/partner is being considered
- the proposed spouse/partner salary amount
- the proposed start date
- the proposed financial arrangement

Once the Office of Faculty and Academic Staff Affairs has reviewed the request, they will respond via email to the Office of the Dean with a determination. If approved, they will copy the Office of the Provost Budget and Personnel Officer so they can work with units on the logistics for receiving the spouse/partner budget allocation.

REQUESTING AN EXCEPTION FROM POSTING A FACULTY/ACADEMIC STAFF POSITION

After the unit has a) secured funding, b) the spousal/partner arrangement has been agreed to by the department of the original faculty candidate and the hiring unit of the spouse/partner, and c) the spouse/partner has accepted the offered position, the hiring unit takes the following steps to officially hire the spouse/partner:

- 1) creates the agreed upon position via an Academic Exception Request Form through the [EBS portal](#). When submitting the form:
 - select the exception reason of “Recruitment and Retention Contingent Hire – Spouse/Partner.”
 - Attach documentation of the approval from FASA of any central funding

Once the Academic Exception Request Form is submitted, it will route for review and approval to the Office of Faculty and Academic Staff Affairs, the Office for Institutional Diversity and Inclusion, and to the departmental/unit, fund, and MAU approvers.

- 2) Initiates hiring paperwork and processes including the criminal background check, the offer letter, Fixed Term Memorandum, Conflict of Interest Form (if applicable), etc.
- 3) Once these processes are complete the hiring unit utilizes the position number provided in the Academic Exception Request Form to complete the appointment form in EBS for the spouse/partner to officially hire them at MSU.

RESOURCES

- [Michigan Higher Education Recruitment Consortium \(HERC\)](#)
 - Contact Maranda Holtsclaw, Director, MI HERC at mholtscl@msu.edu
- [MSU WorkLife Office](#)
 - Contact worklife@msu.edu
- [Office for Faculty and Academic Staff Affairs](#)
 - Contact FASaffairs@msu.edu
- [Office of Human Resources](#)
 - Contact SolutionsCenter@hr.msu.edu

SUMMARY OF RESPONSIBILITIES

Responsible Party	Action
Faculty Candidate	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Notifies the unit administrator (e.g., chairperson/school director) of the need for a spousal/partner hire at time of offer. 2. Determines whether to accept or decline the offer based on identified arrangements (or lack of arrangements).
Unit Administrator of Faculty Candidate	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Obtains information about the spouse/partner, their CV, and contacts the Office of the Dean for support.
Office of the Dean of the Original Candidate	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Determines whether to pursue spouse/partner arrangements. 2. Identifies potential funding arrangements and hiring units. 3. Contacts leadership within the potential hiring units.
Potential Hiring Unit of the Spouse/Partner	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Explores internal possibilities considering the qualifications of the spouse/partner presented, alongside the potential hiring unit's unique needs, funds, etc. 2. If opportunities exist, identifies and conducts next steps unique to the position (e.g., interview process).
Hiring Unit of the Spouse/Partner	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Follows the processes outlined above for hiring. 2. Identifies and clearly articulates expectations of the position (e.g., responsibilities, length of appointment, and expectations around reappointment) in the offer letter. 3. Submits the Academic Position Request Form in EBS. 4. Initiates hiring paperwork and processes and submits the hire form in EBS. 5. Provides resources (e.g., computer, IT support, professional development support) for the spouse/partner hire to successfully fulfill their responsibilities. 6. Onboards the spouse/partner hire. 7. Works to identify sustainable funding for the position beyond the initial 3 years, if the hiring unit intends to renew the appointment.
Faculty & Academic Staff Affairs	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Reviews central funding requests from Deans (or their designee). 2. Assists the units of the original candidate and the potential hiring unit with process questions. 3. Supports the Office of the Dean of the original candidate, when requested, in exploring possibilities across the university. 4. Reviews the academic position exception request for spouse/partner hires within the EBS system. 5. Facilitates discussion with HR Employee Relations on no-post staff positions.
Office of the Provost Budget and Personnel Officer	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. When requested by the hiring unit, allocates the agreed upon central funding amount for the spouse/partner hire.