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### Studying ways to help 2-career couples



A lot of married couples find themselves having to figure out who gives up what so the other can take the job of a lifetime. Jar reports it's a problem especially common in academia.

#### *TEXT OF STORY*

**KAI RYSSDAL:** Love and marriage are on the syllabus today at Cornell University. The school's hosting its fifth annual Dual Careers Conference. A lot of married couples find themselves having to figure out who gives up what so the other can take the job of a lifetime.

Marketplace's Jane Lindholm reports from the Work and Family desk it's a problem especially common in academia.

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**JANE LINDHOLM:** Bob Prasch and Falguni Sheth met and fell in love when they were both studying at Berkeley in the 80s. They've been together for 19 years, but that was pretty much the only time they worked and lived in the same place.

**BOB PRASCH:** The first time you have a phone fight, it's like . . . and especially being an economist, it just strikes me as ultimate futility. I mean, not only are you like, in a bad mood cause you had an argument, but you're paying money for it. Long distance money and it's like, "This is really stupid."

**FALGUNI SHETH:** But as the philosopher, I kind of feel like, what's the principle? You've got to hash it out. It doesn't matter where you are.

As you may have noticed, even their arguments are cerebral. Prasch is an economics professor at Middlebury College in Vermont. Sheth teaches philosophy and political science at Hampshire College — in Massachusetts.

Their academic passion is what brought them together. But it's also what keeps them apart.

**PRASCH:** We have a number of friends who were academics, who cheerfully, one half — but wistfully — would say OK, you know, we want to be together, and so one of us will actually stop being an academic. And I think for us, that would really breed a resentment. You know, how can you ask somebody to give up what they do when that's such an integral part of who they are?

Prasch and Sheth aren't alone in their predicament. Almost a third of all faculty and staff in higher education are partnered with other academics. They face huge hurdles when it comes to getting jobs in the same place.

Andrea Davies Henderson is the research director at the Clayman Institute for Gender Studies at Stanford University. She says there are unique challenges for dual-career couples in academia.

**ANDREA DAVIES HENDERSON:** Unlike other employment sectors — medicine, law, elementary or high school teaching — you can work almost anywhere, provided you pass the state certifications. But in academia, doctoral training is so specialized that it makes employment options very few, and faculty positions are less concentrated in major metropolitan areas.

Which means couples often have to take jobs far apart from one another.

**PRASCH:** Things like two households, two cars, there's been a lot of expenditures that we wouldn't otherwise have to have. And you know, academics, I mean we're not doing badly now, but we haven't always done that well. And you know, so it's made it hard to save money.

**SHETH:** And frankly, you know, in terms of having children, I mean this has been a really difficult conversation for us over the years. It's like, because I cannot imagine having to commute while raising kids.

But it's not just the couples that suffer. Universities are starting to find their best job candidates going elsewhere when their spouses can't find an offer to match.

Evelyn Hammonds is the senior vice provost for Faculty Development and Diversity at Harvard University.

**EVELYN HAMMONDS:** I'm a woman scientist and my spouse gets a great job at Harvard, and I've got a great job at Georgetown. And Harvard doesn't try to help me find a great job in Cambridge, but Georgetown tries to help us both stay there, then hey, we're gonna stay in Washington.

That's getting schools around the country to partner up with their neighbors when it comes to hiring. Universities in several regions throughout the country have developed HERCs: Higher Education Recruitment Consortia.

There are HERCs in Northern California, Southern California, New Jersey, New England, New York and others are starting up. They're basically clearing houses for all available jobs at all participating schools in a region.

HERC members hope that by collaborating, they'll be able to hire their top-tier candidates by luring them to the region, rather than placing the burden on only one institution. But this means that at the New England HERC, for example, Harvard and MIT are sharing information about positions. That kind of open exchange doesn't usually happen between schools who are more used to competing for professors.

Nancy Aebersold helped create the very first HERC in Northern California in 2000. She says that was an initial concern.

**NANCY AEBERSOLD:** But it was pretty quickly put to rest. Overall, there was a sense that there's enough talent out there and we actually thought that by collaborating, we would create a competitive advantage — for our area and for all the members of the HERC.

Andrea Henderson at the Clayman Institute for Gender Studies says this collaboration is a step in the right direction.

**ANDREA HENDERSON:** HERC is fantastic, because it's changing the ways that universities do business.

She says before HERCs emerged, universities had their own ad-hoc policies, but there was no standardized procedure for spousal hiring. And sometimes, faculty and staff didn't even know what the policy on their own campus was.

Bob Prash and Falguni Sheth say they could benefit from this type of accommodation. But Sheth is pessimistic. She says policies like this may make it easier to hire spouses, but with such specialized positions it's still hard to find something perfect for both of them.

Until then, she and her husband will continue living their separate lives.

**SHETH:** It's really nice to be together, you know. And I just keep thinking, "God, I don't want to do this forever. It's such a hard existence."

I'm Jane Lindholm for Marketplace.