

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

Murielle de Wekker, Ph.D.



Faculty Retention

- **A critical factor: spousal/partner unemployment**
(Burke, 1988 ; Schiebinger, Henderson & Gilmartin, 2008; Wolf-Wendel, Twombly & Rice, 2000)
- **Goal: Minimize STEM and SBE female faculty attrition caused by spousal unemployment**



Finding Employment

- Socialization and networking are key factors
(Calvo-Armengol & Jackson, 2004; Krauth, 2004; Topa, 2001)
- Networking: access to informal organizational knowledge
- Socializing: fellowship, encouragement and moral support



A Networking Program

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

Networking Program Structure

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


Multiple Benefits

- A simple idea with a high return on investment
 - Many benefits even if it does not generate employment
 - Increases faculty satisfaction re: spousal support
 - Engages and values dual-career couples employed at the University
 - Easy to implement
 - Leverages existing University resources
 - Cost effective
 - Low-risk initiative
- Addresses diversity needs
International, same-sex and minority couples
- A retention strategy applicable to the entire dual-career population at the University (not just STEM and SBE female faculty)
- A recruiting tool



References

- Burke, D. L. (1988). *A new academic marketplace*. Greenwood Press, Inc., 88 Post Road West, Westport, CT 06681.
- Calvo-Armengol, A., & Jackson, M. O. (2004). Social networks in determining employment: Patterns, dynamics, and inequality. *American Economic Review*, 94(3), 426-454.
- Krauth, B. V. (2004). A dynamic model of job networking and social influences on employment. *Journal of Economic Dynamics and Control*, 28(6), 1185-1204.
- Schiebinger, L. L., Henderson, A. D., & Gilmartin, S. K. (2008). *Dual-career academic couples: What universities need to know*. Michelle R. Clayman Institute for Gender Research, Stanford University.
- Topa, G. (2001). Social interactions, local spillovers and unemployment. *The Review of Economic Studies*, 68(2), 261-295.
- Wolf-Wendel, L. E., Twombly, S., & Rice, S. (2000). Dual-career couples: Keeping them together. *Journal of Higher Education*, 291-321.



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

Murielle de Wekker, Ph.D.

Thank you!