Program aids faculty members’ spouses

By Patty Skidmore
Lantern staff writer

In this age of two-career families, Ohio State is recognizing the career needs of spouses and partners of faculty members being recruited by Ohio State.

A program directed by Barbara Newman, associate provost for faculty recruitment, helps these partners find job openings and sets up meetings with potential employers.

The program is sometimes called spousal advocacy, but the term is not accurate because her office also helps significant partners who are not spouses, Newman said.

Although different departments have informally offered a similar service to prospective faculty members for a long time, more departments use Newman’s office now that news of the program has spread, she said.

Since Newman became associate provost in January 1987, the program has assisted over 160 people in a variety of ways, she said.

Newman said each instance of support is handled differently. Sometimes her office becomes involved from the outset of the recruitment process, and other times they assist after the faculty member has been hired, she said. Occasionally she also helps partners of current faculty members.

The partners’ career interests are about evenly split between on-campus and off-campus jobs, Newman said.

Aly Bradley, Newman’s assistant, discovers off-campus positions through the Columbus Spousal Advocacy Network, a group of 30 to 40 local employers which shares information about job openings. However, Ohio State’s program most often matches people with on-campus jobs, Newman said.

Donald and Jamie Colbert took advantage of Newman’s program when Mr. Colbert became assistant director of research operations at the Biotechnology Center in May 1989.

During the recruiting process, Mr. Colbert told his department that his wife’s career interests would be a factor in their decision to come to Ohio State because she would have to give up a faculty position in the Boston area.

The Biotechnology Center contacted Newman, who helped Mrs. Colbert find a position as lecturer in the English department. The nice thing about Ohio State’s program, Mr. Colbert said, is that it is willing to help all potential faculty members, not just those who are heavily recruited.

George Delic also found Ohio State’s program helpful. His wife, Irene Masing-Delic, had offers both from Ohio State and from another Big 10 university. While Ohio State was interested in helping him find a job, the other university didn’t care, Delic said.

Newman’s office arranged several appointments for Delic, a theoretical physicist. Delic was hired as a senior supercomputer resource specialist at the Ohio Supercomputer Center, and he also teaches a course in the computer and information science department. Masing-Delic is an associate professor of Slavic and Eastern European languages.

Because the Delics lived in South Africa before they came to Ohio State in 1987, it would have been very difficult for him to make contacts on his own, Delic said. Ohio State’s help was an important part of the couple’s decision to come here, he said.

Newman said competition for new faculty members will increase in the 1990s and the early part of the 21st century because the number of professors in the United States is expected to decrease.

Many professors who entered the profession after World War II will retire, and the number of people receiving doctoral degrees is not increasing, she said.

In light of this increased competition for professors, Newman said, programs that help faculty members’ partners will become even more important in attracting good candidates.

“There’s no guarantee that the university can find a person a position,” Newman said, “but I think that just having a door opened or an introduction made gives a person a feeling that their career interests aren’t being discounted or that the university isn’t supportive of both partners.

“That’s an important message for the university to send—that we value the expertise of both partners and we want to be of help.”
Dual Career Couples at Ohio State
April 2014

Nationwide, 36% of full-time faculty members in major research institutions have academic partners and another 36% have partners who are professionals outside of academia. Thus, 72% of full-time faculty at major research universities are part of a dual-career couple (Schiebinger et al., Dual-Career Academic Couples: What Universities Need to Know, 2008).

The prevalence of dual-career couples is higher among younger faculty, indicating that the workforce of the future will be increasingly composed of dual-career couples. Clearly, academic institutions must provide assistance to and support for dual-career couples if they wish to compete for the best faculty.

Over the past year, we have developed two initiatives to address the needs of dual-career couples:

1) Jointly with the office of Gender Initiatives in STEMM, we have worked to establish a Higher Education Recruitment Consortium (HERC) for the region. Ohio State is a founding member of the OH/WPA/WV HERC, a consortium of academic institutions in Ohio, Western Pennsylvania, and West Virginia which will facilitate dual career placements in academia. This HERC will launch in May 2014.

2) Second, Project CEOS has initiated discussions to create a consortium among academic institutions and the private and non-profit sectors to assist each other with dual career hiring needs.

The purpose of this briefing is to provide baseline data for faculty against which we can measure the success of these initiatives. Comparable data for staff are needed as well.

Current Status of Dual-Career Faculty at The Ohio State University

Of the Ohio State faculty in 2014, 343 women and 453 men (15% of all faculty) have partners who are employed intramurally. Of this total, there are 212 couples (47% of all OSU faculty partnered with an OSU employee) in which both individuals are faculty, while the balance are partnered with staff or students.

The only source of data on partner employment outside of OSU comes from the 2011 Faculty Satisfaction Survey. Those data, weighted according to known faculty demographics, showed that 16.3% of the OSU faculty were single. Faculty with partners
reported a variety of situations. Some partners were not employed and not seeking employment (20.4% of the OSU faculty), and 2.7% of the faculty had partners pursuing advanced education. Another 4.4% of the faculty’s partners were actively looking for employment.

Roughly two thirds (63.3%) of the OSU faculty reported partners who were employed. Some were employed at OSU as faculty or staff, others held faculty positions elsewhere. The largest subgroup (38%) was faculty with partners employed outside OSU and in non-faculty positions.

**Partner Status of OSU faculty**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Status</th>
<th>Percent</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Single</td>
<td>16.3%</td>
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<tr>
<td>OSU faculty partner</td>
<td>20.4%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other faculty partner</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partner not seeking employment</td>
<td>8%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Partner seeking employment</td>
<td>3.8%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Non-faculty OSU partner</td>
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<tr>
<td>Student/postdoc partner</td>
<td>4.4%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Partner employed elsewhere</td>
<td>8%</td>
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**Significance of Assistance to Dual-Career Couples**

Faculty satisfaction is strongly affected by home life. Thus the employment status of faculty partners is of direct concern to the university. The 2011 survey showed that:

1. There is a positive impact on overall satisfaction levels when a partner is satisfied with his or her current employment status.
2. Those whose partners are satisfied with their current employment are less likely to report they might leave Ohio State within the next three years.
3. Faculty who are in commuting relationships are more likely to report they might leave Ohio State within the next three years.

Assisting faculty with partner placement is therefore an important recruitment and retention strategy.