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The Two-Body Problem: Dual-Career-Couple Hiring Practices in Higher Education

Lisa Wolf-Wendel, Susan B. Twombly, Suzanne Rice

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Approximately eight of every ten academics have spouses or partners who are working professionals, and almost half of these partners are academics as well. In fact, dual-career academic couples are so prevalent that "the two-body problem" has become a common way of referring to the situation. Increasingly, intense competition to hire the best faculty forces institutions to assist dual-career couples in finding suitable employment for the accompanying spouse or partner.

The authors of *The Two-Body Problem* examine policies and practices used by colleges and universities to respond to the needs of dual-career couples within the economic, legal, and demographic contexts of higher education. Using data from an extensive survey of public and private universities as well as in-depth case studies of institutions representing distinctive approaches to this problem, the authors find that the type of institution?its location, size, governance, mission, and resource availability?is a critical factor in determining dual-career employment options. *The Two-Body Problem* describes various accommodation models in depth and provides valuable information for college and university administrators responsible for hiring faculty and supporting their performance.

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