

Increasing the representation and advancement of women in academic science and engineering careers

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October Events Calendar

Academic Department Heads, Chairs, and Directors Breakfast Roundtable

October 13, 7:30 a.m. DBHCC

AdvanceVT professors Beate Schmittmann and Karen Thole will lead a discussion on successful faculty searches.
(*Invitation only event.*)

"Frisbee Golf Strategies: Preparing for the Right Faculty Position"

October 14, noon to 1:30 p.m., 117A Randolph

Brown Bag lunch with visiting speaker **Dr. Deb Niemeier**, professor and former chair of the Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering at the University of California, Davis. Co-sponsored by *AdvanceVT*.
(*Open to graduate students and post-docs in science and engineering.*)

Vecellio Distinguished Lecture

October 15, 4:00 p.m., 2150 Torgersen Hall

Patricia D. Galloway, the first woman president of the American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE), will discuss "The Mission of the Civil Engineer in the Movement of Globalization". The event is part of the university's Vecellio Distinguished Lecture series.
(*Open and free to the public.*)

College of Engineering Promotion and Tenure Forum

October 19, 10:00 to noon, DBHCC Auditorium

Six panelists including the Dean of Engineering, 3 evaluators sitting on the College and University Promotion and Tenure Committees, and 2 recent promotion/tenure successes will be available to answer questions about the process and the probationary phase of tenure track positions. The format will be a moderated Q/A with time available for audience questions.
(*Open to faculty, students, post-docs, and other researchers with academic career aspirations.*)

Organization of Women Faculty Panel Discussion

"University Policies on Stopping the Tenure Clock and Dual Career Couples"

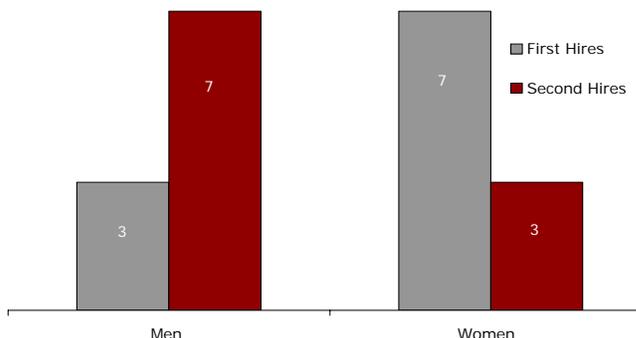
October 21, 3:00 to 5:00 p.m., 1100 Torgersen

Panelists will include Pat Hyer, Kimberly Ellis, Glenda Gillaspay, Elizabeth Creamer, Nancy Love and Brian Love. Co-sponsored by *AdvanceVT*.
(*Open to faculty, post-docs, and graduate students.*)

Dual-Career Hire Study Results

During the summer of 2004, the *AdvanceVT* Assessment team conducted a mini-study of the dual hiring process at Virginia Tech. Twenty individuals, 10 women and 10 men, from sciences and engineering were interviewed for the study. Participants were asked to describe the hiring process, their satisfaction with the position they secured, and a number of other issues, including the receptivity of the colleagues in their department to dual-career hires.

Breakdown of Participants Interviewed



Second Hires

In most cases, one spouse or partner initiates the hiring process and at a later point the subject of a position for the second spouse or partner arises. Four of 10 second hires in this study obtained tenure-track positions and six were hired in other part- and full-time positions, most with concentrated teaching responsibilities. The most creative arrangements seemed to apply to second hires who, in a less rural location, would normally seek employment outside of the university.

Initial Position of Second Hires (N=10)

	Women (N=3)	Men (N=7)
Tenure-Track	2	2
Off Tenure-Track	1	5

Second hires as a group are under-employed. Most sought a position that was more intellectually challenging, without necessarily aspiring to a tenure-track position. The single policy that frustrated second hires in non-tenure track positions the most was the inability to serve as a PI on funded research.

Climate

Receptivity of co-workers to spousal hires varied substantially by department. Of the 20 individuals interviewed, six felt that their coworkers were supportive of spousal hires, three reported a combination of positive and negative feedback, and 11 reported somewhat unsupportive or unsupportive feedback from colleagues.

Receptivity of co-workers was strongly linked to the department's prior experience with dual-hires. Participants seemed to gauge the receptivity of co-workers by the stories told about the department's prior experience with other couples and dual-hires and with the department head's attitudes. Participants in departments with no previous dual-hires often reported being uncomfortable about talking about their situation with colleagues. Taking steps to communicate that dual hiring is a routine practice is a strategic way to defuse the stigma sometime associated with the second hire.

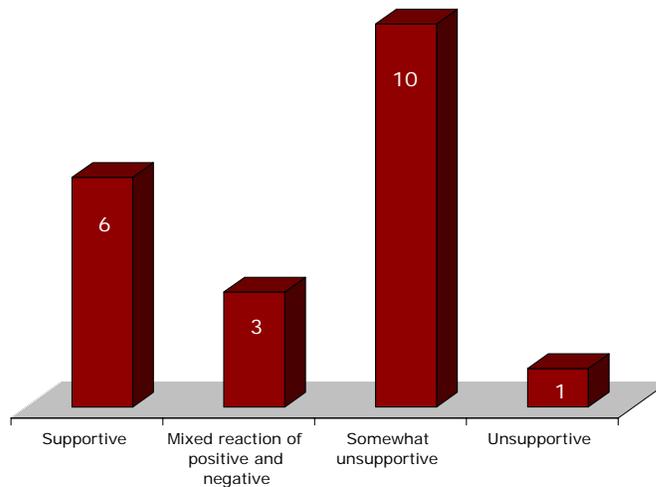
"I don't want the pressure [of a tenure track position]. It would be nice if there's a position that doesn't demand 60, 70, 80 hours a week but is still intellectually challenging."

- Female, Science

“Some people view spouses as an opportunity, some people view them as problems. The way it’s phrased here is it’s a two body problem. ... I wish they could view it more as a two body opportunity.”
- Male, Engineering

“Come up with some guidelines that sort of emphasize the commitment of the university to support dual career couples. I would also like to see the guidelines broadened to dual career couples who are not married but who are significant others, partners as well as spouses.”
- Female, Vet Med

Climate: Attitudes of Co-Workers to Spousal Hires (N=20)



Departmental-Level Recommendations

Administrators deliberating spousal hires, especially in departments with no prior experience or with a negative previous experience with couples, have the added responsibility of anticipating the reception a dual-hire might receive. A negative climate can be off-set somewhat by approximating conventional hiring practices and keeping the visibility of the administrative role low-key.

University-Level Recommendations

A variety of different recommendations for improving Virginia Tech’s spousal hiring process were offered by those interviewed. These fell under four general themes:

- **Visibility:** It’s important that Virginia Tech’s willingness to work with dual hires be visible to potential employees. This visibility could be obtained through mention of Virginia Tech’s dual career policy in the job announcement and/or on the university website. This puts job candidates more at ease about raising the issue of a position for a spouse.
- **Oversight:** Participants expressed the need for someone who was in a position to negotiate across departments and colleges. This individual could facilitate coordination and communication about dual hires, including both on- and off-campus job opportunities.
- **Dual Hire Fund:** Any dual career policy must be sufficiently flexible to address the unique demands of each dual career case. A pool of money set aside to help departments with dual career hires would certainly go a long way to improving the receptivity to such hires. The availability of funds to assist with dual hires has been a very significant factor of successful dual-hire programs at other Research 1 universities.
- **Language.** Replacing language such as “accommodation,” “two-body problem,” and “trailing spouse” with more neutral language, like “dual-hire” and “initial” or “second” hire is another strategy to communicate a positive climate.

Ask Gail

Virginia Tech's Advance proposal describes the experiences of "Gail", a fictitious female junior faculty member in engineering, and how her relationships with her male peers change as a result of AdvanceVT program activities.

"Gail" has taken on a life of her own as a metaphor for the Advance program. The AdvanceVT Team offers its collective wisdom about being a woman in science and engineering to anyone who would like to send a question to AskGail@vt.edu.

Comments and observations are also welcome. Please be sure to indicate if the response should be confidential, otherwise questions and responses will be posted on the AdvanceVT web site.

Congratulations

AdvanceVT Professor Karen Thole has been named a Distinguished Alumna of the University of Texas Department of Mechanical Engineering.

AdvanceVT Professor Catherine Eckel and Associate Dean Sheryl Ball are recipients of the Diggs Teaching Scholar Award.

Audrey Zink-Sharp, associate professor of wood science and forest products in Virginia Tech's College of Natural Resources, is the incoming president of the Society of Wood Science and Technology (SWST).

Funding Opportunities

AdvanceVT will again be awarding doctoral and post-doctoral fellowships, research seed grants for junior faculty, and leadership development fellowships for senior faculty. Application deadlines are in January 2005. For more information visit www.advance.vt.edu.

Visiting Scholars

Proposals for visiting speakers who support the goals of Advance are accepted at any time, and strongly encouraged in late summer/early fall.

AdvanceVT Colloquia: Distinguished Lectures

Funding is available to bring outstanding, nationally and internationally recognized speakers to Virginia Tech for a public lecture, reception, and private meetings with faculty, students, and administrators.

AdvanceVT Colloquia: AdvanceVT Scholars

Funding is available to invite potential faculty candidates, especially mid- or early-career faculty, post-doctoral researchers and advanced graduate students, for short campus visits.

Advance at Virginia Tech

AdvanceVT is a comprehensive National Science Foundation funded program to promote and enhance the careers of women in science and engineering (S&E) at Virginia Tech. The program targets institutional barriers that have constrained the advancement of women faculty in S&E. Institutional transformation will occur through advancing women into faculty careers, increasing the representation of women faculty at all levels, empowering women as leaders and scholars, and changing institutional culture.

