

Response to of spouses"

Endeavor applauded, results bemoaned

Response to the article "Hiring of the editorial, the Guilfordian feels given letters is both justifiable and the accompanying letters and the are printed in their entirety.

"The fact that the comments favorable to a policy of hiring spouses came almost entirely from individuals with spouses who have been hired leads to an impression that they are the only ones who support such a policy. A broader sampling of opinion was certainly needed."

tion of the A.A.U.P.

to practice their profession. In addition, they are contrary to the best interests of the institution which is deprived of qualified faculty members on the basis of an inappropriate criterion, and of the community which is denied a sufficient utilization of its resources.

The Association recognizes the propriety of institutional regulations which would set reasonable restrictions on an individual's capacity to function as judge or advocate in specific situations involving members of his or her immediate family. Faculty members should neither initiate nor participate in institutional decisions involving a direct benefit (initial appointment, retention, promotion, salary, leave of absence, etc.) to members of their immediate families.

The Association does not believe, however, that the proscription of the opportunity of members of an immediate family to serve as colleagues is a sound method of avoiding the occasional abuses resulting from nepotism. Inasmuch as they constitute a continuing abuse to a significant number of individual members of the profession and to the profession as a body, the Association urges the discontinuance of these policies and practices, and the rescinding of laws and institutional regulations which perpetuate them.

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les P. McDowell
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authority as to the motives behind their being hired. Second, he is in error when he claims that faculty hiring is objective. I am aware of at least two cases in which prospective faculty members said they would not accept employment unless their respective spouses were hired (which was done). In my opinion, Guilford struck a poor bargain in both cases. I believe Mr. Rogers is honest and sincere in his opinions and that he means well; in fact, as he gains experience as an administrator I expect his policies to reflect his high ideals.

One might well argue that Guilford is an unhappy place because of the pervasiveness of its nepotism - rather than to argue that it is as happy as it is because of it.

Just what is wrong with nepotism? I believe it is undesirable for a number of reasons. First, it stifles diversity of perspective. In hiring faculty and staff we have the opportunity to bring in people with widely varying backgrounds and diversity of outlook. By hiring relatives (or others who have especially close relationships with faculty) we diminish this diversity and in the process attack what ought to be one of the strengths of an academic institution.

Second, the hiring of relatives tends to create power alliances which are not wholesome for the college. Nepotism is synergistic in that it allows for the distribution of power within that college in a way that could not occur if each employee were a single unit within the institution. It creates opportunities for collusion which place other members of the faculty at a clear disadvantage. It places some faculty members in the position of having to be less than fair and objective when it comes to making decisions on such things as tenure, study leave, and promotion for the simple reason that to vote against one member of a pair may be difficult when one must deal with that person's spouse as a colleague.

I'd like to make several points with regard to the article and editorial in the Feb. 17 issue that addressed the matter of "spouse hiring". First, I am pleased to see the *Guilfordian* tackling substantive and controversial issues, as it has a number of times this academic year. Second, I am aware that approaching such issues carries with it a serious and weighty responsibility to be correct, precise, and thoughtful. I therefore heartily applaud the endeavor but simultaneously bemoan some of the results. Let me indicate a few specific examples of what I regard as reasons for lament:

(1). Acknowledging the views of any individual who declines to be identified is a practice that can only encourage an atmosphere of irresponsibility and non-accountability (the comments of the unidentified individual should be considered suspect not only because he/she refused to lay claim to the comments but also because of the reference to "block voting". Very few faculty or administrative decisions at the College are made on the basis of a vote; we employ consensus);

(2). While much of Mark Gurley's article clearly differentiated between the hiring of spouses and the practice of nepotism, the two became muddled and nearly synonymous toward the close of his article and in the editorial;

(3). Jim Shields asserted that "there is an unusually high proportion of couples on the college staff" but gave no evidence to support such an assertion (for all I know, 14 married couples on the faculty and within the administration represents an unusually low proportion or is typical of colleges our size);

(4). While Jim recognized that there are a multitude of possible sources for conflicts of interest, the net effect of the article and editorial is to imply that the presence of spouses is the primary (or even sole) source;

(5). The fact that the comments favorable to a policy of hiring spouses came almost entirely from individuals with spouses who have been hired leads to an impression that they are the only ones who support such a policy. A broader sampling of opinions was certainly needed.

Sincerely,
Jackie Ludel

Third, it keeps the college from attracting and keeping faculty who are in fact the best qualified and reduces the economic benefits of employment to a zero-sum game in which faculty must compete against one another in ways which clearly invite abuse. It is covert, discriminatory, and ultimately unjust -- all of which, I believe, run counter to Guilford's oft touted "Quaker ethic."

Fourth, nepotism is not a legitimate support system for the college community as a whole, nor is it an appropriate kind of institutional commitment to marriages or other intimate associations; even if it were, it would be more than offset by the harm it works in other areas. To the contrary, nepotism can (and has been) a device which ensures the social and professional isolation of some members of the college community. Furthermore, it contributes to the college's already considerable internal strife. One might well argue that Guilford is an unhappy place because of the pervasiveness of its nepotism -- rather than to argue that it is as happy as it is because of it!

Finally, I am disturbed to see nepotism justified on the basis of quasi-religious grounds for I am reminded of the fact that the term actually refers to the practice on the part of ecclesiastics of showing special favor to nephews or other relatives in conferring offices. If Guilford is to be a college it must adhere to the best values of an academic institution and be very careful lest it lose sight of the distinction between religion and administration. Indeed, perhaps we ought to remind ourselves of the difference in the missions of Guilford College (an academic institution), Friend's Homes (a retirement community), and the Society of Friends (a religion) and place each in its proper perspective -- if possible.

Last spring I noted with chagrin that as former President Hobbs delivered his swan-song at commencement, the chimes struck eleven. The college is entering into a difficult era and its survival cannot be taken for granted. Perhaps the college can start this decade by recognizing that it is a poor banquet indeed which is prepared for the benefit of the chefs!