

at the University of Minnesota — Mattheis at the Minneapolis campus and Wong in St Paul. Now, Wong is an adjunct faculty member at Cal State. “You get frustrated by all the same bureaucratic hurdles of the institution,” says Mattheis. Who better to commiserate with over Mattheis’s struggles to add her partner to her health insurance than Wong?

The two talk about how best to design lessons, address students’ misconceptions or advise students. Wong also refers biology students with an interest in teaching to Mattheis. The two have started a project to connect secondary-school teachers with university instructors to improve early science education.

These relationships are of value to scientists still in training, too. Erin Zimmerman of London, Canada, misses this kind of connection now that she and her husband, Eric Chevalier, no longer work in science. Although they met as graduate students in the Plant Biology Research Institute at the University of Montreal, Canada, she’s now a freelance science writer; he, an optometrist at Old South Optometry in London. When they began dating, it was easy to keep in contact. Chevalier once placed a picture of a hand-drawn flower into a beaker on Zimmerman’s desk, because he knew she hated how real cut flowers die. They co-authored a review, and related to each other’s dealings with academic culture, funding woes and other frustrations. “It was nice being able to have someone at home who really understood that,” says Zimmerman. “Now,” she jokes, “we bore each other.”

There are potential pitfalls to such a relationship. For one, those determined to work together might limit their options. One-fifth of researchers in a relationship surveyed by the EC<sup>3</sup> had refused or left a job owing to the challenge of maintaining both careers. Moore advises: “You have to be seen as one, so when they want you, they want both of you.”

Scientist couples who work together need to be aware of how they present themselves, and must always maintain an image of two distinct professionals. “Your relationship is living in a fishbowl,” says MacKay. And they must take care to avoid even the possible appearance of favouritism. Intern architect Donna Marion and her husband, Mike Grosskopf, a statistics graduate student at Simon Fraser University in Vancouver, Canada, met as undergraduates in an astrophysics lab at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor. Both joined the lab as employees once they graduated, and, for a time, Grosskopf was Marion’s supervisor. But when romance blossomed, he warned his boss, who changed Marion’s supervisor.

Similarly, mathematician Piper Harron, a temporary faculty member at the University of Hawaii at Manoa, avoided selecting her

husband, Robert Harron, as an academic mentor when she was applying for grant support. “If we weren’t related, I would be the natural choice,” says her husband, a maths faculty member at the university, but he knew that any reports or letters of recommendation that he might write about her would be suspect. Nonetheless, they contribute to each other’s work, reading and editing their writing. Piper excels at bits that sell the projects, and Robert is good at converting text into more maths-oriented language.

Sharing a last name might also raise eyebrows, adds biochemist Edith Sim of Oxford, UK, who met her husband, Bob Sim, when they were undergraduate laboratory partners. They worked in each other’s labs at times. Once, a grant application that she had submitted came back with the comment, “Was this hers or was this her husband’s?” From then on, she left her husband’s name off any papers that she produced.

By contrast, colleagues of Moore and Stanier didn’t always catch on that they were married. “We didn’t hide it, but we didn’t particularly flaunt it,” explains Stanier. One visiting student spent a few months in Moore’s lab while Stanier was a postdoc there, and thought the two were engaged in a scandalous affair. (His adviser set him straight.)

Another issue that couples may want to consider, points out Keith Bahjat, is that when a couple works for the same employer, both members depend on that employer for their wages. That’s a particular concern in industry, he says, where companies might impose layoffs at any time. D’Eath and Jarvis had the same concern, which they’ve mitigated in part by Jarvis taking a second position as director of a master’s programme at the University of Edinburgh, UK, in addition to her work at Scotland’s Rural College. Now they feel safer, because it’s unlikely that both institutions would falter at the same time.

Despite these challenges, scientist couples know that they enjoy significant good fortune. “Finding a situation where you both have great opportunity is really rare,” says Frances Rena Bahjat. ■

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1. Michelle R. Clayman Institute for Gender Research. *Dual-Career Academic Couples* (Stanford Univ., 2008).
2. US National Science Foundation. *Women, Minorities, and Persons with Disabilities* (NSF, 2015).
3. European Commission. *Research Careers in Europe* (EC, 2016).

#### CORRECTION

The Careers feature ‘Code alert’ (*Nature* **541**, 563–565; 2017) gave the wrong affiliation for Andrew Durso. He is at Utah State University in Logan.

#### SALARY

### Postdoc penalty

Completing a US postdoctoral-research stint in biomedical sciences leads to thousands of dollars in lost earnings, a study finds (S. Kahn and D. K. Ginther *Nature Biotechnol.* **35**, 90–94; 2017). Researchers tracked the careers of 10,402 people who received a biomedical PhD in the United States between 1980 and 2010. They found that, ten years after graduating, those who had done a postdoc earned an average of US\$12,002 (11%) less than those who had not. “Ex-postdocs pay an earnings penalty for up to 15 years,” the study says, noting that the penalty could discourage top-level candidates from pursuing careers in biomedical science. Over that period, ex-postdocs earned \$128,297 (17%) less in non-tenure-track academic research; \$239,970 (21%) less in industry; and \$161,142 (17%) less in government and non-profit positions. The study found that non-postdocs were as likely as ex-postdocs to work in government or non-profit positions, suggesting that hirers and managers in those sectors do not seek candidates who have completed postdoctoral research. Employers outside academia place no financial value on skills or training acquired through a postdoc position, the study says.

#### JOBS

### Seeking STEM skills

A report from a UK think tank predicts that more than 100,000 new jobs and 600,000 vacancies in science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) will be created in the United Kingdom between now and 2023 ([go.nature.com/2kmhxgk](http://go.nature.com/2kmhxgk)). *Jobs of the Future*, produced by the Social Market Foundation in London, used government data to analyse growth trends in Britain’s STEM industries. Fields that will produce the most new jobs include scientific research and development; computing services, particularly programming and coding; information services; and telecommunications, the report predicts. Although demand for conventional STEM jobs will remain high, the report predicts that candidates with technology and research-based skills will be sought for positions in consultancy, in legal, accounting and financial services and in management. The report found that women in STEM positions in 2016 totalled just over 460,000 and accounted for 19% of jobs in the combined sectors. With gender parity the total would be 1.2 million, the report says. It calls for more women to study the sciences in school and at university.