9-10-2012

Newsroom: Yelnosky on Academic Hiring Quandry

Roger Williams University School of Law

Follow this and additional works at: https://docs.rwu.edu/law_archives_life

Recommended Citation
https://docs.rwu.edu/law_archives_life/349

This News Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Archives & Law School History at DOCS@RWU. It has been accepted for inclusion in Life of the Law School (1993- ) by an authorized administrator of DOCS@RWU. For more information, please contact mwu@rwu.edu.
Yelnosky on Academic Hiring Quandry

Professor Michael Yelnosky speaks to PBN (story teaser and photo above the fold on front page!) about a husband-wife hiring dispute at Brown University.

From PROVIDENCE BUSINESS NEWS: "Academic hires often come in pairs" by Rebecca Keister, PBN Staff Writer
September 10, 2012: Beverly Haviland, a senior lecturer and visiting associate professor in Brown University’s American Studies department, holds a Ph.D. in comparative literature from Princeton University.

Before coming to Providence, she was a tenured professor at the State University of New York at Stony Brook and, before that, at Vassar College.

Well-published with a long list of awards on her research page on Brown’s website, she is, by all measures, an accomplished academic.

But what she wants is to be treated like a tenured professor at Brown. It's a promise she said the university made to her when she was hired as part of a package deal with her husband, Paul Armstrong, who was hired as dean of the college in 2001, and did not deliver.

“I think [such a hiring] is a fairly unique aspect of academic employment,” said Michael Yelnosky, a professor of law at Roger Williams University School of Law in Bristol. “I [also] think it’s not uncommon for some people to say, ‘This is opening up a bad can of worms, and we just shouldn’t do it.’ ”

Haviland sued Brown University in 2005 for breach of employment contract and for the right to be reviewed as a tenured professor would. In July, the R.I. Supreme Court ruled in Haviland’s favor, meaning she now has job protection similar to that of a tenured professor.

“It’s a cautionary tale, but these two [Brown professors] did it right,” Yelnosky said. “I read a lot of employment law cases from lots of jurisdictions, and I teach the subject. These people did much more and got much more [in writing] than most plaintiffs in employment wrongful-discharge [cases] get.”

Brown University, according to legal documents, recruited Armstrong in 2000 when he was a dean at Stony Brook and Havillard was a tenured professor of comparative studies there.

Armstrong made it clear that he wouldn’t go to Brown unless they could find a tenured position for Haviland.

After originally saying they couldn’t do that, the university created a position for Haviland as a visiting professor and said in writing it would allow her to be reviewed in the same manner as a tenured professor facing nonrenewal.

In short, Haviland wouldn’t be a tenured professor but she would be held to the same benefits and standards, including job security, as a tenured faculty member.