

# The College of Arts and Sciences

## Helping Couples and Companies Survive Workplace Romance

When it comes to romance, the heart does not heed the boundaries of the workplace. To the contrary, on the job is often where couples meet, according to Professor Amy Nicole Salvaggio, Ph.D.

An assistant professor of Industrial/Organizational Psychology, Salvaggio also knows that workplace romances may be fraught with problems – not only for those involved in the romance but also for their co-workers. She is currently researching couples whose work lives and love lives have intersected and who are willing to talk about it, confidentially.

Salvaggio first began studying the dynamics of workplace romance when she was teaching at the University of Tulsa. In an effort to understand how workplace romances are perceived, she conducted a study of some 200 workers from a wide range of workplaces. Simultaneously, she engaged a large cadre of students in an intensive literature survey to determine how workplace romance is depicted in the popular media.

“What is depicted in the media is often very different from reality,” she says. “According to my research, most employees do not mind the idea of a romance developing between two unmarried workers, but they have concerns if one of the participants is married or if the relationship is between a supervisor and a subordinate.”

General acceptance notwithstanding, workplace romances pose a host of risks, she says. Many of those participating in her survey felt that their careers could be negatively impacted. And they expressed concern about a loss of respect and credibility as well as declines in productivity.

The goal of Salvaggio’s current survey is to help companies and couples more effectively deal with the many issues that arise from workplace romance. “Employers continually ask, ‘What can we do to help a great employee whose romantic relationship is affecting his or her work performance?’” she says. “Our aim is to help the companies help employees balance their personal and professional relationships.”



Amy Nicole Salvaggio, Ph.D.

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