

Surviving Chairdom: Observations of a past chair

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Disclaimer: My experiences may
not generalize (luck matters!)



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About being a Chair (not a Head) and building Consensus-

1. It is a full time job – mostly about talking and listening, and really about **listening!**
2. Best described as “Herding Cats”
Must Learn to tell a good story.
3. Good staff makes all the difference (1 is enough)
4. Fun part can be learning how your College and your University work – the A&S Council of Chairs was the best part for me



What about research?

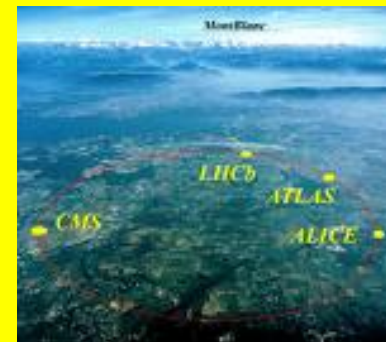
Can you continue to be active in research while chair?

Depends strongly on boundary conditions –

- Member of a large research group with stable funding, or single PI lab with multiple small grants?
- Many post docs and grad students, or PI and 1 student?
- How needy is your department?
- I found it was extremely difficult!

My boundary conditions (luck) –

- Member of sizeable theory group with DoE umbrella grant – existed without me
- Seminars, post docs, students and visitors relevant to research existed without much input on my part
- My special area of interest is phenomenological “collider” physics, which was in upgrade mode in late 1990’s (why I agreed to be chair), and field changed slowly while chair



Lessons - What I did right(?):

- Interact with students and post docs while chair (led to 2 papers)
- Attend seminars every week and go to a physics meeting every summer (~ 1 month of science in the summer)
- **Serve only *one* 5-year term as chair**
- **Be “young” (~ 50) when become chair**

After Chairdom:

- *Jump* enthusiastically back into research -

I spent the spring after at Fermilab as “Frontier Fellow”

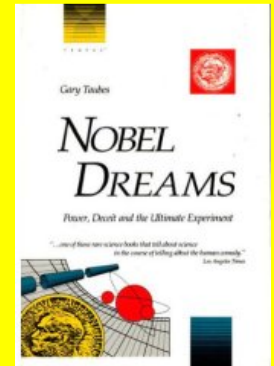
- the Dean can help by agreeing to an “after” sabbatical to recruit you as chair

I taught our advanced graduate course in particle physics (so I could relearn it)

- the new Chair can help by allowing you to teach a research related course

But again, I was lucky!

- Run II at Fermilab was just starting (after chairdom) and my expertise in “jets” was relevant
- The turn-on of the LHC at CERN is coming (this summer) and my interests have been relevant in the run-up
- The Physics Department was willing to hire a string theorist, who wanted to learn about collider phenomenology. He became a “pushy” collaborator who helped drive my rehabilitation.



Conclusions

- **It is possible to survive (and even enjoy) chairdom and return to research**
- **You must decide this is the future soon enough to plan for it**

No second term as chair

Have a plan to invigorate research after chairdom

- **Timing (luck) can be really important – pay attention to opportunities**