“Why refuse to be a chair?”

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• Takes away from research and education
• Hard to gear back into research and education later on
• Too much politics (inside and outside the department)
• Don’t want to pass the tin cup
• No skill set for managing staff, central budgets, etc.
Research & education

• It’s true…for most of us, something has to go
• But not everything has to go: I gave up classroom teaching, but kept on with research and graduate advising
• Afterwards? Well, I’ll see!
  – I anticipate being able to get back into classroom teaching reasonably easily
  – It would have been hard to start a new pipeline of grad students, write grants from scratch, etc.
Politics

• “University politics are vicious precisely because the stakes are so small.” – Kissinger

• I reject this
  – Politics arise where there are people – to be effective one must deal effectively with people
  – The stakes in academia are not small at all – if one believes that, one shouldn’t be an academic
Raising money

- It’s a reality that chairs (and deans) spend much of their time doing fundraising
- “But I’m an academic, not a fundraiser!”
- I don’t view fund raising as in any way inconsistent with our traditional missions of education, research and service
Indeed, I’d say the opposite – it provides an opportunity where we must, in a highly effective way, articulate why we do what we do, and this seems to be a wonderful obligation.

I deeply believe in universities; we have a simple pair of goals – produce extraordinary people and fantastic ideas.

- Our people are students, post-docs, etc.; UW is judged more by the success of the people that leave the university than those of us who remain here.

- Our ideas are conveyed in a broad set of ways, by papers, books, company formation, technology transfer, artwork and performances, and many others.

Conveying the excitement and the value of our people and our ideas is the core of fundraising – and it’s fun!
Never trained to be an administrator

- That’s almost surely true
- Of course, you were probably never trained to be an educator or mentor, either
- If you have good staff, you can rely on them to do some (much) of this, and you can learn some on-the-fly, too
So why agree to be a chair?

- Is your commitment to yourself or to the broader community?
- Do you have something special to bring to your unit – improving diversity, increasing the focus on teaching and learning, developing centers, increasing interdisciplinary work, etc.?