

Report of the APS Task Force to Re-envision the April Meeting
12 June 2014
Executive Summary

In the summer of 2013 the APS Executive Officer established a 12-person task force to “re-envision” the Society’s April meeting. Concerns about the April Meeting are, broadly, (1) that few APS units regard this meeting as the premier opportunity to present their best results, (2) that meetings in big cities are expensive, and (3) that the time of the meeting is not good for college and university physicists, coming as close to the end of the academic year as it does. Perhaps most importantly, April meeting attendance has been falling since 1989. The charge given the April Task Force (ATF) is attached.

Recommendations

1) The ATF believes that the April meeting provides a unique opportunity for APS to generate a scientific synergy whose importance cannot be overstated. The Task Force thus recommends that this meeting be centered on themes related to the broad interests of the fundamentals of cosmology, including its interfaces with nuclear, particle, gravitational physics, astrophysics. As such, we view DPF, DNP, DAP, GGR, DPB, GHP, GFB, and GPAP as being the APS Units most aligned with this synergy and meeting “brand.” These themes should be vigorously publicized.

2) In order to support this synergistic identity, and because the Task Force feels that the time of the April meeting is not ideal for other reasons, we recommend that it be moved to the last half of October. There was strong sentiment for this recommendation on the part of the Task Force, which voted 9-3 in favor of it. Resulting changes to the time of the DNP meeting require further discussion. It is the ATF’s hope that this would enhance participation in the new October meeting by the DPP, DPB, DPF, and AAPT. The move also has the advantages of distributing the work load of the Meetings Department and putting more time between the two major, scientifically broad APS meetings. The above recommended changes to the “April” Meeting are possibly contentious, and will require significant alteration of the calendar for a major unit of the APS. If the Council decides to proceed with the ATF recommendation, significant diplomacy on the part of APS leadership will be required to bring it about successfully. To avoid the impression that the October meeting is solely focused on issues from gravitation, particle, and nuclear physics related to cosmology, we recommend that the official title of this new meeting be “The October Meeting”, with the hope that its DNP/DAP/DPF/GGR/GHP etc. synergistic identity will become apparent after several years. The ATF spent significant time on the phone and in emails trying to develop a better title. The best alternative we found was “*From Quarks to the Cosmos*”.

3) A major concern regarding the April meeting is that it does not have a well-articulated purpose, and that any themes individual April meetings might have had in the past were poorly advertised to APS members. There was also strong dissatisfaction with the meeting’s “web presence.” We recommend that the paper Bulletin be abandoned and that a web-based Bulletin be designed based on the 2014 April Meeting iPhone App. We also recommend that the abstracts of contributed talks be reduced in length, to make navigation of the Bulletin easier on, e.g., a smartphone.

The October/April meeting should be advertised in *Physics Today* and, of course, on the APS main website. To reach non-APS members, we recommend putting advertisements in, e.g., *Scientific American*, and *The CERN Courier*, as well as on the web pages of foreign physical societies.

4) The ongoing responsibility for the scientific viability of the October/April meeting is born by its Program Committee (PC). To this end, the ATF feels that the makeup of the PC is crucial, and that its members must have broad awareness of the general, synergistic goals of the meeting. The ATF recommends that these members serve for a two-year term, with the PC Chair being a second-year member. This will ensure adequate institutional memory. We recommend that the PC comprise two members each from each of the synergistic units (see above); other participating units would get one.

While the ATF is in favor of a broad DPF/DAP/DNP/GGR/GHP brand for the October/April meeting, it will be important to have a more specific theme or themes for the meeting in any given year. These would be advertised immediately under the meeting's title, or listed in a short preamble. Such themes should be determined by a PC Planning Committee well before speakers are invited.

It is the ATF's recommendation that, on an experimental basis, contributed talk sessions (which appear to often be very poorly attended with little cross fertilization) should not be held in parallel with invited sessions. If contributed talk sessions on a given scientific topic are usually poorly attended, they should be converted to posters sessions.

Finally, we recommend that the ongoing need for career development opportunities, both for graduate and undergraduate students, be the responsibility of the PC, working closely with the FED, FGSA and the APS Careers Program Manager and its Outreach staff.

4) The April Meeting has traditionally been thought of as the "Washington Meeting." The chief advantages of holding the meeting in Washington are its accessibility to a majority of APS members, and its proximity to the nation's legislative seats of power and science funding agencies. Meetings held in Washington are more visible to Congress and the funding agencies, and allow members to more easily visit members of Congress and funding officers. An objection to holding the meeting in Washington is that location's expense. We note that moving the meeting to October reduces the cost of meeting venues and hotels by ~10%. The ATF thus recommends that the October/April meeting be held biannually in Washington DC and that during off years it alternate between a middle-of-the-country location and a west-coast location. We also recommend that the meeting continue to be held over a weekend to reduce scheduling conflicts for people working in academic settings.

5) The cost of the April meeting is clearly a major concern to the membership. To this end, we recommend that audio-visual and IT costs be aggressively analyzed for potential cost savings. Reducing costs of this type could pay for coffee breaks, which we view as being an important catalyst for scientific interaction. The APS should also consider applying for financial support for this meeting from industrial sponsorships, DOE, and the NSF. To reduce the housing costs of the meeting, APS should reserve early a block of rooms in less expensive hotels, which are more readily available in large cities.

Implementation

We recommend that these changes be implemented over the next two to three years. The APS Presidential Line, the Executive Office, and the Chair of the Meetings Committee must coordinate any changes adapted by the Counsel with the Program Committee and the leadership of the DNP. While we feel that the chances for a successful revitalization of this meeting will be greatest if all four approaches are tried together, each approach implemented individually would improve the *status quo*.

CHARGE TO THE 2013 APS “APRIL” MEETING TASK FORCE

The APS “April” Meeting brings together a unique nexus of physics communities drawn from the areas of astrophysics, nuclear physics, particle physics and gravitational physics. There is also significant programmatic participation from most of the APS Forums. The attendance at the April meeting has remained stable at 1100 – 1300 participants over the past 5 to 10 years. The central question to be addressed is: What changes might be implemented to make this more of a “must attend” meeting? In exploring this question the following issues (among a range of topics) should be considered:

- Is the April time frame really optimal?
- Are there ways to encourage the announcement of important scientific results at the meeting?
- Should Washington, DC be a fixed venue in alternate years?
- Are there other groups whom we should be engaging to participate in this meeting on a regular basis?
- Are there opportunities to make the meeting more of an event for students and Early Career physicists?
- Are there ways to raise the international profile of the meeting, thus attracting greater international participation?
- Are there programmatic changes that should be considered (e.g. number of plenaries, parallel sessions, posters, oral contributed sessions, etc.)?

Task Force members are encouraged to “think outside the box” in order to “re-imagine” the April Meeting.

The Task Force should plan to complete their report, with recommendations, for presentation to the APS Executive Board in February, 2014.

2014 April Meeting Task Force Report

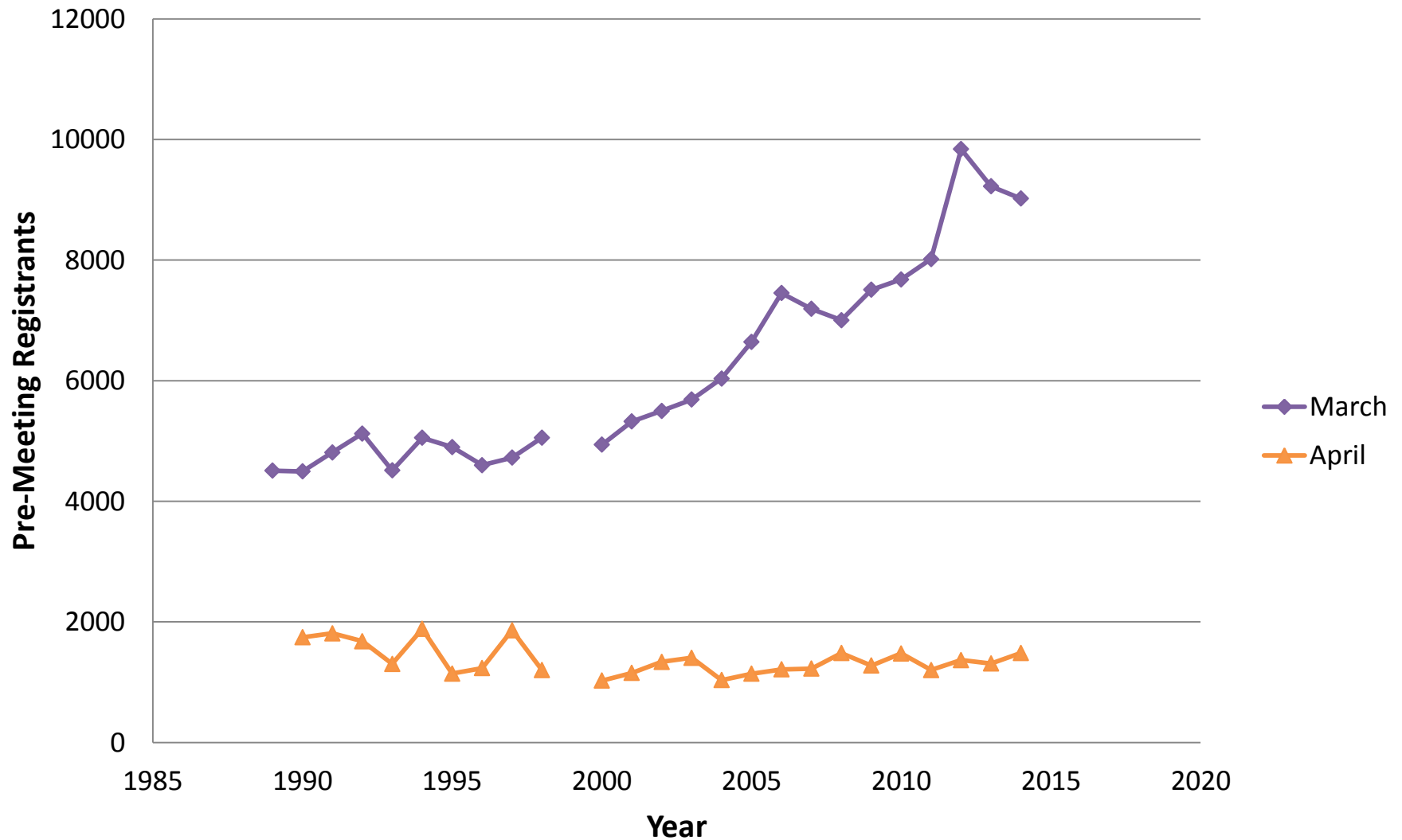
Tim Gay (Chair)
University of Nebraska

APS Council Meeting
9 April 2015

0th-Order Problems with the April Meeting

- Non-optimal time, especially for those at colleges and universities
- Not regarded as a venue for the presentation of major new results
- No clear scientific “brand”
- Poor talk quality, format; technology non-optimal
- Cost; meetings in big cities are expensive
- Uneven work load for the APS Meetings department
- *Attendance*

Attendance



ATF Timeline and Activities

- Initial Discussions: Early Fall 2013
- Discussions through June 2014 with participating unit ExComms, individual members, each other
- 2 surveys
- 3 + 4 teleconferences, 1 face-to-face meeting in Savannah
- Savannah: Town Hall Meeting, presentations to Unit ExComms, Business Meetings

April Task Force (ATF) members

- Laura Boon (Purdue University) – DPB, FGSA
- Eric Brewe (Florida International University) – FED, GPER
- Brenda Dingus (LANL) – DAP, DNP, DPF
- Cary Forest (University of Wisconsin) - DPP
- Tim Gay (Chair, University of Nebraska) – DNP, DAMOP, FHP
- Karsten Heeger (Yale University) – DNP, DPF, FIP
- Daniel Holz (University of Chicago) – GGR, DAP
- Daniel Kleppner (MIT) – FHP, DAMOP
- Patricia McBride (FNAL) - DPF
- Peter Petreczky (BNL) – GHP, DNP, DCOMP
- Fulvia Pilat (JLAB) - DPB
- Bill Zajc (Columbia University) - DNP

Recommendations: 1you asked for an “out-of-the box” solution.....

- The synergy of a meeting involving DAP, DPF, DNP, GGR, DPB, GHP, GFB, and GPAP is crucial.
- The meeting should be advertised to announce this synergy, and given a “particle/nuclear/gravity/astrophysics:cosmology” brand.
- To this end, the meeting should be moved to the latter half of October (NB: 9-3).

Reinventing the wheel.....



...J. S. Langer, APS President 2000....

Recommendations 2: Web Presence, Advertising and Articulation

- The paper Bulletin should be abandoned in favor of smartphone-app based media
- Abstracts should be shortened significantly to make their navigation on, e.g., smartphones easier
- Pedagogy (presentation) software and video archiving should be evaluated by the Meetings and IT Departments on an ongoing basis
- The themes of the meeting should be aggressively advertised, e.g., in the *CERN Courier* and on various websites and to APS members

Recommendations 3: The Program Committee

- The Program Committee (PC) should have two members from each of its synergistic units and one from each of the others (~24 members)
- These members should serve for two years to enhance institutional memory
- There should be a Planning Committee that determines themes of the meeting well before speakers are invited
- The PC should work with APS to select plenary speakers and to set up student development events
- Speaker quality should be as important as the timeliness and quality of the science
- Contributed and invited talk sessions should not be in parallel; poorly-attended oral sessions should revert to poster sessions

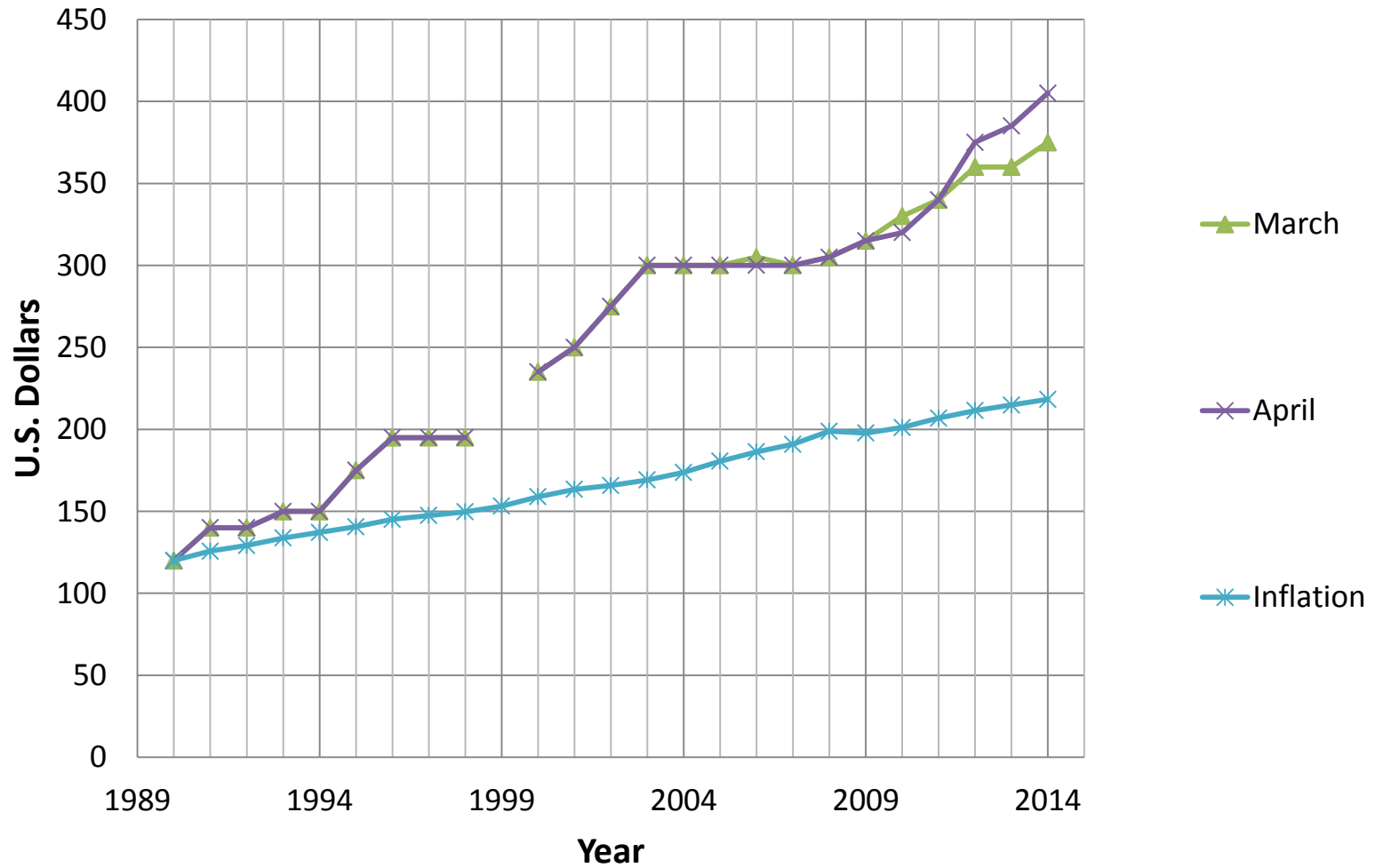
Recommendations 4: Time of week and location

- Given the results of the second survey, we suggest that the meeting be held every other year in the environs of Washington, D.C.
- On “off” years it should alternate between the west coast and the middle of the country
- The meeting should be held over weekends

Recommendations 5: Cost Containment

- The move to October helps
- Aggressively contain both IT and hotel costs; book early!
- Seek funding for the meeting from appropriate industrial or government sources
- Coffee breaks a must!

March and April Meeting Early Member Registration Fees



Current Status

- The ATF recommendations are presented to the Council's Executive Committee in Sedona, June 2014. The report is unanimously accepted.
- The Committee on Meetings meets at the ACP in July 2014, reviews the ATF report, hears from the Chair of the DNP, and recommends that a group led by Kirby move forward to work with the DNP, the Program Committee of the April Meeting, and the APS Meetings Staff to implement as many of the recommendations as possible.
- The APS Leadership (Kirby, Taylor) and the ATF Chair meet with DNP leadership (teleconference) in August 2014. The ATF's April/October switch recommendation is determined by the APS Leadership to be unfeasible.
- The APS Leadership and the ATF Chair meet with the April Meeting Program Committee (teleconference) in October 2014. Recommendations on process, polity, and focus for the Program Committee are reviewed by them and taken under consideration.

Acknowledgements

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