

# PHAS Colloquium:

## A Random Walk: Finding an Alternative Career in Physics



They asked me how well I understood theoretical physics. I said I had a theoretical degree in physics. They said welcome aboard.

**DATE:** January 8<sup>th</sup>, 2019

**TIME:** 2:30 PM

**LOCATION:** PSE 317

**SPEAKER**

Chris Stewart  
York University

**THERE WILL  
BE SNACKS**

**ALL ARE WELCOME**

### ABSTRACT

What do you do when you finish your degree and realise, maybe you don't want to be a research physicist after all? I'd wanted to be a physicist ever since I stole a book about Grand Unified Theories from my grandfather's study when I was 11 — I didn't understand a word of it, but I suddenly wanted to know the fundamental workings of the universe. I did well in school despite indifferent teaching, ploughed through my undergraduate degree, and moved to Canada to start a graduate program here at York with Prof. Roman Koniuk. Together we built a Mac-based parallel supercomputer at a time when such a thing was preposterous, and used it to carry out lattice calculations of quark dynamics. I filled my days writing FORTRAN code for simulations that took weeks to run and months to debug.

I graduated in May 2000, after a staggeringly long, ridiculously short decade of formal university education. And I realised — again, suddenly — that my career was about to enter a very different, very non-linear phase.

I've spent the subsequent two decades in and around universities, exploring the many different side streets and alleyways of academia, from teaching and education research to science communication and media production, from project management and leadership to skills training and development. At every stage, the experience and skills I picked up through my physics degrees were not just useful, they were invaluable.

If you're doing a degree in physics and you're wondering what happens next ... well, I can't promise any answers, but this talk might just prompt a few new questions.