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Agricultural and Applied Economics Association in 2020.

### **What is the biggest concern/problem facing AAEA?**

I feel there are two primary challenges facing the association. The last few years have seen several dramatic events affect the association in unprecedented ways. Most visibly, the association moved all meetings this past year online in response to the pandemic. Moving online provided greater opportunities for international participation, including many participating from low income countries. At the same time, online meetings create barriers to the types of networking and social exchange that help make the annual meetings so valuable. As we emerge from the pandemic, the association needs to adapt to serve the wider audiences it has the demonstrated potential to reach, as well as reinstitute the interactive services and benefits longstanding members have come to expect. Finding ways to build bridges between these groups and how they experience the association events is key to building a wider membership and increasing value to members. Second, the discipline of economics generally has come under severe scrutiny for its often [intolerant and combative atmosphere](#). This problem stretches beyond anonymous online discussion groups and unfortunately taints much of the discipline including many of our most respected departments. The AAEA has done some work to change this culture and to address longstanding social injustices within the field. We now have the opportunity to play a key role in leading this charge to improve the work culture and atmosphere in applied economics. Doing so is key both to building a more welcoming and diverse culture, but also to improving the quality of life and job satisfaction for members of our discipline.

### **What actions would you initiate to address the challenges and opportunities described in your response to the previous question?**

Clearly future meetings need to incorporate online as well as in person elements in order to continue engagement with a broader audience. The challenge is to do so in a way that allows broader engagement and improves the online experience, while not discouraging in person participation or undermining members' ability to have such participation funded. I propose a full reimagining of the

meeting structure that will allow for wider participation and engagement from those who cannot travel to the meetings while facilitating the vigorous in-person interchanges that have been the backbone and highlight of our meetings. This reimagining must consider the key in-person social, professional and mentoring interactions that must be retained, while considering how similar value can be provided to those who attend online. This should include an examination of how large audience sessions, selected and track sessions function, in addition to the administration of section activities. We must also give thought to potential audiences that do not attend. With broader potential formats for participation, we have the opportunity for greater engagement and exchange with industry and commodity groups that have largely disappeared from our meetings over the last few decades.

Several of my colleagues from general economics departments who have associated with the AAEA praise our meetings as a friendly oasis in which to present research and receive meaningful and reasonable feedback. We should build on this reputation both by striving for a higher standard of behavior and ideals for our members, and by promoting a friendly and uplifting atmosphere as a real strength within the broader field of economics. Many professional associations including the AAEA have developed codes of conduct to discourage bigotry or bullying within the confines of association meetings. I see these efforts as an important, but incomplete step in creating a more productive and welcoming atmosphere. Additional efforts to promote, highlight and reward a positive presentation atmosphere can help cement a culture of positive feedback. As we have increased the broad array of applied economists attending our meetings, we should promote our meetings to a broader economic audience as a space in which diverse research and diverse researchers are welcome.

**At the end of your three-year term, what changes/new initiatives would you have helped create?**

At the end of my term, I hope to have broadened the regular membership and deepened the typical involvement within the association. I hope to accomplish this through adapting our meeting structure using modern technology and careful consideration of the value presented to many potential audiences. In addition, I hope to have a vibrant and thriving in-person attendance at the meetings. We will be able to increase membership both by offering a broader set of participation modes, but also by building on our strong and positive presentation atmosphere, and strengthening our substantial mentoring efforts. Ultimately, I believe having a broader and more diverse membership will strengthen the benefits that all AAEA members enjoy.