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His main professional service roles have been for USDA-NIFA-AFRI (e.g., panel manager twice and panelist multiple years) and the Northeast Agricultural and Resource Economics Association (e.g., President, Board of Directors, Associate Editor, and Guest Editor). For AAEA, in years past he has served on the Outstanding Dissertation Award and Selected Paper committees and is currently serving as the Secretary/Treasurer of the FAMPS section.

What are the biggest challenges and opportunities for AAEA?

In a university setting, I have always found that agricultural and applied economists are extremely well-suited for leading multidisciplinary and multifunctional (i.e., research, teaching, outreach) projects. By extension, I believe that AAEA is also well-positioned to lead teams that integrate academia, government, industry, and NGOs. Thus, in the long-term, one of AAEA's biggest opportunities is to position itself as a leader on multi-pronged research, policy analysis, and outreach efforts for important topics such as climate change, farm viability, food-system sustainability, immigration policy, and many others. This long-term opportunity maps to a medium-term challenge of increasing the role of AAEA's industry/NGO partners and members.

In the short term, AAEA faces the opportunity of re-imagining itself in a post-COVID world where more can be done remotely. However, when evaluating remote opportunities, AAEA must acknowledge that the costs and burdens of remote work fall unequally on our members. That is, some of our members will be disadvantaged by the new remote environment. Therefore, our ongoing challenge of improving diversity and inclusion might become ever more challenging.

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

1. Broaden and empower the Government Relations Committee. The recent relocation and reorganization of USDA's ERS and NIFA show us how vulnerable these agricultural research institutions can be. USDA's NIFA-AFRI competitive grants programs have been important to AAEA members and need to be continually protected and strengthened. I would like to see the AAEA's Government Relations Committee take on this task. More generally, AAEA, with the help of C-FARE, can help coordinate efforts to support these USDA agencies and, while we are at it, strengthen relationships with the FDA, CDC, and EPA, since these agencies also fund our researchers and hire our students.

2. Strengthen industry partnerships. AAEA serves the academic and policy audience well, but we can and should strengthen our ties to industry. In some cases, we need to do this because we can help inform industry decisions; however, we also need to strengthen these ties because industry is an increasing source of data and research ideas. Thinking strategically about these partnerships will also be useful: Historically, AAEA has done an excellent job studying and understanding agricultural production and consumer behavior towards food. However, we have had less success partnering with firms in the middle of the supply chain or technology providers serving producers and retailers. Benefits of a stronger partnership would be more informed policy discussion and, potentially, better access to data that are often unavailable.

3. Completely review the annual meeting format. In a post-COVID world, our annual meetings will likely be a blend of in-person and remote activities. While this blend could create new opportunities and extend AAEA's reach, it could also create new challenges, including those related to inclusion and pricing. While attendance has increased for many AAEA online events, some segments of the AAEA membership are adversely impacted by the new remote environment. Serious and creative analysis will be necessary to figure out the structure of the annual meeting, what is the best blend in-person vs. remote activities, and how best to price meeting-registration options to benefit the full range of our members.

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

At the end of my term, I would like to have helped the AAEA board and officers create an annual meeting plan for blended meetings. Optimally, this plan would suggest meeting features that make the meetings more inclusive and more accessible while serving the heterogeneous needs of our members. I would also help the board expand the role of the Government Relations Committee and find the best place within AAEA – i.e., an existing committee or a new one – to place an industry-partnership initiative.