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Current State and Future Directions of SAEA

Eduardo Segarra

Do not look back in anger, or forward in fear, but around in awareness.

—James Thurber

It is difficult to describe the extent of my pleasure both in being here today and in having the honor of serving as your president this year. This occasion is particularly meaningful to me since I follow in the footsteps of two of my professors in this forum, Sandra S. Batie and Oral Capps, Jr., who have had a great deal of influence on my professional development.

The 1984 meetings of the Southern Agricultural Economics Association (SAEA) in Nashville, Tennessee, marked my first exposure to the meetings of this Association. One of my more vivid memories of that occasion was a dinner at the Opryland Hotel where Joseph Havlicek, Jr., enlightened us with his comments on the state of this Association and its future prospects, along with an in-depth reminiscence of the Association's history.

There are other reasons why I remember the 1984 meetings well, and I would like to share with you two "firsts" I experienced at those meetings. I made my first professional presentation before an audience of agricultural

economists, and it was an enjoyable experience (i.e., the audience at the selected paper session was easy, maybe too easy, on me). The second "first," while also memorable, was less enjoyable. I got my right hand jammed in a car door, the right front door to be exact, which was closed on my hand by a very good friend and fellow graduate student at Virginia Tech. The kicker to this second "first" was that when the right front door closed on my hand, it locked—and the only unlocked door was the right rear door that I was using to get out of the car! There I crouched, in a situation both ludicrous and painful, like a fly on a pin, half in and half out of the car while one of my companions rushed to find the driver who held the only set of keys.

When I found out that I would be addressing this forum, I spent a considerable amount of time reviewing possible topics. As some of you know, I have been inclined to focus my research and teaching on the enhancement of farm-level decision making in an environment characterized by change. It is change, the most constant theme of the latter half of the 20th century, which influences our activities and our environment with a dynamic dimension as never experienced in any previous epoch. This orientation, given the many issues currently surrounding agricultural-related teaching, research, extension, and outreach activities, made it natural for me to start thinking of a topic along the same lines which might be of broad interest to the Association. Issues related to possible challenges and opportunities seated in this environment of change and facing our profession in general, and the southern

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portion of the United States in particular, came to mind.

I selected my topic, however, only after some background work and discussions with a number of you as to the relevance of SAEA's current activities. Only then did I finally decide that it would be appropriate for me to address the current state and future directions of SAEA. SAEA's 25th anniversary in 1993 passed apparently unnoticed, although Oral Capps mentioned that it was impending in his 1992 presidential address. This year, 1998, marks SAEA's 30th anniversary; given this milestone and the quickly approaching end of this century, it occurred to me that a topic labeled "Current State and Future Directions of SAEA" might be of interest to you.

What is the relevance of anniversaries anyway? Anniversaries represent a point in time where we can look forward, pause and look back to see where we have come from, figure out where we are, and possibly make decisions about where we want to go. This occasion presented what I felt was a unique opportunity to conduct a survey of the charter members and other members of the Association and to elicit their views and opinions as to the relevance and possible future directions of SAEA and its activities. In this address, I focus first on the evolution of SAEA, then report on the results of the membership survey conducted in the summer of 1997 as to the justification for the continuing existence of SAEA and the relevance of its activities. The closing section explores possible future directions and roles of the Association.

Evolution of SAEA

Pre-SAEA Formation

By far, the best source of abridged information on the beginnings of SAEA is Havlicek's 1984 presidential address. The foundation for the establishment of SAEA and other southern associations currently affiliated with the Southern Association of Agricultural Scientists was laid in 1899 with the formation of the Cotton States Association of Commissioners of Agriculture. The main purpose of this

organization was to study and evaluate cotton production and related issues of importance to southern states.

Taylor and Taylor note that during the 1880s, the rapid adoption of technological advances in agriculture led to significant increases in agricultural production. Conversely, the deflation of the currency and depression in the industrial sector that took place in the early 1890s led to sharp reductions in the price of agricultural commodities, which in turn had a devastating impact on incomes in the agricultural sector. This situation prompted farmers, through the National Farmers' Alliance and Industrial Union, to promote government intervention in agriculture. In 1893, Senator J. Z. George appointed two committees, one of which was "charged especially with the duty of investigating the condition of the agricultural industry of the country as it concerns cotton and other vegetable fibers" (Taylor and Taylor, p. 19). The resulting "George Report of 1895" described the precarious cotton situation in the South and called for agricultural diversification. The stated purpose of the Cotton States Association of Commissioners of Agriculture, established in 1899, was thus a direct result of economic conditions in the South in that period. This group, recognizing the need to broaden its purpose beyond cotton, was renamed three times between 1905 and 1911, when it ultimately became the Association of Southern Agricultural Workers (Havlicek). In 1972, the Association of Southern Agricultural Workers was renamed the Southern Association of Agricultural Scientists (SAAS).

Havlicek points out that since its beginning, economics-related topics have been an integral part of the annual conventions of the Association of Southern Agricultural Workers (ASAW). The Agricultural Economics Section of ASAW was formed in the early 1920s, and at the 1925 convention was listed as part of the program. It is interesting to note that the formation of the Agricultural Economics Section might have been partially inspired, almost concurrently, by a perceived need to regionalize agricultural economics activities in the South. The national scene saw a merger of the

American Farm Management Association and the Association of Agricultural Economists into the American Farm Economics Association in 1919, renamed in 1968 as the American Agricultural Economics Association (AAEA), while the Bureau of Agricultural Economics of the Department of Agriculture was established in 1922.

Rural sociology was added to the Agricultural Economics Section of ASAW in 1933, and the section was renamed the Agricultural Economics and Rural Sociology Section. Also noteworthy is that parallel to these organizational activities during the mid- to late 1920s and early 1930s, marketing research within the U.S. Department of Agriculture evolved rapidly with significant state participation. It is conceivable that this activity stimulated the formation of the Marketing Section of ASAW in 1937. Finally, both the Agricultural Economics and Rural Sociology Section and the Marketing Section continued as part of ASAW until 1968, when these sections were merged to form SAEA (Havlicek).

There is no doubt that the formation of an association such as SAEA had to be spearheaded by a number of individuals. Not meant by any means to be a comprehensive list, the record shows that some of those pioneering individuals included: Joseph A. Ackerman, George H. Aull, William E. Black, Leo V. Blakley, Stephen J. Brannen, Harold F. Breimyer, M. Lloyd Downen, J. Norman Efferson, Marshall R. Godwin (first president-elect), Donald L. Henry, R. J. Hildreth, Dale M. Hoover, John A. Hopkin, Verner G. Hurt, Luther H. Keller, Richard A. King, W. J. Lanham, William T. Manley, James E. Martin, J. Rod Martin (first editor of the *Journal*), Henry J. Meenen, John R. Moore, W. W. McPherson, James S. Plaxico, John C. Redman (first secretary-treasurer), Robert W. Rudd (first president), Joseph C. Purcell, A. D. Seal, Jr. (first vice-president), Wesley G. Smith, John G. Stoval, Kenneth R. Tefertiller, William D. Tous-saint, Luther G. Tweeten, Fred H. Tyner, Melvin L. Upchurch, Thomas J. Whatley, Thomas T. Williams, and Willard F. Williams. The magnitude of the vision of these and most likely other agricultural economists in the

founding of SAEA is best illustrated by the fact that there were 519 charter members (a list of the names of these members was published in the 1969 inaugural issue of the *Southern Journal of Agricultural Economics*, pp. 169–72).

It is important to acknowledge that the Farm Foundation, founded in 1933 by Alexander Legge and Frank O. Lowden to improve the well-being of U.S. agriculture and rural people, played a tremendous role in strengthening the agricultural economics profession as a whole and in fostering regional activities of agricultural economists. The formation of the North Central, Southern, Northeastern, and Western Farm Management Research Committees in the late 1940s and early 1950s was due in large part to the Farm Foundation's efforts. The record suggests that throughout its existence, the Farm Foundation not only has continued to provide needed financial and in-kind support, but also has facilitated and fostered the creation of fora that enhance the stature and relevance of the agricultural economics profession. Progress in this respect owes much to the hard work and devotion of past Farm Foundation managing directors Joseph A. Ackerman and R. J. Hildreth, and current managing director Walter J. Armbruster.

Post-SAEA Formation

Significant sources of information on the history of SAEA since its establishment in 1968 include Havlicek's presidential address, which marked the 16th anniversary, and Penn's and Harris' invited addresses, both marking SAEA's 21st anniversary. These three sources not only provide keen insight and information on the evolution of SAEA, but also pay tribute to several of the individuals who played key roles in the formation and strengthening of its activities.

The record shows that the purposes and objectives of SAEA have not changed since its inception. Article II of the constitution states:

The purposes and objectives of the Southern Agricultural Economics Association shall be to foster the study and understanding of ag-

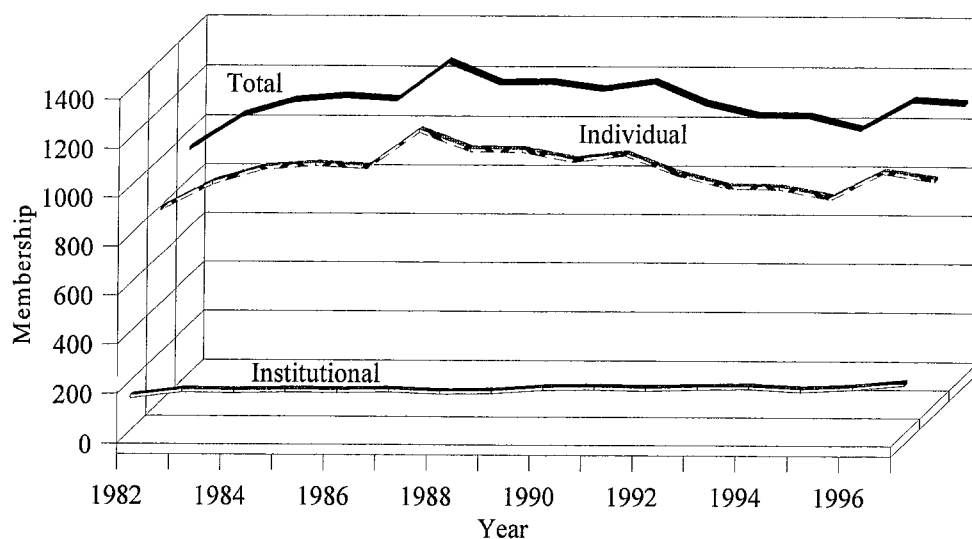


Figure 1. SAEA membership, end-of-year 1982 through July 1997

gricultural economics and its applications to problems in the Southern United States; to promote unity and effectiveness of effort among all concerned with those problems; to promote improvement in the professional competence and standards of members; to cooperate with other organizations and institutions engaged in similar or related activities; and to increase the contribution of agricultural economics to human welfare.

Several revisions have been made to the Association's constitution and bylaws. The last time the constitution and bylaws of the Association were published in the *Journal* was in 1987 (*Southern Journal of Agricultural Economics*, Vol. 19, No. 1, pp. 155–59), where it was reported that revisions were made in 1982, 1986, and 1987. However, I believe revisions were also made in 1974, when the makeup of the executive board of the Association was reconfigured starting in 1975 (i.e., the vice-president position was split into two positions, first and second vice-presidents).

The records on membership numbers are sketchy during the 1970s, but indications are that between the 1970s and early 1980s, total SAEA membership almost doubled. Figure 1 depicts the evolution of SAEA's individual and institutional membership for the period covering year-end 1982 through July 1997. Figure

1 shows that total and individual memberships were highest in 1987, with a slight decrease since that time. Institutional memberships, however, have shown a tendency to increase through the years, peaking in 1997 with the largest institutional membership on record. These membership numbers are encouraging, particularly when compared to those of other regional associations and AAEA. A recent communication dated July 9, 1997, from John Halstead, secretary-treasurer of the Northeastern Agricultural and Resource Economics Association (NAREA), to Reuben Buse, Bruce Godfrey, and Michael R. Dicks, points out that over the past five years AAEA membership has declined sharply, Western Agricultural Economics Association (WAEA) membership has dropped, and SAEA and NAREA memberships have been stable or increased slightly.

Havlicek, Penn, and Harris each provide keen insight and information on the evolution of association activities, focusing on the *Journal* and the annual meetings. Havlicek states in 1984, "The Association has lived up to its purpose and objectives" (p. 5). In 1989, Penn reports, "[The SAEA] is generally adjudged to have fulfilled most of the expectations that the original founders held for it" (p. 59), and in that same year, Harris confirms, "In the vernacular of our region, 'We done good!'" (p. 63).

Havlicek, Penn, and Harris base their comments on many factors. I identify several of the most significant factors here: (a) SAEA activities that are sensitive in addressing issues of importance to the South in a timely manner, especially through the invited paper sessions at the annual meetings and the organized symposia which were adopted in 1984; (b) the selected paper sessions which provide members an effective vehicle for the exchange of ideas and for professional interaction; and (c) the *Journal's* applied focus, with its sensitivity to the needs of its members and its continuing effort to become and remain a credible and respected publication in the agricultural economics profession. Also, Broder points out that SAEA has become more sensitive to the needs of teaching-related activities, particularly since the late 1980s.

Other factors contributing to the strengthening of SAEA's stature are numerous, including: the establishment of the SAEA awards program in 1987, a response to the need to recognize the professional contributions of its members (Conner suggested its creation in 1985); the enactment of professional poster sessions and the poster session award at the 1990 meetings; publication of the outstanding graduate student paper in the *Journal* beginning in 1991; the renaming of the *Southern Journal of Agricultural Economics* as the *Journal of Agricultural and Applied Economics* in 1993, a response to the need to broaden the scope of the journal; the establishment of the SAEA Undergraduate Student Section in 1995 (Havlicek suggested its establishment in 1984); the sponsorship of the *Journal of Agricultural Economics Issues* in 1995, a response to the need for an issue-based applied economics analysis publication to foster increased communication with traditional and nontraditional audiences; the adoption of an executive summary-based paper selection for presentation at the meetings in 1997, a response to the membership's desire to proceed in this manner; and the encouragement of Southern Region research groups' participation in the meetings. It is interesting to note that the renaming of the *Journal* coincided with the 25th anniversary of SAEA. Thus, it took SAEA 25 years to broaden the scope of

its flagship publication, while it took AAEA twice as long to do the same! It should be pointed out that the *Journal of Agricultural Economics Issues* initially proposed by SAEA (more specifically by Angelos Pagoulatos and David L. Debertin) came to be the "new" *Review of Agricultural Economics* which is jointly sponsored by AAEA, SAEA, WAEA, and NAREA.

The central activities of the Association since its inception have been the annual meetings, the *Journal*, and the newsletter. These SAEA activities, especially the *Journal* and the meetings, appear to have served the membership well as vehicles for communication enhancement among agricultural economists in the South and with those in other regions as well. The evolution of SAEA activities would seem to reflect the ever-increasing diversity of interests and talents of agricultural economists that Breimyer, Conner, Harris, Libby, and Penn have identified. As Penn asserts, "Institutions that thrive over time are those that adapt successfully, that effectively continue to meet the needs of the membership" (p. 59). The question is not necessarily whether SAEA has been sensitive in adapting to change—because I believe that it has. The relevant question might be: Is the speed at which SAEA has adapted over time been fast enough? A related question might be: Is SAEA currently sensitive to the membership's desires and sufficiently dynamic to accommodate new issues of interest to the membership? These were some of the questions I had in mind when I set out to conduct the survey discussed below.

The Formation and Relevance of SAEA

My task, as I conceived it, was to obtain input from SAEA charter members which would be valuable to the current and future membership of the Association. Realistically speaking, given that SAEA was founded 30 years ago, an increasing number of charter members will cease to be professionally active within a few years—making it increasingly difficult to obtain their views, experiences, and insights. Concurrently, I wanted to elicit from other members their thoughts on the relevance of

SAEA's activities and their perceptions of the Association's future direction.

Two surveys were developed in the summer of 1997 to elicit views and opinions from SAEA's charter members and other members on the formation of SAEA and the relevance of its activities. The surveys were identical, except for one additional question asked of charter members about the formation of SAEA. Before proceeding to the particulars of the survey questions and their results, I clarify here that I claim sole responsibility for their entire contents. At the same time, however, I wish to acknowledge the contributions of Harold F. Breimyer, Don E. Ethridge, R. J. Hildreth, Ronald Knutson, Kary Mathis, and Sukant K. Misra in the development stage of the surveys.

The Surveys

In June 1997, Michael R. Dicks and Phillip Kenkel provided me with a mailing list of 531 SAEA members with paid-up dues as of May 1997. This membership list was cross-referenced with the list of 519 charter members published in the December 1969 premier issue of the *Southern Journal of Agricultural Economics*. Overall, 80 charter members were cross-referenced. The addresses of 49 additional charter members were found using two AAEA telephone directories. The initial mailing consisted of 580 surveys: 129 to charter members and 451 to other SAEA members. A list of the names of all charter members was enclosed in the materials sent to charter members, with a request that they provide addresses for those charter members who could not otherwise be located. This request generated 58 additional charter members' addresses. Thus the total mailing consisted of 638 surveys—187 to charter members and 451 to other SAEA members.

Overall response to the survey was good, with 281 usable responses (a 44% overall response rate). Twelve surveys were returned blank or indicated no interest in responding, and approximately 40 surveys (many of them sent to charter members) were returned indicating an incorrect address. The composition

of the usable surveys was as follows: charter members, 76 (40% response rate); and other members, 205 (45% response rate). Of the 205 responses from other members, one was from an undergraduate student, six from graduate students, 25 from assistant professors, 47 from associate professors, 91 from full professors, eight from individuals working for industry, 17 from persons working for government agencies, and 10 from "other" sources. Of the 281 total respondents (but excluding the one undergraduate student), 221 indicated they had an M.S. degree in agricultural economics. Without including students, 239 of those surveyed indicated they had a Ph.D. degree in agricultural economics (approximately 90% of charter members, assistant professors, associate professors, and full professors; and 70% of the individuals working for industry, government agencies, or other).

Because students were asked to answer a more limited set of questions, student responses were eliminated from the analysis that follows. Additionally, the low response rate from both undergraduate and graduate students posed a reliability problem for the responses from these groups. Responses were placed into three groups to keep survey responses manageable: (a) charter members; (b) professors—which included assistant, associate, and full professors; and (c) others—which included those working for industry, government agencies, and other. Responses also were grouped using a three-point Likert scale, where 1 = agree, 2 = somewhat agree, and 3 = disagree. The survey results raised many issues that could be considered in detail; however, my comments here are limited to those issues which in my view are the most significant.

Formation of SAEA

One survey question was asked only of charter members. This question dealt with their perception of several possible reasons as to why SAEA was formed. Appendix table A1 presents the general opening statement for this survey question and lists the average responses by charter members to the specific

survey statements related to the question. From the list of statements identifying reasons leading to the formation of SAEA, statement (a), "SAEA was formed to foster increased interaction among southern agricultural economists," received the most agreement among all of the reasons listed. The second highest rated statement was (b), "SAEA was needed to increase the number of publication outlets." The third highest rated statement was (d), "SAEA was needed to enhance the understanding of agricultural economics issues in the South." Notice that the three lowest ratings pertaining to the reasons for the formation of SAEA were received for the following survey statements: (e) to enhance teaching competence, (h) to enhance relations with agricultural industry, and (g) to enhance extension competence (in that order).

It is clear from these responses that the formation of SAEA came about due to the charter members' perceived need to increase and enhance personal communication among agricultural economists in the South through the meetings, and in writing through the *Journal*. It is also clear that teaching, relations with the agricultural industry, and extension were not an important incentive. The mean response associated with statement (a), "to foster increased interaction among southern agricultural economists," had the lowest variance across responses, while the mean response associated with statement (i), "to enhance relationships between agricultural economists and government agencies," had the highest variance. That is, the response on the formation of SAEA to foster increased interaction among southern agricultural economists ranked highest among all responses and also had the lowest degree of variability among respondents.

Impacts of SAEA Meetings on Professional Development

Appendix table A2 presents the general opening statement for the survey question focusing on the impacts the SAEA meetings have had on the professional development of respondents, the average responses to the specific survey statements by each of the three respon-

dent groups, and the overall average response. Statement (e), "the SAEA meetings have been a good vehicle to share my research experiences and findings," was rated highest and also had the lowest overall variance across all respondents. The mean response to this statement by industry, government agency, and other respondents was statistically different from those responses from both charter members and professors, which were not statistically different.

The second and third highest ranked statements in table A2 were (c) and (a), respectively. These two statements dealt with the impact that the SAEA meetings have had on the ability to establish professional relationships with other agricultural economists, and the feeling that professional interaction at the SAEA meetings has had a significant impact on the professional development of respondents. Given the responses and last-place ranking of statement (i), it is evident that respondents felt the SAEA meetings have not been any more valuable than the AAEA meetings in their professional advancement. The low rankings of statements (d), (j), and (b) indicate that the SAEA meetings have not been a valuable vehicle for sharing teaching experiences, strengthening multidisciplinary programs, or for redirecting professional interests. The responses of charter members across all statements were not statistically different from those of professors.

Impacts of the JAAE (SJAE) on Professional Development

Appendix table A3 presents the general opening statement for the survey question about the impacts the *Journal* has had on the professional development of respondents, the average responses to the individual survey statements by each of the three survey groups, and the overall average response. This table shows that statement (i), "the *Journal* was given appropriate weight by my employer(s) in my professional advancement," rated highest among all respondents. The mean response to this statement by industry, government agency, and other respondents was statistically dif-

ferent from those responses from both charter members and professors, which were not statistically different. This was also the case for the second highest overall rated statement, (d), "the *Journal* has been a good vehicle to share my research program findings." The response to the third highest rated statement, (f), implies that the *Journal* has been more valuable in the professional advancement of professors than it has been for industry, government agency, and other, and that for charter members it has not been significantly different from either professors or other respondents.

The low-ranked responses to statements (c), (e), (j), and (b) raise several issues: the *Journal* has not been a good vehicle for the SAEA membership to share their teaching experiences, to share their extension program findings, to strengthen multidisciplinary activities, or to redirect their professional interests. Responses to statement (c), which placed last in the statement rankings, also had the lowest level of variance. That is, the lowest level of variability of opinion concerning the impact of the *Journal* was with respect to the *Journal* not being a good vehicle for the SAEA membership to share teaching experiences and views. Like the ratings of the statements related to the impact of SAEA meetings on professional development (table A2), charter members' responses on the importance of the *Journal* in their professional development are not statistically different from those of professors.

Relevance of SAEA Activities

The question of the relevance of SAEA-sponsored activities is addressed in appendix table A4. The table presents the general opening statement, the average responses to the individual survey statements by each of the three respondent groups, and the overall average response. The results show that statements (b) and (c), "SAEA activities are a good vehicle for the professional advancement of graduate students," and "of faculty members," respectively, ranked highest and had the lowest and the second lowest variance across responses.

The responses and rankings associated with

statements (f), (h), and (e) indicate respondents felt that the breadth of the SAEA awards program has been effective in recognizing contributions of SAEA members, that SAEA activities have been effective in addressing issues important to the South, and that SAEA activities are a good vehicle for professional advancement of agricultural economists working in government agencies. Conversely, given the responses and low rankings of statements (d) and (g), it appears that SAEA activities have not been an effective vehicle for the professional advancement of agricultural economists working in industry, and that the SAEA awards program has not been effective in recognizing the multidisciplinary contributions of SAEA members. This latter rating had the highest level of variance across all respondents. Again, responses from charter members across all statements were not statistically different from those of professors.

Positioning of SAEA in the Future

Finally, appendix table A5 presents the summary results for the general opening statement on the future positioning of SAEA-sponsored activities. Statements (d), (h), (c), and (j) received the highest rankings. That is, respondents felt strongly about making special efforts to include extension-related sessions at the meetings, about broadening of SAEA activities to attract agricultural industry professional workers, and about making special efforts to include teaching-related sessions at the meetings, and respondents agree that SAEA's sponsorship of the *Review of Agricultural Economics* was a good step toward broadening the scope of the Association. It is important to point out that of all the survey responses to statements by the three respondent groups in tables A2–A5, the top two statements with the highest ratings (i.e., the most agreement) were statements (d) and (h) in table A5: "SAEA should make special efforts to include extension-related sessions at the meetings," and "SAEA activities should be broadened to attract agricultural industry professional workers."

Respondents did not feel as strongly about

the establishment of a grantsmanship award, an increased emphasis by the *JAAE* on southern issues, the establishment of a professional mentorship award, an increased emphasis on southern issues at SAEA meetings, or the establishment of a student mentorship award. It is important to note, however, that although the response to the statement about increased *JAAE* emphasis on southern issues ranked low, the variance among respondents was the highest and its mean was statistically different between professors, and charter members and others. Furthermore, this was the only statement in the survey for which the responses from charter members and professors were statistically different. That is, charter members and others feel more strongly about increasing the emphasis on southern issues in *JAAE* than do professors. With respect to statements associated with the enactment of new SAEA awards, statements (k) through (p) in table A5 indicate that the enactment of a Ph.D. dissertation and/or an M.S. thesis award is seen more favorably than the enactment of any of the other types of awards listed.

The Future of the Profession and Other Issues

There were four open-ended questions included in the survey: (a) What changes will the profession of agricultural economics need to make in the next 30 years? (b) How can SAEA serve the profession in making these changes? (c) How can we enhance the attractiveness of the SAEA meetings to increase participation/attendance? and (d) Are there any other issues that you would like to address? Response to these questions was good, but varied among respondents from no response at all, to a few sentences, to several pages. Well over 450 statements were volunteered (consisting of 14 single-spaced pages, using a 10-point font!, and including a few statements which were significantly shortened). These responses provided considerable insight on attitudes toward SAEA and needed improvements. Because I felt it would be a good idea to make these available in their entirety to the membership, they will be posted on my web page and on

the *Journal's* web site (<http://www.agecon.uga.edu/~jaae/jaae.htm>). However, if you would like to have a hard copy of these, please contact me.

Presented in appendix B is a small sample of selected responses from the more than 450 volunteer statements received. There are some common threads among the responses: (a) there is too much disciplinary focus in the profession—we need to go back to our problem-solving roots; (b) we need to broaden the profession's base beyond traditional areas to enhance relevance; (c) SAEA activities need to be more balanced among teaching, research, and extension activities, and more industry participation should be encouraged; (d) SAEA should continue to provide fora for the enhancement of communication among agricultural economists; (e) the time of the year and locations at which the SAEA meetings have been held are not optimal; and (f) the format of the SAEA meetings needs to be reconfigured and broadened, emphasizing invited papers, prominent speakers, workshops, and organized symposia.

Future Directions and Final Thoughts

Using Harris' terms, I believe that during the maturing stage, SAEA's activities have gone forward, and that the Association is now approaching the consolidating stage. This suggests that we must seriously consider speeding up the reconfiguration of some SAEA activities to meet the opportunities and challenges that lie ahead. Changes taking place in agriculture will continue to have impacts on teaching, research, and extension programs, not only in agricultural economics, but in other agricultural sciences as well. These changes include funding of teaching, research, and extension programs, elimination of farm programs and associated structural changes in production agriculture, changes in consumer preferences, increased industrialization of agriculture, increased environmental protection, evolution of information and production technologies, and market globalization. In an environment of constant and critical change, what role can or should the SAEA play?

The survey results reported here suggest that the SAEA was created because agricultural economists in the South wanted to increase and enhance communication, both personal—through the meetings, and in writing—through the *Journal*. Based on the survey responses, the evidence indicates that the Association meetings have provided an effective arena for members to share disciplinary and subject-matter research findings, and to establish professional relationships. Further, member respondents believe interaction at the SAEA meetings has significantly impacted their professional development. The *Journal* is recognized as being of valuable assistance to professional development and is acknowledged as an effective vehicle for sharing research findings. It is noteworthy that these positive findings emerged despite the fact that we are sometimes perceived as being too discipline oriented and that many members feel the SAEA can do better.

Disciplinary Issues

The *Journal* and the meetings appear to have been quite relevant and valuable in addressing the disciplinary and subject-matter research aspects of the members' agendas, and they also are perceived as having improved and facilitated the understanding of agricultural economics issues in the South. The survey respondents' message pertaining to SAEA's lack of sensitivity to the teaching, extension, and outreach efforts of members is, however, very clear. I propose the following steps for consideration. With respect to papers submitted for publication in the *Journal*, I believe that the contents of the *Journal* cannot and should not be micro-managed by the executive board. That is, we must continue to provide the editors and associate editors of the *Journal* with the ability and means to manage and make publication decisions based solely on their discretion and that of the *Journal* reviewers as to what should or should not be published in the *Journal*. The survey suggestions for changes in the meetings format seem to show that there is a need to seriously consider both extension

and teaching/agricultural industry outreach-related invited paper sessions at the meetings.

Historically, the meetings' program format has included three invited paper sessions—one per day. I propose to make room for four invited paper sessions in the future, and for all of them to take place in the first two days of the meetings. How do we accomplish this? I have reviewed several of the meetings' programs from recent years, and have come to the conclusion that we can move as follows (I should point out that Chung L. Huang, Lucas D. Parsch, and others have influenced my thinking on this issue). First, we need to adopt a 15-minute selected paper presentation format. Then, leaving the quiz bowl competition and the graduate fair as they are currently scheduled, the meetings' program could be restructured to allow for: (a) increased prominence of the poster session in the program, (b) four invited paper sessions—and improved timing of these in the program, (c) up to 171 selected papers, and (d) up to 10 organized symposia sessions. The selected paper and organized symposia sessions could be reconfigured to fit the number of submissions in any particular year, but this provides a general guideline and an upper bound of presentations at the meetings (i.e., all invited paper sessions, the poster session, and approximately 60% of the selected papers and 40% of the organized symposia in the first two days; and approximately 40% of the selected papers and 60% of the organized symposia on the third day). Two of the invited paper sessions could be dedicated to extension and teaching/agricultural industry outreach-related activities, but if no submissions are received, the sessions could be allocated to other invited paper submissions. The question at this point is: How do we generate interest in these two dedicated invited paper sessions?

The extension-related invited paper session is where the contributions of President Duffy and Past-President Reinschmidt as to the need to reconfigure the executive board are pertinent. Somehow, either formally or informally (but preferably formally), we need to have extension representation on the executive board to assure that the views of extension ag-

ricultural economists are internalized in the operation of SAEA activities. Extension representatives on the executive board could, in addition, provide input and leadership in the generation of interest for the extension-related invited paper session. Also, I propose the merging of the SAEA Undergraduate Student Section into a general SAEA Student Section, including both undergraduate and graduate students. The teaching/agricultural industry outreach-related invited paper session could provide a focus for this Student Section, and its scope could be broadened to: (a) provide input, through student advisors (who should also be considered for representation on the executive board); (b) include activities to attract agricultural industry professional workers; and (c) explore regional educational activities such as internship opportunities, undergraduate and graduate distance learning opportunities, teaching improvement workshops, etc.

I offer three final points on disciplinary issues. First, I would like to suggest the establishment of an SAEA M.S. thesis award. As reported by the survey findings, the enactment of both Ph.D. dissertation and M.S. thesis awards is seen more favorably than the enactment of any other awards. Other regional associations promote M.S. thesis awards. I have first-hand knowledge of some excellent Southern Region M.S. theses that have gone unnoticed at the national level, and I do not see why we should not recognize our own M.S. students with this type of award. Second, although I am unacquainted with possible economic and editorial feasibility problems, I suggest that we have not used the newsletter to its full potential. The newsletter could and should be used by the members of the Association to surface issues of broad relevance to the SAEA or to air controversial issues of relevance to particular constituencies within the SAEA. This could also be accomplished through a cheaper and perhaps more feasible alternative, the creation of a "chat-room" located at the Association's web site. Finally, we must seriously consider taking the *Journal* "electronic" in its entirety. We could "burn" a CD yearly containing a single volume of the

Journal. This is unavoidable; the economics and heightened visibility of this approach are a reality, and postponing it would put us that far behind the times. We should continue posting on the *Journal's* web site the abstracts of articles published in the *Journal*, or might even consider posting slightly longer "executive summaries" containing more detailed information.

Cross-Disciplinary Issues

The current issues surrounding agriculture and their expected future evolution—from the funding of research, education, and extension programs to the internalization of socially driven factors in the economic decision-making process at all levels and the increased role of state-level decision making induced by federal decentralization—cry out for attention. I believe there needs to be an increased emphasis on "regional coordination" among states and across disciplines of agricultural-related teaching, research, and extension activities. This suggests that breaking away from SAAS would send the wrong message in that it would confirm to many outside agricultural economics that we are indeed too discipline oriented.

There are many excellent examples of the contributions that agricultural economists have made and can make to multidisciplinary, interdisciplinary, and transdisciplinary applied research, teaching, and extension efforts. The survey results indicate, however, that the SAEA membership perceives that the Association's activities have not been an effective vehicle to foster communication on these types of activities. Unfortunately, the stimulation of these types of activities, and their inclusion in the meetings' program or in the *Journal's* pages cannot be mandated. Rather, these activities individually and collectively need to be actively encouraged by all of us.

Increased coordination of teaching, research, and extension activities across both state boundaries and disciplines will become the norm, rather than the exception, as we move on and enter the 21st century. These cross-disciplinary efforts can be expected to

contribute effectively toward the enhancement not only of our own discipline, but also of other participants' disciplinary programs. Furthermore, increased *ex ante* (rather than *ex post*) and proactive (rather than reactive) programs and activities appear to be a necessity for the future. SAEA's activities can have a positive impact on the fostering of these types of activities, and in the exchange of communication needed to enhance them. The breadth and diversity of the SAAS meetings are a valuable asset to the membership and must be used to our advantage. If we think such concerns are challenging within agricultural economics, just speak to anyone in any of the agricultural biological sciences to discover their struggles on both the justification and accountability of their programs. There is no need here for David Letterman's top 10 reasons on why agricultural economists should individually and collectively get involved in these types of cross-disciplinary activities. The number one reason is: *We are it!* No one else in the agricultural arena is as well prepared as we are to contribute toward the enhancement of cross-disciplinary teaching, research, and extension activities in agriculture. My own cross-disciplinary research experience tells me that unconditional cooperation, open communication, mutual trust, and respect are keys to the success of these types of efforts.

The future is uncertain, indefinite, undefined, "seen through a glass dimly," if at all. However, there are two things about which I am quite certain. First (hoping that I do not

spoil it for him), if Cal Ripken, Jr., plays opening day this upcoming baseball season, he will be playing at least 162 games! Second, in order to assure the future viability of SAEA, coasting is not an option. There is a continuing need to work actively toward the enhancement of the relevance of our profession and our organization if we intend to live up to SAEA's purposes and objectives set forth by the charter members.

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Appendix A: Survey Response Summary Tables

Table A1. Responses of Charter Members to Survey Statements Associated with Reasons for Formation of SAEA

Survey Question: *As you know, SAEA was formed by you and 518 other charter members from the Agricultural Economics and Rural Sociology Section, and the Marketing Section of the Association of Southern Agricultural Workers (ASAW, renamed in 1972 as the Southern Association of Agricultural Scientists, SAAS) in 1968. Based on your thinking at that time, please rate each of the following statements:*

| Survey Statement | Mean Response ^a (Likert Scale) | Overall Response Rank ^b |
|---|--|------------------------------------|
| (a) SAEA was formed to foster increased interaction among southern agricultural economists. | 1.06 [†] (66) | 1 |
| (b) The formation of SAEA was needed to increase the number of publication outlets, i.e., the <i>Southern Journal of Agricultural Economics (SJAE)</i> , for agricultural economics issues. | 1.19 (67) | 2 |
| (c) The formation of SAEA was needed to establish a publication outlet (<i>SJAE</i>) with a southern focus. | 1.53 (65) | 4 |
| (d) The formation of SAEA was needed to enhance the understanding of agricultural economics issues in the South. | 1.41 (67) | 3 |
| (e) The formation of SAEA was needed to enhance southern agricultural economists' teaching competence. | 2.17 (64) | 9 |
| (f) The formation of SAEA was needed to enhance southern agricultural economists' competence in conducting research. | 1.68 (66) | 5 |
| (g) The formation of SAEA was needed to enhance southern agricultural economists' competence in extension activities. | 1.98 (65) | 7 |
| (h) The formation of SAEA was needed to enhance relationships between agricultural economists and agricultural industry. | 2.03 (66) | 8 |
| (i) The formation of SAEA was needed to enhance relationships between agricultural economists and government agencies. | 1.95 [‡] (66) | 6 |

Note: Rating choices were based on a three-point Likert scale, where 1 = agree, 2 = somewhat agree, and 3 = disagree.
^a For "Mean Response" columns: Numbers in parentheses represent the number of responses on which the mean response is based; [†] indicates group response with the lowest variance, and [‡] indicates group response with the highest variance.

^b Ranked from highest level of agreement (1) to lowest (9).

Table A2. Responses of Charter Members and Other Members to Survey Statements Associated with Impacts of SAEA Meetings on Professional Development

Survey Question: *I would like to know your views on the impacts that the SAEA meetings have had on your professional development. Please rate each of the following statements:*

| Survey Statement | Group Mean Responses ^{a,b} (Likert Scale) | | | | Overall Mean Response ^a (Likert Scale) | Overall Response Rank ^c |
|---|---|--|-------------------------------------|--|--|------------------------------------|
| | Charter Members | All Professors | Indust., Gov. Agency & Other | | | |
| (a) Interaction at the SAEA meetings has had a significant impact on my professional development. | 1.72 (61) | 1.76 (138) | 2.00 (20) | | 1.77 (219) | 3 |
| (b) Interaction at the SAEA meetings has had a significant impact on my ability to redirect my professional interests. | 2.05 (57) | 2.26 (131) | 2.30 (20) | | 2.21 (208) | 7 |
| (c) Interaction at the SAEA meetings has had a significant impact on my ability to establish professional relationships with other agricultural economists. | 1.54 (64) | 1.45 (137) | 1.77 (22) | | 1.51 (223) | 2 |
| (d) The SAEA meetings have been a good vehicle to share my teaching experiences. | 2.25 (47) ^A | 2.28 (107) ^A | 2.80 [†] (5) ^B | | 2.29 (159) | 9 |
| (e) The SAEA meetings have been a good vehicle to share my research experiences and findings. | 1.44 (58) ^A | 1.39 [†] (132) ^A | 1.94 (18) ^B | | 1.45 [†] (208) | 1 |
| (f) The SAEA meetings have been a good vehicle to share my extension experiences and findings. | 1.90 [†] (20) ^A | 1.85 (49) ^A | 2.50 (10) ^B | | 1.94 (79) | 6 |
| (g) The SAEA meetings have been valuable in my professional advancement. | 1.74 (59) ^A | 1.75 (136) ^A | 2.22 (22) ^B | | 1.80 (217) | 4 |
| (h) The SAEA meetings have proven to be more valuable in my professional advancement than those of other regional agricultural economics associations. | 1.83 [†] (55) ^A | 1.94 [†] (131) ^{A,B} | 2.35 [†] (20) ^B | | 1.95 [†] (206) | 5 |
| (i) The SAEA meetings have proven to be more valuable in my professional advancement than those of AAEEA. | 2.29 (61) | 2.57 (140) | 2.61 (21) | | 2.50 (222) | 10 |
| (j) The SAEA meetings have strengthened my multidisciplinary activity(ies)/program(s). | 2.20 (58) | 2.45 (120) | 2.47 (19) | | 2.38 (197) | 8 |

Note: Rating choices were based on a three-point Likert scale, where 1 = agree, 2 = somewhat agree, and 3 = disagree

^a For "Mean Response" columns: Numbers in parentheses represent the number of responses on which the mean response is based; [†] indicates group response with the lowest variance, and [‡] indicates group response with the highest variance.

^b No group mean responses by statement are statistically different at the 0.05 level of probability (Duncan's Multiple Range Test). However, in those instances where group mean responses by statement are significantly different at the 0.05 level of probability, means associated with the same superscript letter (i.e., A,A or B,B) are not significantly different.

^c Ranked from highest level of agreement (1) to lowest (10).

Table A3. Responses of Charter Members and Other Members to Survey Statements Associated with Impact of the *Journal* on Professional Development

Survey Question: *I would like to know your views on the impact that the SIAE (now the Journal of Agricultural and Applied Economics, JAAE), referred to as the Journal below, has had on your professional development. Please rate each of the following statements:*

| Survey Statement | Group Mean Responses ^{a,b} (Likert Scale) | | | | Overall Mean Response ^a (Likert Scale) | Overall Response Rank ^c |
|---|---|-------------------------|------------------------------|-------------------------|--|------------------------------------|
| | Charter Members | All Professors | Indust., Gov. Agency & Other | | | |
| (a) The <i>Journal</i> has had a significant impact on my professional development. | 1.96 (65) ^{A,B} | 1.81 (159) ^A | 2.21 (33) ^B | 1.90 (257) | 4 | |
| (b) The <i>Journal</i> has had a significant impact on my ability to redirect my professional interests. | 2.38 (60) | 2.36 (150) | 2.48 (29) | 2.38 (239) | 7 | |
| (c) The <i>Journal</i> has been a good vehicle to share my teaching experiences and views. | 2.65 [†] (44) | 2.64 [†] (110) | 2.88 (9) | 2.66 [†] (163) | 10 | |
| (d) The <i>Journal</i> has been a good vehicle to share my research program findings. | 1.65 (61) ^A | 1.57 (146) ^A | 2.23 (21) ^B | 1.65 (228) | 2 | |
| (e) The <i>Journal</i> has been a good vehicle to share my extension program findings. | 2.61 (21) | 2.54 (61) | 2.84 [†] (13) | 2.60 (95) | 9 | |
| (f) The <i>Journal</i> has been valuable in my professional advancement. | 1.92 (63) ^{A,B} | 1.80 (158) ^A | 2.20 (25) ^B | 1.87 (246) | 3 | |
| (g) The <i>Journal</i> has proven to be more valuable in my professional advancement than the journals of other regional agricultural economics associations. | 2.08 (59) | 2.21 [†] (153) | 2.42 (26) | 2.20 [†] (238) | 5 | |
| (h) The <i>Journal</i> has proven to be more valuable in my professional advancement than the <i>AJAE</i> . | 2.30 [†] (63) | 2.33 (157) | 2.42 [†] (28) | 2.33 (248) | 6 | |
| (i) The <i>Journal</i> has been given appropriate weight by my employer(s) in my professional advancement. | 1.66 (54) ^A | 1.48 (136) ^A | 2.50 (16) ^B | 1.61 (206) | 1 | |
| (j) The <i>Journal</i> has strengthened my multidisciplinary activity(ies)/program(s). | 2.35 (59) | 2.52 (136) | 2.45 (22) | 2.47 (217) | 8 | |

Note: Rating choices were based on a three-point Likert scale, where 1 = agree, 2 = somewhat agree, and 3 = disagree.
^a For "Mean Response" columns: Numbers in parentheses represent the number of responses on which the mean response is based; [†] indicates group response with the lowest variance, and [‡] indicates group response with the highest variance.
^b No group mean responses by statement are statistically different at the 0.05 level of probability (Duncan's Multiple Range Test). However, in those instances where group mean responses by statement are significantly different with the same superscript letter (i.e., A,A or B,B) are not significantly different.
^c Ranked from highest level of agreement (1) to lowest (10).

Table A4. Responses of Charter Members and Other Members to Survey Statements Associated with Relevance of SAEA Activities

Survey Question: *Given your participation in SAEA-sponsored activities (such as the annual meetings, and the S/JAE/JAAE), I would like to know your views on the relevance of these activities. Please rate each of the following statements:*

| Survey Statement | Group Mean Responses ^{ab} (Likert Scale) | | | | Overall Mean Response ^a (Likert Scale) | Overall Response Rank ^c |
|--|--|---------------------------|-------------------------------------|--|--|------------------------------------|
| | Charter Members | All Professors | Indust., Gov. Agency & Other | | | |
| (a) SAEA activities are a good vehicle for the professional advancement of undergraduate students. | 1.79 [†] (62) | 1.87 (135) | 1.60 (20) | | 1.82 (217) | 7 |
| (b) SAEA activities are a good vehicle for the professional advancement of graduate students. | 1.31 (64) | 1.31 [†] (149) | 1.50 (28) | | 1.33 [†] (241) | 1 |
| (c) SAEA activities are a good vehicle for the professional advancement of faculty members. | 1.28 (64) | 1.34 (152) | 1.42 [†] (26) | | 1.33 (242) | 2 |
| (d) SAEA activities are a good vehicle for the professional advancement of agricultural economists working in industry. | 1.80 (57) ^A | 2.08 (115) ^{A,B} | 2.33 [†] (27) ^B | | 2.04 (199) | 9 |
| (e) SAEA activities are a good vehicle for the professional advancement of agricultural economists working in government agencies. | 1.48 (58) ^A | 1.55 (122) ^A | 1.89 (29) ^B | | 1.58 (209) | 5 |
| (f) The breadth of the current SAEA awards program (teaching, outstanding JAAE publication, extension, lifetime achievement, poster, graduate student paper awards) has been effective in recognizing outstanding contributions of SAEA members. | 1.36 (60) ^A | 1.41 (141) ^A | 1.72 (22) ^B | | 1.43 (223) | 3 |
| (g) The breadth of the current SAEA awards program (teaching, outstanding JAAE publication, extension, lifetime achievement, poster, graduate student paper awards) has been effective in recognizing outstanding multidisciplinary contributions of SAEA members. | 1.88 (60) | 2.08 [†] (133) | 1.87 (24) | | 2.00 [†] (217) | 8 |
| (h) SAEA activities have been effective in addressing important issues to the South. | 1.51 [†] (62) | 1.52 (143) | 1.76 (30) | | 1.55 (235) | 4 |
| (i) The relevance of the <i>Journal</i> to southern agriculture has been strong. | 1.61 (63) | 1.66 (143) | 1.63 (30) | | 1.64 (236) | 6 |

Note: Rating choices were based on a three-point Likert scale, where 1 = agree, 2 = somewhat agree, and 3 = disagree.

^a For "Mean Response" columns: Numbers in parentheses represent the number of responses on which the mean response is based; [†] indicates group response with the lowest variance, and [†] indicates group response with the highest variance.

^b No group mean responses by statement are statistically different at the 0.05 level of probability (Duncan's Multiple Range Test). However, in those instances where group mean responses by statement are significantly different at the 0.05 level of probability, means associated with the same superscript letter (i.e., A,A or B,B) are not significantly different.

^c Ranked from highest level of agreement (1) to lowest (9).

Table A5. Responses of Charter Members and Other Members to Survey Statements Associated with Positioning of SAEA in the Future

Survey Question: Please rate each of the following statements with respect to how we can position SAEA to better serve our clientele in the future:

| Survey Statement | Group Mean Responses ^{ab} (Likert Scale) | | | | Overall Mean Response ^a (Likert Scale) | Overall Response Rank ^c |
|--|--|-------------------------|-------------------------------------|--|--|------------------------------------|
| | Charter Members | All Professors | Indust., Gov. Agency & Other | | | |
| (a) The SAEA meetings should have an increased emphasis on southern issues. | 1.84 (66) | 2.05 ⁺ (154) | 1.81 (32) | | 1.97 (252) | 13 |
| (b) JAAE should have an increased emphasis on southern issues. | 1.92 (67) ^A | 2.27 (158) ^B | 1.87 ⁺ (32) ^A | | 2.13 ⁺ (257) | 15 |
| (c) SAEA should make special efforts to include teaching-related sessions at the meetings. | 1.37 (62) ^A | 1.29 (153) ^A | 1.68 (25) ^B | | 1.35 (240) | 3 |
| (d) SAEA should make special efforts to include extension-related sessions at the meetings. | 1.26 (63) | 1.27 (150) | 1.36 (30) | | 1.28 (243) | 1 |
| (e) SAEA should foster and sponsor multidisciplinary interactions with other southern scientist associations. | 1.47 (67) | 1.50 (156) | 1.33 (33) | | 1.47 (256) | 7 |
| (f) SAEA should foster and sponsor joint activities with southern regional projects. | 1.55 (63) | 1.50 (154) | 1.32 (34) | | 1.49 (251) | 8 |
| (g) SAEA should foster and sponsor the creation of appropriate "task forces" to address issues of interest to the South. | 1.40 (66) | 1.62 (154) | 1.48 (33) | | 1.54 (253) | 9 |
| (h) SAEA activities should be broadened to attract agricultural industry professional workers. | 1.28 (63) | 1.34 ⁺ (155) | 1.14 ⁺ (34) | | 1.30 ⁺ (252) | 2 |
| (i) SAEA activities should be broadened to attract other than just "agriculturalists" (i.e., nonagricultural industry, consumer groups, environmental groups, etc.). | 1.74 (66) | 1.70 (157) | 1.73 (34) | | 1.71 (257) | 11 |
| (j) The "new" <i>Review of Agricultural Economics</i> (co-sponsored with AAEA and other regional associations) is a good step toward broadening the scope of the SAEA. | 1.26 ⁺ (64) | 1.36 (153) | 1.53 (32) | | 1.36 (249) | 4 |
| (k) The SAEA awards program should include an M.S. thesis award. | 1.37 (64) | 1.44 (154) | 1.41 (31) | | 1.42 (249) | 6 |
| (l) The SAEA awards program should include a Ph.D. dissertation award. | 1.37 (64) | 1.45 (155) | 1.34 (32) | | 1.41 (251) | 5 |
| (m) SAEA should co-sponsor with SAAS the enactment of a multidisciplinary award. | 1.73 (67) | 1.64 (148) | 1.71 (32) | | 1.68 (247) | 10 |

Table A5. (Continued)

Survey Question: Please rate each of the following statements with respect to how we can position SAEA to better serve our clientele in the future:

| Survey Statement | Group Mean Responses ^{a,b} (Likert Scale) | | | | Overall Mean Response ^a (Likert Scale) | Overall Response Rank ^c |
|--|---|----------------|------------------------------|------------|--|------------------------------------|
| | Charter Members | All Professors | Indust., Gov. Agency & Other | | | |
| (n) The SAEA awards program should include an "SAEA Student Mentorship Award" | 1.80 (67) | 1.99 (147) | 1.82 (29) | 1.92 (243) | 12 | |
| (o) The SAEA awards program should include an "SAEA Professional Mentorship Award" | 1.90 (66) | 2.06 (146) | 2.03 (29) | 2.02 (241) | 14 | |
| (p) The SAEA awards program should include an "SAEA Grantsmanship Award" | 2.26 [‡] (65) | 2.48 (148) | 2.50 (32) | 2.42 (245) | 16 | |

Note: Rating choices were based on a three-point Likert scale, where 1 = agree, 2 = somewhat agree, and 3 = disagree.

^a For "Mean Response" columns: Numbers in parentheses represent the number of responses on which the mean response is based; [†] indicates group response with the lowest variance, and [‡] indicates group response with the highest variance.

^b No group mean responses by statement are statistically different at the 0.05 level of probability (Duncan's Multiple Range Test). However, in those instances where group mean responses by statement are significantly different at the 0.05 level of probability, means associated with the same superscript letter (i.e., A,A or B,B) are not significantly different.

^c Ranked from highest level of agreement (1) to lowest (16).

Appendix B: Selected Volunteer Responses to Open-Ended Questions, 1997 SAEA Membership Survey

What changes will the profession of Agricultural Economics need to make in the next 30 years?

- Become relevant to today's and tomorrow's issues. Engage in true multidisciplinary work without worrying about who gets credit or who makes the first move. Talk with, and respect each other.
- Support more relevant, problem-oriented research. Encourage teaching and extension excellence.
- More application to problems/issues, more agribusiness, international trade, and natural resource management attention. The way we are going, we will not survive 30 years as a profession.
- Relevancy and deep involvement with other disciplines, private sector, etc. Broaden definition of agricultural economics to what it is—Applied Economics.
- The profession needs to continually strive to be relevant to real economic problems and issues, and resist the powerful tendency to focus on narrow “inside-the-profession” concerns.
- Must become more relevant to real-world issues, be more anticipatory, more competitive with other fields, and take lead in multidisciplinary work.

How can SAEA serve the profession in making those changes?

- Provide the rallying point and the professional stimulation to ensure the highest integrity and performance of the professional generations of the future.
- Continue to provide a forum for quality dialogue among professional agricultural economists while avoiding the fads that are always before us. This is no easy task and it requires us to stay focused on economics as we look at our changing world.
- Encourage sound, responsible, relevant research. Help recognize outstanding teachers and extension programs.
- Invite speakers who will promote/disseminate the word about SAEA. Identify groups who really need us—environmental, consumer, and other disciplines.
- More emphasis on teaching and the integration of teaching and research. Take risks, be innovative, and be willing to fail. The AAEA has too much inertia.

- Facilitate more multidisciplinary interactions, i.e., extension, teaching, research, and the private sector.

How can we enhance the attractiveness of the SAEA meetings to increase participation/attendance?

- Appeal to agribusiness and policy matters.
- Reach out, actively, to nonacademic agricultural economists. Have annual meetings in interesting tourist locations.
- Choose a more attractive location; advertise prominent guest speakers.
- Suggest more thematic meetings, with strong interdisciplinary components.
- Relevance, broader representation of “agriculture industry”—move away from “land-grant” network.
- Broaden program to attract and keep extension and teaching as well as research.

Are there any other issues that you would like to address?

- The nature of our industry is changing—yet our profession and our associations aren't keeping pace.
- We remain very much in the development business since food is a basic human need with about one in five of the world's people malnourished. Our big challenge is how to keep agricultural productivity up so as to keep real food prices steady or declining, and yet permit food producers a good living. Human capital is so important, and yet our end sets are declining. SAEA must help foster human capital in the rural sector.
- Need to strengthen “graduate student” activities. We should probably separate presentations by graduate students from professionals.
- Overall, I think SAEA is doing pretty well, and I believe we are the strongest regional association.
- May need to develop workshops in key areas to enhance professional development. Develop special programs in teaching to draw more heavily from a cross-section of universities. In Lexington, a few years ago, we had a highly successful teaching workshop.
- If the profession does not broaden what it brands/accepts as professional, you'll be able to hold annual meetings in a telephone booth long before 2028 (30 years).

