



President, Association for Evolutionary Economics, February 1, 2021

Dear AFEE Members,

I hope the new year finds you well and safe. COVID-19 marks a turning point in how we interact, both with each other and with our students. The virtual nature of the ASSA conference enabled us to see old faces, hear each other's research, and stimulate new ideas. But it also impeded audience participation. And I miss the personal contacts; I miss the conversations in the hallway where, as Bill Waller notes, some of the more interesting ideas emerge. And I miss the comradery. Hopefully, next year will bring us in personal contact, without the accompaniment of Covid-19.

The rise of the Fascist element and attempted coup in the United States disturbs us all. If anything, it reveals the shortcomings of our educational system, the inability of some to discern fact from fiction. "Fool me a 1000 times, I must be a Trump supporter."

A warm congratulations to the various award winners. Deborah Figart, winner of the Veblen-Commons Award, gave a rousing talk reminding us of what we have accomplished as a society, what we have not, and what we have yet to do. Congratulations to Smita Srinivas winner of the Clarence E. Ayres award; Ramón Vincente García Fernánde, winner of the James H. Street Award; and Geoffrey E. Schneider, winner of the AFEE Service Award. Also, congratulations to Jon Wisman and Quentin Duroy for receiving the Editor's Choice for the Outstanding Article to appear in the *JEI* in 2020. The paper is titled "The Proletarianization of the Professoriate and the Threat to Free Expression, Creativity, and Economic Dynamism," *JEI* 54(3) September 2020, 876-894. And thanks to Chris Brown for leading this organization this past year. A special thanks to Eric Hake, whose hard work enables AFEE to function. Thanks to those too numerous to mention who have undertaken various tasks. It is much appreciated.

On a sad note, we lost a valued member of our community, John Henry. At the Chicago conference a few years ago, John asked me with his characteristic levity where the wives were (I hail from Salt Lake City). We laughed. His humor, efforts to mentor new scholars, and generosity in highlighting others' work sets an example for us all. Rest in peace my friend.

On another note, please renew your membership to AFEE. Like everything, our organization is evolving. We are increasingly global, a positive development. And while we have a dedicated membership, our numbers are declining, partly because of the pandemic, partly for other reasons. We are a community of some 200 plus that sponsors a journal having over 60,000 downloads. Our rejection rate exceeds 90%. The *Journal of Economic Issues* is remarkable for its quality, its readability, and the message that it conveys, that we can change the world for the better. Thanks to our editor Bill Waller, the board, the reviewers and, of course, the AFEE membership.

Our lack of presence in graduate schools, however, is noticeable. To encourage new members, the board agreed to continue to help fund the awards for the best student papers at the Association for Institutional Thought conference in April. In addition, AFEE will provide the awardees a year membership and a year subscription to the *JEI*.

To further promote AFEE, I want to remind you of the Committee for Regional and International Conferences (CRIC). This committee considers requests for travel funds to conferences (besides the ASSA) for those who have been *members for at least three years* to present papers at *CRIC approved sessions*. After in-person conferences resume and assuming you lack other sources of funding, consider submitting your request to Mary Wrenn, President Elect and chair of CRIC.

While the committee appointments have been made, the appendix will be forthcoming and posted on AFEE's website including the bylaws, and the Awards, Nomination, Membership, Finance, and Publications and Communications Committee Assignments.

Best wishes for a healthy, productive, and enlightening year. And thank you for your commitment to making the world better, kinder, and gentler.

john

John Watkins
President, AFEE 2021