Keith Coble is a Giles Distinguished Professor and Head of the Agricultural Economics Department at Mississippi State University. Previously, Coble worked at USDA Economic Research Service and studied at Texas A&M and the University of Missouri. Coble focuses on risk management, agricultural policy, insurance, and precision agriculture. Within the profession, Coble served on the Board of Directors of AAEA (2012-2015) and as Associate Editor of the AJAE (2008-2011). He has chaired the FAMPS and Applied Risk Analysis sections of the AAEA. Recently, he served as the Chair of the ‘Big Ag Data’ committee for C-FARE and on the AAEA Government Relations Committee. Coble has testified before Congressional Committees on three occasions and served as a Chief Economist for the Senate Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry Committee. Coble has published over 80 scientific research journal articles. Coble also received the Bruce Gardner Award from the USDA Economists Group for policy analysis.

What are the biggest challenges and opportunities for AAEA?
The AAEA must remain relevant to our members and to potential new members. As a professional society we must listen to our membership and build upon the strengths of the AAEA. Our professional meetings and scientific journals must be maintained and made to flourish. The leadership of the association needs to recognize the evolution of our profession and the work of our discipline. In particular we need to address the needs of students and younger members so that we maintain relevance into the future. We face competition from other professional societies and we need to be agile enough to adapt to changes in the discipline. Having mentioned several challenges, I can think of no time in my 30 year career where I was more excited about the AAEA and its opportunities than right now.

What actions would you initiate to address the challenges and opportunities described in your response to the previous question?
I served on the AAEA Board during the 2014 strategic planning exercise. Among the issues addressed were initiatives for mentoring, communicating out to others about the profession, and improved government relations. These efforts have been established and need to continue going forward. We need to continue to evaluate adding new AAEA sections as the interests of members change. Sections empower our members and provide leadership growth opportunities within our membership. Actions I propose include: (1) continue implementation of the 2014 strategic plan. (2) Enhance the reputation of our journals and meetings and maintain the financial viability of our journal publishing contracts. (3) Increase the involvement and activities of members and students at our meetings. (4) Encourage more AAEA sponsored symposia, and (5) Intensify efforts to attract a diverse membership including more international members.

At the end of your three-year term, what changes/new initiatives would you have helped create?
By the end of my term, I would expect our profession will have reviewed the 2014 strategic plan and see if revisions or a new plan is needed. I will judge AAEA performance based on attendance at our annual meetings and the impact factors of our journals. It would also be my goal for the stature of our association to rise within the economics discipline and the placement of our students enhanced. I would consider it a success if the AAEA would have added new applied economics sub-disciplines if they fill a niche and complement our current membership. Finally, I would expect to have created greater awareness and respect for our profession by government and industry leaders.