

## Board of Director Maria I. Marshall, Purdue University



Maria Marshall holds the James and Lois Ackerman Professorship in Agricultural Economics at Purdue University and is the Director of the North Central Regional Center for Rural Development. She earned her Ph.D. from Kansas State University, M.A. from the University of Missouri-Kansas City, and B.A. from the University of Nebraska-Omaha.

She served as Chair of CWAE and Chair of the Extension Section, where she also coordinated the Graduate Student Extension Competition. Her editorial roles include Co-Editor of *Choices*, and Area Editor of *JAAEA*. She has served as panel manager for USDA-AFRI programs, specifically the Beginner Farmer Rancher Development Program and Economics, Markets, and Trade. Recent AAEA awards include: the 2020 AAEA Distinguished Extension/Outreach Program Award for Individuals more than 10 Years and the 2024 AAEA Distinguished Extension/Outreach

Program Award for Group achievement. She takes pride in mentoring students and junior faculty, many of whom have gone on to successful careers.

### **Vision for AAEA**

While AAEA faces several challenges in the coming decade, I want to focus on the recruitment and retention of young scholars. In my role on the AAEA Board, I would like to promote two parallel actions: improving the new member experience and initiating a doctoral consortium.

The current system of numerous sections can overwhelm newcomers. To address this challenge, I'd like to suggest two potential programs: 1) digital section guides where we could create concise video introductions and infographics for each section, accessible prior to conferences to help members identify relevant communities and 2) a section ambassador program where experienced members welcome newcomers to the sections, explaining section focuses, and make targeted introductions based on their interests.

A structured doctoral consortium would build both peer networks and mentorship relationships while orienting students to the full spectrum of agricultural and applied economics fields of study. The initiative would: 1) facilitate connections among doctoral students from different universities who share research interests, creating an academic generation of potential future collaborators; 2) expose participants to the multifaceted nature of modern scholarship—balancing teaching, research, engagement, and service commitments; and 3) provide structured interaction with experienced professionals from diverse career paths within and beyond academia. It could develop into a Collaborative Research Incubator creating opportunities for cross-institutional team projects that could also result in conference presentations and publications.

By implementing these strategies, AAEA can create clear pathways for meaningful engagement, build supportive communities for emerging scholars, and ensure the continued vitality and relevance of the association for future generations.