Titus Awokuse is Professor and Chairperson in the Department of Agricultural, Food and Resource Economics at Michigan State University since 2015 and was Chairperson in the Department of Applied Economics at the University of Delaware (2011-2015). His research focuses on how international trade and food market liberalization enhance economic growth, improve food value chains, and promote food security in developing countries. Titus has been an active member of AAEA since 1997. He served on the AAEA Priorities and Solutions Steering Committee and was chair of both the National Association of Agricultural Economics Administrators (NAAEA) section and the Galbraith Forum and Awards Committee. He now serves on the AAEA Trust Committee. He was co-editor of Agricultural and Resource Economics Review (2007-2010) and served on the editorial board of several journals. He is on the Executive Board of the International Agricultural Trade Research Consortium (IATRC). He earned his Ph.D. in Agricultural and Applied Economics from Texas A&M University.

What is the biggest concern or problem facing the AAEA?
Despite improvements from recent AAEA initiatives, there remains important areas in need of more action. A persistent issue is the challenge of becoming more inclusive in creating professional development opportunities for an increasingly diverse membership. The Association can grow in its inclusion of three groups (women, under-represented minorities, and early career professionals). As a department chair for a decade, I have heard these concerns expressed by all three groups. I have also been struck by important recent analysis by Jill McCluskey (and others) pointing to extreme under-representation of women (and minorities) as journal editors and editorial board members. While the Association is becoming more sensitive to these issues and has adopted some new initiatives that led to more leadership roles for these groups in AAEA sections, there is still very limited inclusion of women and underrepresented minorities at the mid and higher levels of the profession.

What action would you initiate to improve the situation described in your response to the previous question?
As a department chair for a decade in two departments, I have grappled with the issues of inclusion of women, minorities, and young faculty, and in collaboration with the faculty developed local solutions such as mentoring committees and incentives to serve on editorial boards. I am interested in serving as an AAEA Board member in order to encourage and work with others in creating association-wide solutions.

I will propose the following three initiatives:
1) Pursue expansion of the pipeline of early career professionals in the AAEA.
2) Advocate for an annual symposium/workshop that focuses on demystifying the journal editorial review and administrative process for AAEA members. Such initiative could address questions related to the peer-review process, qualifications and duties of editors, challenges faced by editors, and tips for becoming a member of an editorial leadership team.
3) Develop mechanism for more effective collaboration/communication between AAEA Board (and its extensions – journal editors) and department chair/heads on how to encourage and incentivize targeted nomination and mentoring of colleagues in their department for leadership roles in the profession.

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

While the AAEA has become more proactive in addressing important issues in recent years, we must continue to develop effective and sustainable institutional responses and solutions to the above problem, that are not just temporary and short-term focused, but rather focused on solutions for the long-run. By the end of my term, I would like to look back and observe successful implementation and achieve big gains in the three-pronged action plan above. Also, I would like to have helped the AAEA to complete a comprehensive review of our current mentoring initiatives with feedback from new and early career members and hope to have pinpointed and started initiatives to improve mentoring.