



American Institute for Southeast European Studies

www.aisees.org

AISEESorg@gmail.com

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I can't believe how fast 2021 has gone by! What a year!! I write to extend warm greetings to the members of the American Institute for Southeast European Studies (AISEES) and also to send you the year-end report of AISEES activities.

The Chair's report provides AISEES members with a more complete picture of AISEES activities and also serves as a means of communication directly with our members. The AISEES Bylaws provide for a Membership Committee (MC), consisting of one representative from each institutional member plus any individual member who wishes to contribute. The MC acts as a line of communication between members of the Institute and the Board of Trustees. I am planning to hold our first annual MC meeting in April, 2022. At this meeting, I will discuss our initiatives and future plans. I encourage you to join and contribute your own ideas on how to improve our organization, develop dynamic programs and expand our opportunities.

This year, we welcomed three new board members: Lauren Earl (background in fundraising and Romanian archeology), Mary Neuburger (University of Texas at Austin), and Dan Weiss (University of Virginia). We also bid farewell to Rick Record, one of AISEES's founding board members, who was instrumental in creating the Scholarship and Fellowship Committee. We wish him well as he pursues other activities. In 2021 AISEES elected a new slate of officers. I was elected Chair in May. At our fall meeting in September, Dan Weiss was elected Vice Chair, Lynn Roller was elected Treasurer, and Victor Petrov will serve as the new Chair of the Scholarship and Fellowship Committee. All will serve for three-year terms. There is a lot of renewed energy and excitement with these changes.

Despite COVID lockdowns and restrictions in many parts of the world, AISEES has found ways to continue supporting our mission. We awarded grants to our third group of American Fellows, who will conduct research programs in southeastern Europe during the next year. Eric DeSena, the North American Director of AISEES, hosted a series of eight online lectures in spring 2021, and AISEES hosted two online lectures jointly with our new overseas research center in Romania, ISTROS. Special thanks to Ioana and Lucian Muresan for all their work in helping to set up the Romanian organization. We look forward to the next series of exciting lectures in winter and spring 2022.

Plans for further growth in our organization are underway. We continue to work to set up and register an overseas research center in Bulgaria. Progress continues to be slow, as with any administrative bureaucracy. Once the center is open, we hope to expand our lecture series, and

we will be able to provide our members with additional assistance in contacting local scholars and help with access to libraries and research resources in Bulgaria.

Other priorities for growth include expanding our programs to offer a grant to support research by a senior or independent scholar. Currently, the fellowship program targets graduate students and junior scholars. We hope to share more details soon.

AISEES is also developing closer ties with other cultural organizations that promote research in southeastern Europe. We already have an affiliation with the Balkan Heritage Foundation, an organization that sponsors a variety of projects in archaeology and conservation. AISEES also contributes to the North of Byzantium research group, which promotes scholarship on the history and art of southeastern Europe during the medieval and early modern periods. We are working with ARIT (the American Research Institute in Turkey) to develop a lecture series that draws on the joint cultural ties between Turkey and southeastern Europe. We are especially excited to report that AISEES preparing to submit an application for membership in the Council of American Overseas Research Centers (CAORC). AISEES is working with Richard Spees, the Executive Director of CAORC, and Heidi Wiederkehr, the Deputy Director, to develop our application package. As a CAORC member, we will become the representative for Southeast Europe studies, a region that currently has no presence in CAORC. This will enable scholars from AISEES member institutions to take full advantage of CAORC programs, including applying for CAORC Fellowships. Affiliation with CAORC will provide another incentive to become a member of AISEES!

The financial picture of AISEES is strong. AISEES is fortunate to have a healthy endowment, about \$775,000 as of December 2021. As a non-profit 501(c)(3) corporation, we also need balanced support from other resources; these include institutional and individual membership dues and donations from our supporting institutions and friends of AISEES. We met our fundraising goal of 2021, and under the leadership of Lauren Earl, we have expanded our fundraising campaign for 2022. We now have nine institutional members and 30 friends! A list of the AISEES members and donors can be found on our web site, <https://aisees.org/about/aisees-members/>. We are grateful to you for your support and we hope that you will be able to renew your membership and continue supporting AISEES in the future.

I will end this report with some remarks about a beginning. In his introduction, Dan Weiss described the reason for joining the board: Southeast European Scholars are often described as the outliers, the ‘misfits’, whenever we attend large conferences or search for courses at universities. We are the small group that gathers and excitedly proclaims something interesting about the Balkans. AISEES eagerly wants to be that “go-to” organization, the one that supports research initiatives focusing on Southeastern Europe in all chronological periods. AISEES is proud to host the “band of misfits”, those that are not well represented in American universities or conferences. There is a place for you, a community of scholars who share your same interests. With your help we can continue to promote the cultural heritage and contemporary issues of this fascinating region.

With best wishes for the upcoming year,

Cynthia A. Lintz
Chair, Board of Trustees
American Institute for Southeast European Studies