On the first of February, I officially became president-elect of the AMS. At the time, I had no inkling of the challenges we would be facing two months later. I spent the past several days participating via Zoom in the spring meeting of the AMS Executive Committee and Board of Trustees (ECBT). This was the first ECBT meeting since the start of the pandemic. The experience was grueling (endless hours on Zoom), sobering, yet at the same time, inspiring. The discussions at the meeting were a stark reminder of the challenges the organization faces in navigating the fallout from this crisis. But they were also a reminder of the amazing commitment, concern, and compassion of everyone involved in the organization, both the AMS staff and the community of mathematicians who volunteer to serve the AMS.

I recently looked back at the June 2019 issue of the Notices where current president Jill Pipher’s ”A Word From…” article appears. In her article, she highlights a variety of programs the AMS operates for the benefit of graduate students and early-career mathematicians. I fully agree that these are some of the most important programs the AMS sponsors. But this is only the beginning. Beyond that, the AMS supports us in many ways throughout our career, both directly through meetings, publications, and fellowships designed to advance research, and indirectly by representing the interests of the mathematics community in government and other professional societies. In addition, the AMS provides widely used resources such as MathSciNet and MathJobs. Until I got involved in AMS governance a decade ago, I had no idea of the breadth of activities the AMS supports or the size of their staff. I suspect that the same is true for many of you. Did you know, for example, that the AMS has an office in Washington whose primary focus is on advocating for significant and sustained funding to support research and education in mathematics? Let me suggest that you go to the AMS website and cruise the impressive portfolio of programs and events that the AMS organizes and funds.

Which brings me to the current crisis. While the pandemic has required and will continue to require major adjustments to many of these activities, the role of the AMS in supporting mathematicians is more essential than ever during these difficult times. This is especially true for those just entering the job market or currently in non-tenure-track positions. In the next few months, the AMS will need to focus much attention on the best way to modify the services and events they normally provide, and find new ways to support those in our community who need it the most. That process is already underway. At the same time, we must not lose sight of longer-term goals, such as increasing diversity in our community and assuring continued government support for research in mathematics.

This is my second stint with AMS governance, having served on the ECBT for close to ten years in the past. I genuinely enjoyed those sessions as they were a chance to meet and interact with a broad range of colleagues from across the profession. There was always time to socialize during and after meetings, to share a dinner and a glass of wine. When I was asked to run for president of the AMS last year, I agreed because I believe that the organization plays an important role in supporting the mathematics community and I wanted to be part of that endeavor. But admittedly, the social aspects of the job were also an appeal. After spending the last few days in a marathon Zoom meeting, I am acutely aware that the social component of these meetings has been temporarily suspended; it would be a stretch to call them enjoyable. But now more than ever, the AMS needs to find creative ways to support the community. I look forward to working with the amazing team of AMS staff members and volunteers toward that goal.

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1 The opinions expressed here are not necessarily those of the Notices or the AMS.