



## The Globalization of Athletic Training and Athletic Therapy Education: Special Guest Editor Welcome

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**A**s a young athletic training professional who has just finished her first year as a full-time faculty in Japan after more than a decade spent in the United States, I am humbled to serve as the guest editor of this special issue on the globalization of athletic training and reflect on the progress made in global athletic training education. This opportunity has given me a chance to reflect on my international experience and the related educational path that helped shape my professional career.

My passion for athletic training first developed when as a teenager I spent 4 years living in the United States and was exposed to athletic training as an injured athlete. I was intrigued by the support system and culture that existed even at the youth sports level, because such a concept was not popular in Japan at that time. When I returned to Japan, I continued to play sports in high school, but by then, I was determined to study and pursue a career in athletic training. One of the pivotal moments in my professional life was when I attended the open house at Waseda University and met Chiaki Nakamura, now a retired certified athletic trainer (AT), who became my undergraduate mentor. At the time, Waseda University was one of the few programs that offered courses in athletic training. Little did I know that it was also one of the few programs that was taught by sports medicine professionals with varying credentials; including Board of Certification–certified ATs, Japan Sports Association–certified ATs, licensed physical therapists, and licensed massage therapists, along with sports medicine physicians with a vast range of specializations, from internal medicine to orthopaedic surgery. I believe my undergraduate class was also the first generation of athletic training students in Japan who received schooling from athletic training PhDs, because the number of athletic training faculty with a doctoral degree was very limited at the time.

By the time I was preparing my bachelor's thesis project, I had no doubt about pursuing a master's degree in the United States to get certified and licensed as an AT. This decision was greatly influenced by the exposure to American athletic training education and philosophy I had received from the Board of Certification–certified ATs throughout my undergraduate years in Japan. It was not an easy task to pursue a degree abroad, but Dr Jefferey A. Bonacci, the program director at the University of Arkansas, welcomed me with open arms to pursue this dream.

During my master's years, I also found a passion for research, which has given me the lifelong goal of promoting the value of athletic training through research and education. The aspiration to become an AT-researcher brought me to another pivotal moment in my professional life, which was the opportunity to work at the Korey Stringer Institute and have Dr Douglas J. Casa mentor me in my doctoral studies.

My identity as an AT, researcher, and educator was shaped by all of the aforementioned institutions and international experiences. I recognize that I was fortunate enough to be in a generation of international ATs who were provided the opportunity to go beyond their home borders to receive athletic training education while also receiving athletic training education domestically. Now we are starting to see more AT PhDs from outside the United States, like myself, becoming educators for the next generation of AT students in their respective countries. This truly demonstrates a “full circle” of AT education and international growth of our profession, and I am looking forward to seeing our profession continue to expand and adapt in various countries around the world.

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### Full Citation:

Hosokawa Y. Special issue on globalization of athletic training. *Athl Train Educ J*. 2019;14(4):240.