

Column: AT Education Listserv Highlights

Donald Fuller, PhD, ATC
University of Findlay, Findlay, OH

The following is a brief review of selected topics discussed on the Athletic Training Education listserv. It is not necessary to be a member of this listserv to access the archived messages and discussions. To view this listserv, to go
http://health.groups.yahoo.com/group/athletic_training_education. To post messages you must join the listserv.

Athletic Training Education Doctorate (March 30, 2007 – 22 postings)

There are several schools that offer education, experience, and research in athletic training education. There are several factors that help determine which schools to attend. The name of the major (i.e., pedagogy, physical education, educational leadership, curriculum and instruction, higher ed. administration) or degree type (i.e., PhD, EdD, DA, DSc) are not as important as the content and experience within the curriculum. If possible, students should focus on AT education when they are reading articles, analyzing statistics, writing papers, etc. during their doctoral studies. Having a good mentor is always essential when choosing a good program or school.

Dr. Mark Merrick made a good point about the need for more doctoral students and programs that prepare students for the sciences. Thus, these ATC graduates will be prepared to determine the best ways for other ATCs to treat their patients. Others felt that all doctoral programs should have some or more science-based research in their curriculum to help prepare them to do scholarship work in their faculty careers, which is a tenure requirement in most institutions. Dr. Merrick provided the following quote from Chris Golde's essay *Preparing Stewards of the Discipline*¹: "A PhD holder should be capable of generating new knowledge and defending knowledge claims against challenges and criticism; of

conserving the most important ideas and findings that are a legacy of past and current work; and of transforming knowledge that has been generated and conserved by teaching well to a variety of audiences, including those outside formal classrooms."

Another concern mentioned was the need for doctoral students to have more professional experience before starting these doctoral programs. This experience will significantly enhance the educational experience both in teaching, research, and administration (if applicable). It may also be helpful if students maintain their AT skills while they are in their doctoral studies; unless there is no time because of their teaching and research graduate assistantships. Whenever possible, students should seek a doctoral program that allows them to become an active part of an entry-level CAATE accredited program. It may also be possible for students to attend doctoral schools online, weekends, or summers only, which work well for students with other full-time jobs during the academic year. Some other issues and concerns when choosing the best doctoral program may include: admission criteria, research and teaching resources, size of school, Carnegie classification, number or quality of faculty, degree type (PhD, EdD, DA), research and grant writing assistance, and athletic division or conference.

Below is a small list of popular doctoral schools that prepare and train AT education faculty:

- Argosy University (FL)
- Ball State University (IN)
- Brigham Young University
- Delta State University (MS)
- Indiana State University
- Ohio University
- Oregon State University
- Rocky Mountain University (UT)
- Temple University
- University of Alabama
- University of Central Florida
- University of Florida
- University of Kentucky
- University of North Carolina - Chapel Hill
- University of North Carolina – Greensboro
- University of Oregon
- University of Southern Mississippi
- University of Toledo
- University of Virginia



Donald Fuller is owner and moderator of the Athletic Training Education Listserv. He is an Assoc. Professor in the College of Health Professions at the University of Findlay.
dfuller@findlay.edu

Medical Director Contracts (April 19, 2007 – 5 postings)

According to CAATE standard A4, “Each affiliated clinical setting where students are assigned to a clinical instructor for student learning and/or clinical practice must have an affiliated agreement...” This may not necessarily pertain to the medical director and his/her supervision of AT students. One program indicated a formal contract is required unless the medical director is a university employee (i.e., director of the student health center) and has “medical director” listed as one of his/her job responsibilities. CAATE Standard B-4, describing the medical director’s role, does not require a formal agreement for this title. Standard B-4.2 describes the medical director’s role as a “resource” for both didactic and clinical experiences. In any case, some programs may wish to have a formal contract or agreement with their medical director’s clinical site. If any program ever needs an interpretation or concern about a CAATE standard, they should contact CAATE directly to get a formal and most accurate answer (www.caate.net).

Parade Magazine Article (April 19, 2007 – 4 postings)

This *Parade*² article was a major discussion on several AT listservs and classrooms. There seemed to be several errors in this article such as no college degree required for ATCs. It seems that there are a lot of lay people as well as medical people who do not know what we are, what we know, how we are educated, where we work, what patients we work with, etc. The NATA Public Relations staff and all athletic trainers (including students) have a daily and lifelong job to accurately describe our profession to the public, state legislators, insurance companies, education professionals, and others.

Clinical Education vs. Clinical Care (June 5, 2007 – 11 postings)

Clinical education is an essential component of athletic training programs. However, the primary responsibility of the ATC is to provide services to their patients. This can occur in any traditional and non-traditional clinical education setting where students are supervised and taught by an ATC. One example was given about an ACI who was no longer used by an ATEP because he was providing too much service to his patients and not enough clinical instruction to the students.

It is essential to have strong communication between the ATEP and clinical instructors. This begins at the first ACI orientation, annual updates, and throughout the academic year when they are supervising AT students. ACIs would be given the opportunity to ask questions and provide feedback to the ATEP and other ACIs. Knowing the expectations of the student and program an ACI must be established at an orientation and evaluated on a regular basis. If the expectations are too high for the ACI, then he/she can either choose not to take students until they change their decision or discontinue being an ACI for that ATEP until further notice.

If there is concern about the expectations, then perhaps all parties should review the affiliated clinical site agreement/contract, AT Student Handbook, ACI training materials, and other documents that describe the roles and responsibilities of the ATEP, ACI, and students. Any unrealistic expectations can be discussed and perhaps modified in these previously mentioned documents. Hopefully, the ATEP faculty, especially the clinical coordinator, are familiar with these clinical education sites and are visiting them regularly – especially during peak times.

The quality of the services provided by the ATC was also mentioned. CAATE requires regular formal evaluation of several aspects of the clinical education component. However, many ATCs, athletic departments, and other organizations do not regularly evaluate the quality of the healthcare provided. Therefore, it may be unknown whether or not the quality of patient care is deprived or diminished when the ATC is also supervising and teaching ATSS.

Some ATEPs pay their ACIs to supervise and teach students; thus they are expected to be quality instructors and be competent. Those ATCs who are paid by athletics are expected to provide quality athletic training service to their patients. However, if the ATC’s job description includes supervising students and/or being an ACI for the AT program, then it shouldn’t matter if they’re getting paid to be an ACI.

There was also concern about the amount of “hand-holding” the ACIs are doing to the ATSS they are supervising. ATSS are not capable of thinking independently, making split second decisions, and being able to deal with all of the situations ATCs face because we never ask them to practice such skills before they are certified.

Pre-Season Clinical Experience Requirements (July 23, 2007 – 13 postings)

Meaningful, educational clinical experiences are important, including pre-season practices. Some ATEPs may start their clinical classes in the summer so that students are required to participate in these pre-season experiences. Other fall clinical classes may have preseason practices as a course requirement. The important thing is that all students get the same experience or opportunity for that experience while they are in the entry-level ATEP.

Some feel that without the preseason, ATSS are not well prepared for the profession. Other than the long hours, there are some experiences (i.e., weight charts, heat related illnesses, equipment fitting, physicals) during two-a-days that cannot be experienced at any time. This is also a good time to meet with local EMS to review emergency protocols and equipment. Since CAATE allows institutional autonomy, ATEPs have several options to use these personal and other educational experiences.

Another consideration during the preseason periods is whether or not students are covered for liability. Some policies may indicate that students must be enrolled in an academic course in order to be fully covered. Read your ATEP’s and institution’s policies carefully and check with other related programs on campus.

Some concerns for the ATs are their lodging and meals during preseason. Some coaches allow the ATs to stay in the dorms and eat with the players. Some teams may provide meals for working x number of hours. These benefits are more likely to happen if there is good communication and understanding with the coaches and athletic administrators. It's also a good idea to have students interact with these individuals, although this may be easier in smaller institutions and teams.

ATEPs must have a clear purpose for these preseason practice experiences. If students are being used as workers, then this sends the wrong message to the athletes, coaches, administration, and others. On the other hand, students will be more motivated to come and learn during these experiences if it is an educational experience for everyone. Most importantly, it will help teach the students professionalism, dedication, and pride.

Criminal Background Checks (September 6, 2007 – 7 postings)

Here are some resources to obtain criminal background checks on students (\$10-\$50):

1. Campus police
2. Local Sheriff's department
3. State's Department of Education
4. HireRight – <http://www.hireright.com>
5. Certified Background – <http://www.certifiedbackground.com>

References

1. Golde, C, Walker, G. *Envisioning the Future of Doctoral Education: Preparing Stewards of the Discipline - Carnegie Essays on the Doctorate*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass; 2006
2. Brenner, L. How Did You Do? *Parade Magazine*. Available at: http://www.parade.com/articles/editions/2007/edition_04-15-2007/WPE_lead.