Athletic Training Education Affects Entire Membership

All articles by Chad Starkey, PhD, ATC, Pete Koehneke, MS, ATC and Jeff Ryan, ATC, PT

The athletic training education reform that started eight years ago is now approaching its most visible deadline – the 2004 elimination of the internship route to certification.

At the same time, the Standards and Guidelines for athletic training education have been revised by the JRC-AT.

The result is a much stronger and more credible professional preparation – and it's accompanied by the challenges inherent to any change of this magnitude.

The following articles, prepared cooperatively by the NATA Education Council, the Joint Review Committee on Athletic Training and the NATA Board of Certification, Inc., offer a comprehensive look at the current state of athletic training education.

In addition, a complete index of articles pertaining to the education reform can be found in this material and downloaded at www.cewl.com, and additional information resources are cited repeatedly.

Please familiarize yourself with these issues and their consequences, because they directly affect each and every certified athletic trainer.

dear colleagues,

The theme of this edition of the *NATA News* is athletic training education – an issue that affects every certified athletic trainer, not just those in the classroom setting.

As of April 19, 2002, the Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs (CAAHEP) had accredited 165 athletic training education programs. By comparison, at the end of 1997, there were approximately 82 accredited programs. Obviously, we're growing.

Many of us entered the profession through internship route, an option that by 2004 will no longer be available to students. Instead, accredited curriculum programs will be the only route to certification. This new process represents significant changes. Any type of change requires understanding, accepting, adapting and accommodating new demands. While it can push us out of our comfort zone, change is necessary to enhance our profession. As George Bernard Shaw once said, "Progress is impossible without change, and those who cannot change their minds cannot change anything."

Transitioning athletic training education from an internship to an accredited curriculum-only process is an immense task that has involved countless certified athletic trainers as well as cooperation from multiple committees and organizations, including CAAHEP, the Joint Review Committee on Educational Programs in Athletic Training (JRC-AT), the National Athletic Trainers' Board of Certification (NATABOC) and the Education Council (EC).

Athletic training is a hands-on profession, and providing athletic training students with the highest level of competency involves a balance of cognitive training as well as development of clinical skills. Athletic training students learn equally from their academic courses and their clinical experiences. Thus, it is vitally important that both facets of their education process be integrated as seamlessly as possible. This cannot be accomplished without cooperation and teamwork.

Great athletic teams succeed because they practice and play together as a team, not as individuals. As ATCs, we have seen this in action – teams either pull together or they pull apart. Make the choice now to pull together. Please take the time to stay up-to-date by reading the articles in this special edition and by reviewing regularly the NATABOC, JRC-AT and EC Web sites. Facilitate the optimal working relationship between clinical athletic trainers and athletic training educators.

We're all in this together, and together we can work to see our profession continue to grow and improve through education reform.

Ron Courson, ATC, PT, NREMT-I
Chair, CUATC

➔