Kent Falb's Speech on Education

Kent Falb, ATC, PT, President of the NATA, spoke at the Professional Educators' Conference in January of 1997. His speech is being reprinted due to the importance of education reform. The president's comments reflect his strong support of the process underway to enhance the quality of athletic training education.

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NATA President Kent Falb, ATC, PT

I would be very remiss if I did not thank the NATA Foundation and Dr. Malissa Martin for the opportunity and privilege to address this esteemed audience of athletic training educators. This is my first opportunity to speak to athletic training educators, and I would like to address some of the fears, anxieties and concerns you may have.

I believe, and am committed to, the philosophy that quality education is our number one job. Athletic training education and educational reform will not only be the future cornerstone, but also the basic structure for work toward the following goals: securing effective, non-restrictive state regulatory acts; the successful institution of long overdue third party reimbursement; and insuring that certified athletic trainers will be recognized and approved as the premier health care providers for the physically active. Fourth, although it is seldom discussed, I firmly believe, that quality education will be the determinant in establishing economic, professional, social, and individual self-worth and self-esteem for ourselves, and more importantly for those who follow us.

Reams of paper exist regarding education and educational reform, but this is all fluff if it is not supported by a total effort, commitment, and determination to achieve maximum education enrichment.

The future of athletic training education will be a

bipartisan responsibility. The responsibility will be shared equally between the NATA Board of Directors and all athletic training educators. The NATA Board of Directors voted in December to make 18 recommendations on NATA educational policy.

Particularly notable are:

- The strengths of internship and curriculum routes are to be combined.
- Insure and enhance didactic and clinical requirements and experiences for the next generation of certified athletic trainers.
- CAQS will be appropriately developed to enhance credibility and credentials for educators and clinicians.

I must emphasize clearly and emphatically that the Education Council will coordinate entry level and graduate level athletic training education. Various subcommittees can recommend educational changes and improvements. However, the ultimate education policy decisions will be made by the NATA Board of Directors. We have not, nor do we intend to, create an education corporation nor a dynasty.

Education Council Chair

I consider the Education Council chair the most important single appointment of my tenure in office. This is the most crucial and far-reaching decision the Board of Directors has had to face in several decades. Tasks and responsibilities confronting the Education Council chair will no doubt be of an enormous and staggering scope. Inherent in this position will be issues that challenge the toughest of convictions, test the heights of courage, and necessitate superlative leadership talents.

The challenges and responsibilities for athletic training educators are to pursue their ideas and establish new methods to enhance the already excellent standards they have established. The Board of Directors seeks the cooperation and support of athletic training educators in implementing the task force's recommendations, which are now NATA policy. The Board of Directors would be naive to think that there will not be a philosophical debate and disagreement about educational procedures and issues.

To achieve the ultimate success from these new policies, however, there must be rational, wise, and mature dialogue and support.

(Note: Chad Starkey, PhD, ATC, was subsequently chosen to serve as Education Council Chair. For more about Chad Starkey please see the June NATA News*, page 48.)*

The History of NATA Education Reform

In 1994, then president Denny Miller, ATC, PT, exercised great wisdom, insight, and expert leadership when

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he created the NATA Education Task Force. This task force, with its 18 diverse members has fulfilled its charge to assess and recommend change in all aspects of athletic training education. Because of the unequaled efforts of this task force, and its dedication, I am totally confident that NATA education policies recently enacted will take the profession, and our fellow certified athletic trainers successfully into the next millennium.

If I were someday asked to write a history of the NATA, I would devote one chapter to the Education Task Force and co-chairs Richard Ray, EdD, and John Schrader, PhD. I sincerely believe our history will rate their two year effort and the results of tremendous historical significance and stature, and equate them to the accomplishments of education pioneers and legends like William E. "Pinky" Newell and Sayers "Bud" Miller. With that historical perspective in mind, John, Richard, and every member of the Education Task Force, we respect, admire, and appreciate your efforts, integrity, and dedication to improving our profession and our very lives. Congratulations on a job well done.

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The Future is Ours

Ladies and gentlemen, we are at the threshold of the next chapter of our proud and cherished history. Henceforth, it is imperative that we work together in harmony to insure the future and stature of our profession, so we may ultimately realize our goals, aspirations, and dreams.

To squander or to succeed in quality education standards will determine our fate. You know where I stand on the role of education. Let us begin the next pages of our history together. ❑

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