



**National Athletic Trainers' Association (NATA)  
Hosts Timely Topics Virtual Briefing to Address  
Collegiate Athletic Trainer Labor Crisis  
Panelists Discuss Current Climate & How to Solve It**

**White Paper Unveiled**

**DALLAS, TX (March 10, 2023)** – The National Athletic Trainers' Association hosted in early March an informative and educational virtual program addressing the current collegiate athletic trainer labor crisis in the United States. A joint effort of the NATA's Intercollegiate Council for Sports Medicine (ICSM) and its College/University Compensation Task Force, the event was part of the association's ongoing **Timely Topics** series which addresses hot button issues for its members and others.

A panel discussion moderated by NATA President Kathy Dieringer, EdD, ATC included collegiate athletic trainers (ATs) and experts in the human resources and risk management sectors. The event was attended by over 500 NATA members, employers, media and other invited guests. Questions addressed job resignation, compensation, quality of work environment, recruitment, social issues, the student-athlete to AT ratio and risk management as well as strategies athletic directors and others can implement to promote a positive employment setting.

"Collegiate institutions need to review their athletic trainers' responsibilities and time as it compares within their marketplace to ensure appropriate compensation and create a positive work culture through student-athlete health and safety, independent medical care and a team collaborative environment," said Dieringer. "We do not have a labor shortage, but rather a multifaceted issue of athletic trainer burnout and an increase in employment opportunities creating a more competitive job market. We encourage collegiate environments to recognize and respond to these changes to address the challenges of hiring and retaining athletic trainers."

"Leadership and supervisors must develop a culture that philosophically and financially support independent medical decision making, student-athlete health care, policy development and the clinicians implementing and carrying out these practices," said Brant Berkstresser, MS, LAT, ATC, and Chairman at ICSM. "The collegiate athletic trainer expects an employer to value their work by providing appropriate resources, staffing volume and philosophical support through protocol development."

To review a recording of the session please click [here](#).

**White Paper Unveiled Addressed**

A new white paper, “The Collegiate Athletic Trainer Labor Crisis: A Data Driven Guide Outlining the Current Collegiate Workplace Environment and Strategies to Improve Workplace Engagement,” was addressed during the forum and is available [here](#). It includes an employee checklist and resources.

### **Key Statistics**

- Collegiate athletics has realized 48% turnover rate in the past two years.<sup>2</sup>
- Certified Athletic Trainers have increased over the past 10 years; 58,305 in 2021 compared to 38,973 in 2011.<sup>3</sup>
- As of 2020, the Collegiate AT setting remains the 3<sup>rd</sup> highest represented professional setting (16%) behind secondary schools (24%) and clinic/hospitals settings (18%).<sup>4</sup>
- The average collegiate AT salaries are still low at \$54,000, even after an 8% increase since 2018.<sup>5</sup>
- Over half of the respondents are caring for more than 100 student-athletes (SA) at a time.
- 65% of respondents have received additional responsibilities from their supervisor without an increase in compensation.
- Only 33% of respondents underwent any formal onboarding with their current position, but 60% find a formal onboarding and mentorship program favorable.
- 12% of survey responders have been employed in collegiate athletics beyond 10 years.

### **Key Points**

- The most important variables ATs consider when evaluating a position are: salary, staff culture, paid continuing education, retirement and sport assignment.
- A direct relationship exists between emotional exhaustion and the number of medical errors committed by ATs.<sup>8</sup>
- The level of employee support, lack of job resources, increased responsibilities, demands and pressures without rewards or compensation are contributing factors to workaholism and burnout.<sup>9,10,14</sup>
- The collegiate AT who has remained within the collegiate setting identifies the following reasons: sports medicine culture, staff morale, location, sport coverage, and benefits.
- A direct relationship exists between emotional exhaustion and the number of medical errors committed by ATs<sup>8</sup>. As emotional exhaustion increases the number of medical errors made by an individual increase<sup>8</sup>.

### **White Paper Design**

The National Athletic Trainers’ Association Intercollegiate Council for Sports Medicine (ICSM) in collaboration with the NATA Compensation Task Force disseminated a survey to 6,600 collegiate athletic trainers across all National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) Divisions, National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA) and 2-year institutions to identify key areas of employment.

The survey was designed with questions specific to the collegiate AT within the 5 NATA Compensation Task Force pillars: Fundamentals, Recruitment, Advancement, Retention and Separation. Data collected helped to identify any significant trends in the number of certified athletic trainers and or change in professional settings which may explain the hiring and retention challenges of collegiate ATs.

The overall response rate was 17% with 51.75% female, 47.73% male and .52% preferring not to say. The percentage of responses per level of collegiate athletics are as follows: NCAA Division I 44.59%, Division III 19.28%, Division II 14.92%, NAIA 14.75% and 2-year institutions 6.46%. The majority of the respondents were Caucasian 86.21% with other ethnicities represented; Hispanic 4.62%, African-American 3.32%, Multi-Ethnic 2.18%, Asian or Pacific: 1.48%, Prefer not to say 1.31%, American Indian .44%, Other .35%, and Alaskan Native .09%. Over half of the respondents were married 55.93% and 60.47% of all responders had no children.

### **Virtual Briefing Panelists**

**Brant Berkstresser, MS, LAT, ATC**, chair, Intercollegiate Council for Sports Medicine

**Kenny Boyd, MS, LAT, ATC**, member, AT Compensation Task Force

**Dixon Gillis**, chief executive officer, A-G Administrators LLC, Sports Insurance Specialists, affiliate member of the University Risk Management Insurance Association (URMIA)

**Murphy Grant, LAT, ATC**, NASM-PES, co-chair, AT Compensation Task Force

**Forrest Karr**, director of athletics, University of Minnesota Duluth

**Emily Mulkey, MS, LAT, ATC**, member, AT Compensation Task Force

**George Rivera III**, SVP, Enterprise Sales, Society for Human Resource Management

**Ann Wallace, MSED, ATC, NASM-CES**, member, AT Compensation Task Force

### **About NATA: [National Athletic Trainers' Association](#) – Health Care for Life & Sport**

Athletic trainers are health care professionals who specialize in the prevention, diagnosis, treatment and rehabilitation of injuries and sport-related illnesses. They prevent and treat chronic musculoskeletal injuries from sports, physical and occupational activity, and provide immediate care for acute injuries. Athletic trainers offer a continuum of care that is unparalleled in health care. The National Athletic Trainers' Association represents and supports 40,000 members of the athletic training profession. Visit [nata.org](https://nata.org) for more information.

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<sup>2</sup>[Why the College Athletics Industry Is Losing Employees – Sportico.com](#)

<sup>3</sup>Board of Certification, 2021 Annual Report

<sup>4</sup>Board of Certification, Certified Athletic Trainer Totals and Practice Settings

<sup>5</sup>[nata 2021 salary survey executive summary.pdf](#)

<sup>8</sup>Oglesby, L.W. et al., Burnout in and commission of medical errors by secondary school athletic trainers. *Journal of Athletic Training*. 2022; 57(3): 234-239.

<sup>9</sup>Huml, M.R. et al., From Engaged Employee to Workaholic: A model of athletic department employees. *European Sports Management Quarterly*. 2020; 21(4): 583-604.

<sup>10</sup>Taylor, E.A. et al., Workaholism in sport: a mediated model of work-family conflict and burnout. *Journal of Sports Management*. 2019; 33: 249-260.

<sup>14</sup>Mazerolle-Singe, S.M. Work-Family conflict of college and secondary school athletic trainers who are parents. *Journal of Athletic Training*. 2020; 55(11): 1153-1159.