



NATA State Association Advisory Committee

**State AT Leadership Toolkit:
Guide for Developing Diverse and
Engaged Leaders**

INTRODUCTION

State athletic training associations face a unique problem given the ever-changing landscape of shifting member demographics and professional and educational changes occurring at the present time. Member apathy and lack of broad involvement combined with increased time demands and a call for improved work-life balance within the profession have created challenging circumstances for current state leaders to recruit and retain future leaders. As a result, many states have seen leadership opportunities passed around through a small core group of volunteers and experienced unfilled service opportunities within their associations.

Ensuring leadership is diverse and inclusive (reflective of the association demographics) has been another challenge for many state associations. This includes diversity by race, religion, age, sex, ethnic or national origin, disability, health status, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, or gender identity. Diversity and inclusion also includes work setting. It is critical for associations to model inclusivity and acceptance by setting appropriate association policies and procedures while advocating for policies supportive of all association members.

In January 2020, representatives from the National Athletic Trainers' Association Student Leadership Committee, Young Professionals' Committee, Ethnic Diversity Advisory Committee, and LGBTQ+ Advisory Committee joined the State Association Advisory Committee to address the situation and create a resource state associations can implement to recruit and retain emerging leaders to their associations.

The workgroup identified four general themes: 1) Ensuring a Diverse and Inclusive Leadership, 2) Decreasing Barriers for Leadership Opportunities, 3) Investing in Membership for Personal and Professional Growth, and 4) Providing Opportunities for Meaningful and Impactful Service. Each theme has several suggested initiatives presented for state associations to adopt in a manner that fits their needs and scaled to match the available resources within the state. Additional resources to help implement these initiatives are available through the

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State Association Advisory Committee including consulting on policy and financial resources through the SAAC State Grant program.

ENSURING A DIVERSE AND INCLUSIVE LEADERSHIP

1. Create a State Association Leadership Pledge to be an association that values diversity and inclusion. The state association should ensure that all members of the leadership team attest to the Pledge. The Pledge should be publically available to membership and written into association governing documents (bylaws and policy and procedures).
2. Create a mechanism within association governing documents that upholds the diversity and inclusion pledge. This includes an audit system across to the organization to ensure the association and its events are inclusive (vendors, convention sites, legislators supported, etc), association leadership matches the demographics of the association (ethnically, racially, gender, work setting, etc), and there is an intentional recruiting of minorities and underrepresented individuals into association operations and leadership.
3. Require all individuals within the association leadership to undergo regular educational training sessions in diversity and inclusion (i.e. Cultural Competence Training, Safe Space Ally Training).
4. If the State Association does not have a committee to address diversity and inclusion, the state should create representation to address this in its' Association operations. This includes appropriate revisions to association operational documents. This structure should function to understand, embrace, and promote diversity within the profession and patient populations ATs treat while fostering respect, fairness, equity, and inclusion of difference in both athletic trainers and their diverse patient populations.
5. The Chair(s) of the Association's existing or created diversity and inclusion committee(s) should be a member(s) of the State Association Executive Board/Council. By doing so, State Association leadership will help ensure diversity and inclusion initiatives are integrated and met.

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6. The Association committee(s) addressing diversity and inclusion should report at regular intervals to the Executive Board/Council during board/council meetings (or other appropriate times) on the characteristics of the association leadership. The report should highlight diversity in the leadership, the status of state and association inclusion laws, regulations, and policies, and the impact association policies and state laws have on access for diverse and/or marginalized groups. Finally, the report should highlight positive actions made by the association to ensure diversity and inclusion.

DECREASING BARRIERS FOR LEADERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

7. Change/revise Association policy and procedure (as needed) to ensure all service opportunities have position descriptions that are posted/listed with expected time demands, job duties, meetings attendance required, travel expectations, metrics to judge performance, any reimbursement(s) provided, and frequently asked questions about the position. Postings should be done in a central location (i.e. Association website) that is updated regularly and links advertised widely across all available communication platforms to ensure availability to all members.
8. Create an open forum policy and then create the expectation of current leadership (including the Executive Board/Council and all Committee Chairs) to bring individuals not serving in association roles to association events to expose them to the organization.
9. Hold regular open forums to discuss association activities, service opportunities, and answer member questions. Forums can be held through multiple mediums, such as the annual meeting (i.e. Facetime), through social media platforms, and/or through Zoom video conferencing.
10. Improve the ability for members with no previous service experience to join the association leadership in a service role by investigating service term lengths and bylaw requirements for positions.

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11. Create a formalized leadership onboarding process (as applicable) to ensure proper transition is made for the incoming new leader.

INVESTING IN MEMBERSHIP FOR PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL GROWTH

12. Create an educational program (i.e. StrengthsFinder 2.0) that fits available state association resources to help guide members through a professional growth plan. Use results to identify areas of strength and areas of growth, identify areas of interest, build mentoring relationships, and connect to available service opportunities.
13. Increase and maintain an intentional networking plan for members to connect and facilitate personal relationships. This includes events at association events (i.e. Presidents Receptions, Breakfasts, etc) as well as informal events (i.e. Wine and Paint, Axe-throwing, Cornhole tournaments, and other mixers).
14. Institute an outreach program to all CAATE-accredited educational institutions and perhaps partner with other external healthcare organizations (i.e. HOSA –Future Health Professionals, formerly known as Health Occupations Students of America), to reach out to students and educate them on professionalism and benefits of professional involvement.

PROVIDING OPPORTUNITIES FOR MEANINGFUL AND IMPACTFUL SERVICE

15. Create a committee or some other standing group (workgroup or taskforce) within the Association to serve as stewards for the educational, experiential, and social opportunities created by the association. Ensure the Committee(s) representing diversity and inclusion efforts have a position(s) within this group. Use this workgroup to identify and progress individuals through association positions.
16. Increase opportunities for students and early-career AT members by creating 1-year ex-officio positions adding a student and early-career member to sit on each association committee and board/council. This is

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done to foster interest in association operations and spur member into further developmental and experiential opportunities. Ensure appropriate recognition of these individuals (business meeting, association communications, etc).

17. Provide an avenue for established leaders to share their experiences and recruit new leaders. Have current and former leaders write or record a short personal statement about their experiences to share with members. This will help make association service a personal story and provide an outlet to make the opportunity meaningful. Additionally, these leaders should be asked to contact individuals who have not served previously to recruit them for available opportunities.
18. Sponsor members who demonstrate additional interest in the association into the SAAC Leader Fellow program to develop advanced experiential operational and leadership skills.

CONCLUSION

The goal of this toolkit is to provide state associations with ideas and direction on how to implement programs to create diverse and inclusive emerging leaders. For additional resources, please contact your [State Association Advisory Committee Representative](#).



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