



INTRODUCING YOUR PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES

PRIOR TO THE START of the 2026 NATA Joint Committee Meeting Jan. 31 in Dallas, the NATA Presidential Nomination Committee convened to select NATA's final two presidential candidates: David Gallegos, MA, ATC, Cert. MDT, and Rob Marshall, LAT, ATC.

With voting taking place in July, now is a great time to get to know your candidates. In the following pages, Gallegos and Marshall, in their own words and without editing by NATA, share why they want to be president, the pivotal issues they see facing the profession and their goals if elected. More from the candidates will be featured in the May/June *NATA News*.

Leading up to the 77th NATA Clinical Symposia & AT Expo June 29-July 2 in Philadelphia, members will also have opportunities to hear directly from the candidates and ask them questions during various virtual town hall events. During NATA 2026, Gallegos and Marshall will again speak to members at Face Time '26.

After voting is completed and the results tabulated, the membership will be notified of the new president-elect in early August. At that time, the president-elect will begin the shadowing process. The president-elect's inauguration will then take place during the 78th NATA Clinical Symposia & AT Expo in 2027.

Members can learn more about the election and voting by following NATA's social media channels and visiting the NATA Presidential Election webpage at www.nata.org/presidential-election.



David Gallegos, MA, ATC, Cert. MDT

Current Position:

Deputy CEO – Southwest Sport & Spine Center, Inc.

Career:

Deputy CEO, Southwest Sport & Spine Center, Inc. 2008-2026

Instructor, New Mexico State University, 2001-2010, 2020

Instructor, Fort Lewis College, 2004-2005

Head Athletic Trainer / Teacher, Gadsden High School, 1999-2007

Fitness & Aftercare Program Manager, CORE Rehabilitation, 1997-1998

Athletic Training Intern, Arizona Cardinals, 1996, 1997, 1998

NATA Involvement:

NATA Taskforce Chair, Athletic Training Labor Demand Investigative Research, 2024-2025

NATA Compensation Taskforce, 2022-2023

NATA Vice-President, 2022-2023

NATA DEIA Taskforce, 2021-2023

NATA District 7 Director, 2018-2023

NATA District Secretaries / Treasurers Committee, 2014-2018

RMATA/NMATA Involvement:

RMATA CORE Values Workgroup, 2019-2021

RMATA Finance Committee, 2014-2018

NMATA Legislative Committee, 2012-2026

NMATA Public Relations Rep, 2008-2009

Value and Viability

The following themes reflect my core priorities as presented to the Presidential Nomination Committee in late January, 2026. These priorities are shaped by 28 years of experience across multiple settings, through leadership discussions in and outside of athletic training and with an outlook on the shift in healthcare. Each bolded section represents a strategic pillar discussed in that presentation and is intended to guide how we strengthen our profession moving forward. Together, these themes are meant to leverage our past and build a future we direct. They are actionable directions that connect individual athletic trainers, the National Athletic Trainers' Association, and the broader healthcare system in which we practice. We have grown to over 70,000 athletic trainers worldwide and have done so because we offer a unique value and service. I am excited to offer perspectives that strongly connect our past to our future while driving individual value for athletic trainers and highlighting our organizational impact.

Across the country, athletic trainers are delivering high-value care in schools, colleges, clinics, industry, the military, and many more environments. Yet many of us experience the same tension: our impact is undeniable, but our roles are not always fully leveraged, recognized, or sustained within evolving healthcare systems. This is not a reflection of inadequate preparation or commitment; it is a signal that our profession must intentionally lead its next phase.

If elected President of the National Athletic Trainers' Association, my focus will be clear. I plan to strengthen individual value within the association and within our practice, ensure association viability, and elevate athletic training through visionary, practical conversations about who we are and how we practice.

Promoting Visionary Conversations

Visionary conversations are how progress begins.

For athletic trainers currently practicing in foundational settings such as the secondary schools, colleges, and universities, these conversations create space to rethink how care is delivered, not just where. Settings have traditionally been a battle cry and how we organize our efforts. In the future of health

care, these setting-based specialties are referred to as clinical specialties and forms of population health. With these conversations, I want to encourage clinicians to advocate for expanded roles in high performance health, care coordination, injury prevention programming, primary care and interprofessional leadership to name a few. Our comprehensive skillset addresses the full cycle of high-performance health care and offers embedded solutions to not only maximize the potential for those we treat, but also support organizational needs. As much as I would like to be able to flip between leadership roles across our employment opportunities, creating a measurable impact and understanding the business model so I can successfully require mental paradigm shifts and unique administrative skills.

Participating in this vision allows practicing athletic trainers to move from being viewed as “on-site responders” to being recognized as essential health-care professionals who improve access, continuity, and outcomes. These conversations also help align administrators, physicians, educators, and policy-makers around a modern understanding of athletic training that reflects today’s labor market demands. The intent is to identify strengths we can maximize and opportunities we can leverage.

Developing Individual Value

When individual athletic trainers are empowered, the profession advances.

Developing individual value means ensuring that athletic trainers have the language, data, and support to clearly articulate their impact. It means helping clinicians translate daily work into outcomes administrators understand: reduced time loss, decreased injury recurrence, player availability, improved safety, and cost-effective care delivery.

By participating in this shared vision, athletic trainers benefit through:

- focused professional education,
- stronger justification for appropriate compensation and staffing,
- clearer professional identity across interprofessional teams, and
- expanded leadership opportunities within organizations.

This approach does not require abandoning traditional roles; it enhances them. A high school or collegiate athletic trainer

who integrates broader healthcare thinking such as preventive screening or care navigation adds measurable value without losing the athlete-centered performance health foundation of the profession. We are already doing many of these items, we just have not clearly shared the message. When in different situations, we should be able to readily answer the question, “How does athletic training fit?”

Ensuring Association Viability

Association viability is inseparable from member success.

Athletic trainers benefit directly when NATA succeeds. A viable association is one that supports athletic training as well as athletic trainers. Addressing workload, professional burnout, economic pressures, and evolving expectations from employers are items currently in progress. I am excited to champion these and the many efforts of the professional staff at the national office.

Recruitment and retention are important factors in our future and doing so relies on our professional programs, amazing clinical preceptors, individual clinician leadership and pathways for student success. NATA is an active partner in improving athletic training practice but cannot do it alone. If you feel this is a pivotal time for our profession, teamwork is needed.

Advocacy Through Interprofessional Practice

Modern health care is collaborative by necessity.

Athletic trainers already function interprofessionally, coordinating with administrators, physicians, physical therapists, nurses, performance staff, and educators, often without formal recognition of that role. This vision elevates that reality into intentional advocacy.

For athletic trainers in athletic-based employment practices, broader healthcare integration may include:

- leadership in performance health,
- formalized roles in injury prevention and risk mitigation,
- collaboration on mental health and wellness initiatives,
- participation in population-health and safety planning, and
- involvement in organizational decision-making around health services.

This strengthens both professional credibility and job satisfaction while positioning athletic trainers as essential contributors to health care teams.

Reframing Our Impact: A Vocabulary of Possibility

How we describe our work shapes how others value it and how we value ourselves. I am a big fan of spending time on language. A simple shift from settings to practice specialty is a good example. For the public and incoming professionals, employment opportunities in athletics may seem similar across secondary schools, college and university, and professional sports while in reality each is its own specialty and requires a focused skills set and tailored definition of success. Setting as a term does not clearly denote that to our stakeholders or ourselves.

A shared vocabulary of possibility allows athletic trainers to honor their traditional roots while embracing expanded healthcare perspectives. It reframes athletic trainers not as confined to a sideline, but as adaptable clinicians capable of meeting athletes and physically active populations wherever care is needed.

For those already practicing, this reframing:

- validates the complexity of current roles,
- opens doors to innovation within existing opportunities, and
- strengthens recruitment by presenting athletic training as a dynamic, future-focused profession.

Moving Forward—Together

This message is not about changing who athletic trainers are; it is about fully realizing who we already are and placing additional emphasis on how we practice.

By engaging in these themes, athletic trainers benefit from clearer professional identity, stronger advocacy, and a more sustainable future. Together, we can integrate broader healthcare thinking into traditional roles, expand opportunity without losing purpose, and ensure that athletic training continues to thrive as a vital high-value health care profession.

I believe practice clarity supports members with intention and advances athletic training with confidence. I would be honored to serve and help guide our profession forward.

AT Passion,

David Gallegos, MA, ATC, Cert. MDT



Rob Marshall, LAT, ATC

Current Position:

Director of the Fieldhouse
Columbus Community Hospital (September 2022–Present)
Athletic Training Program Manager
Columbus Community Hospital (September 2013–Present)

Career:

Director of the Fieldhouse, Columbus Community Hospital (2022–Present)
Athletic Training Program Manager, Columbus Community Hospital (2013–Present)
Head Athletic Trainer, Columbus High School – Columbus Community Hospital (2003–2023)
Guest Lecturer, Central Community College (2010–Present)
Head Athletic Trainer, Columbus High School – Premier Physical Therapy (1995–2003)

NATA Involvement:

Vice President, National Athletic Trainers' Association (2023–2025)
Board of Directors, District V Director, NATA (2018–2025)
Finance Committee, Nebraska State Athletic Trainers Association (2023–Present)
NATAPAC Board of Directors, District V (2017–2019)
District V President, NATA (2014–2017)
District Secretaries / Treasurers Committee, NATA (2011–2014)
District V Finance Committee, NATA (2011–2017)
Component Relations Project Team, NATA (2009–2011)
District V Vice President, NATA (2008–2009)

Nebraska State Athletic Trainers' Association Involvement:

Past President (2010–2014)
President (2006–2010)
Vice President (2006)

Change One World at a Time: A Vision for Service-Driven Leadership at NATA

Leadership within a professional association is ultimately about service. It is about listening to members, responding to their needs, and taking action that improves their professional lives. At a time when the athletic training profession faces both significant challenges and exciting opportunities, strong, thoughtful leadership is essential.

My vision for serving as NATA president is grounded in a simple idea: change one world at a time. If we change the world of our members—through support, advocacy, and meaningful engagement—we change the future of the profession itself. Transformation begins not with sweeping mandates, but with service, advocacy, and impact at the individual level.

Goals for My Presidency

If elected president, my primary goal is to lead a member-first association—one where decisions are transparent, priorities are aligned with member needs, and progress is both meaningful and sustainable. This vision is anchored by five guiding principles: member-centered leadership, transparency, equity of experience, sustainable progress, and partnership over isolation.

1. Elevating the Value of the Athletic Trainer

One of the most critical goals of my presidency would be to elevate the value of the athletic trainer across all practice settings. Despite rigorous education, clinical expertise, and measurable impact on patient outcomes, athletic trainers often face challenges related to professional recognition, compensation, and job security.

Addressing this requires coordinated advocacy at both the national and state levels. Supporting state associations in regulatory advancement and scope-of-practice protection will remain a priority. In addition, strengthening relationships with healthcare systems, industry partners, educational institutions, and government agencies will help amplify the voice of the profession.

A national visibility initiative highlighting athletic trainers' expertise across settings—from traditional athletics to healthcare, industry, military, and public safety—would further support these efforts. Equipping

members with tools to demonstrate value and return on investment to employers can lead to better recognition, stronger job security, and increased professional respect.

2. Modernizing the Membership Experience

Another key goal is to modernize the NATA membership experience to better reflect the diversity of today's profession. Athletic trainers are not a monolithic group; they represent a wide range of career stages, practice settings, and professional priorities.

Continuing to evolve dues structures and membership models will help meet members where they are. Expanding member perks, employer membership options, and segmented engagement pathways can increase relevance and accessibility. Leveraging improved data and smarter communication strategies will allow NATA to deliver more personalized content and clearer value.

Equally important is improving operational efficiency, particularly within volunteer engagement and recognition. Volunteers are essential to NATA's success, and reducing unnecessary workload while enhancing the volunteer experience strengthens the association as a whole.

3. Supporting Workforce Well-Being and Career Longevity

Workforce well-being is one of the most pressing issues facing athletic training today. High workloads, long hours, and inconsistent staffing models contribute to burnout and early career exits. Supporting athletic trainers throughout their careers must be a central priority.

As president, I would continue expanding employer education related to appropriate staffing, workload standards, and athletic trainer well-being. Growing mental health support resources and peer networks, such as ATs Care, remains essential. Strengthening early-career pathways and mentorship programs can help retain talent and foster professional confidence.

In addition, increased attention to non-traditional and advanced practice settings will ensure that all members—regardless of where they work—have access to relevant resources and support. Career longevity should be an achievable goal, not an exception.

4. Advancing Excellence in Education and Professional Growth

Education and professional development are foundational to the profession and must continue to evolve alongside the health-care landscape. My goal is to ensure that NATA provides high-quality, accessible, and diverse learning opportunities across all career stages.

This includes strengthening specialty training pathways, leadership development programs, and micro-credentialing opportunities. Expanding global collaboration with professional organizations can further enhance alignment and innovation. Modernizing content delivery through on-demand learning, microlearning, and simulation will improve accessibility and engagement.

Ultimately, these efforts should lead to clearer professional pathways, expanded expertise, and increased opportunities for advancement and earning potential.

5. Ensuring a Strong, Stable, and Future-Ready Association

A strong profession requires a strong association. My presidency would prioritize governance practices that are strategic, transparent, and member-focused. Improving operational efficiency and reducing unnecessary volunteer burden will help ensure that leadership structures serve members effectively.

Financial stability is also essential. Protecting and growing reserves, while expanding non-dues revenue through partnerships and innovation, will help ensure long-term sustainability. A financially sound, responsive association is better positioned to advocate for members and adapt to future challenges.

Pivotal Issues Facing the Athletic Training Profession

The athletic training profession is at a pivotal moment. While demand for athletic trainers continues to grow, several challenges threaten workforce stability and professional sustainability.

1. Workforce Strain and Retention

Burnout and retention remain among the most urgent issues. Increasing responsibilities, expanding coverage expectations, and inconsistent compensation models place strain on athletic trainers across settings. Addressing these challenges requires systemic solutions, including employer education, staffing

standards, and advocacy that promotes sustainable practice models.

2. Membership Engagement and Perceived Value

Membership engagement is another critical issue. Athletic trainers are evaluating the return on their professional investments more closely than ever. NATA must continue to demonstrate tangible value by aligning benefits with real-world needs and delivering a clear, personalized member experience.

3. Professional Visibility and Recognition

Despite their expertise, athletic trainers remain underrecognized within the broader healthcare system. This affects inclusion in interdisciplinary care models, compensation, and policy decisions. Strategic advocacy, strong partnerships, and national visibility efforts are essential to elevating the profession's profile.

4. Governance and Organizational Sustainability

Finally, governance and sustainability remain key considerations. As the association evolves, governance structures must remain agile and transparent. Operational efficiency, financial stewardship, and strategic clarity are essential to ensuring that NATA can continue to meet member needs both now and in the future.

Why I Want to Serve as NATA President

I am seeking the opportunity to serve as NATA president because I believe deeply in this profession and in the power of service-driven leadership. Leadership is not about having all the answers; it is about listening, engaging diverse perspectives, and following through with clarity and consistency.

As president, I would listen first and act second. I would work to ensure that decisions reflect the lived experiences of athletic trainers across settings and career stages. I am committed to honoring the legacy of those who built this profession while accelerating innovation to meet future needs.

If we focus on changing the world of our members—by supporting their well-being, elevating their value, and strengthening their professional community—we will change the future of athletic training. Together, we can change our world, one member at a time. §