



GET TO KNOW THE PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES

AS WE GET CLOSER to the NATA presidential election in July, NATA is working to ensure members have insight into their two candidates: David Gallegos, MA, ATC, Cert. MDT, and Rob Marshall, LAT, ATC.

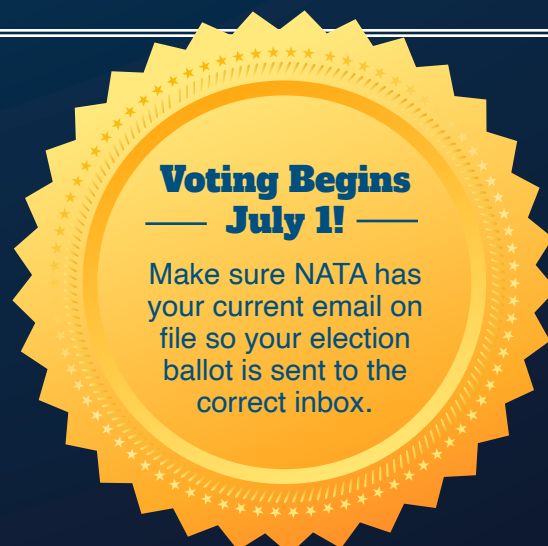
While the presidential candidates introduced their platforms and discussed their goals if elected in the March/April *NATA News*, in this edition, they dive further into issues impacting the profession, in their own words and without editing by NATA. From retention and innovation to what NATA is doing for members, keep reading to learn more about the candidates.

In addition, NATA is offering one more virtual town hall with the candidates at 3 p.m. CDT May 27. Registration is required to attend the town hall. Members can also submit their questions for the candidates to be asked during the town hall.

During the 77th NATA Clinical Symposia & AT Expo June 29-July 2 in Philadelphia, attendees will have the chance to hear from Gallegos and Marshall in person at Face Time '26, from 9 to 10 a.m. July 1.

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 register for the last virtual town hall by visiting the NATA Presidential Election webpage at www.nata.org/presidential-election.





David Gallegos, MA, ATC, Cert. MDT

If elected, what is one innovation or change you would want to see during your tenure as president, and how will you work toward it?

One change I would be happy to support is the development of messaging, resourcing, and packaging of information to support the individual athletic trainer. It is important to realize ATs need information, insight, and guidance on demand. Specifically, when it comes to work-life balance, compensation, best practices and advocacy, our association can package this information in ways we can quickly access it and in ways we can leverage it to match the needs we have at the time. I see a process that starts with organizing and tagging data in its current form then moving to a search engine or a Professional AT GPT that houses NATA key resources. This allows ATs to instantly search for it, use it and leverage it.

Let us imagine we are preparing for an interview with an occupational employer, and we want to be ready with insight and

questions specific to the situation. Currently, we need to track down occupational AT resources on the web and NATA site, ask friends and colleagues for advice about the specialty, look up data on salaries and job growth, and review the compensation tools. We would then process this information for hours in advance and pull from it the pieces we think may be most valuable. On the other hand, an innovation that can come from technology is moving towards a GPT that houses only NATA information. Presented with the same situation, the process could look much different. Lead with an AI prompt to “Please help prepare me for an upcoming employment interview for an occupational AT position” would quickly produce a summary of key takeaways and predictions of questions and concerns. Ideas for questions to support my salary needs and ideas to improve my work-life balance would be waiting for my next prompt. This process, although using the same information, is so much more relevant to the situation and

offered at a speed that allows responsive interview management. This innovation is not out of reach.

While this process is achievable in the next few years, we would need to start by organizing current data in such ways that related topics are easier to find. Organization of our individual efforts and needs into “most likely related” categories will enable the information to be presented in downloadable chunks. An example of this insight is coming off the heels of the Council on Practice Advancement’s effort to better understand our employment models by asking expanded employment demographics questions in our membership renewal process. I hope you have noticed the newly added member renewal questions such as the populations we serve, our work site vs. our employer and other employment model questions. These answers provide actionable insight to inform the types of information ATs need. For example, a secondary school AT may need different resources when applying for employment as a direct employee of the school vs. as a contract employee even though they both work in a secondary setting.

As we better identify member practice insight and thus our needs, information can be organized with the goal of leveraging technology to put it at our fingertips when it is most needed.

How do you feel we can achieve greater retention and job satisfaction in the athletic training profession?

Retention and job satisfaction can be supported through several key strategies. I cannot overstate the impact that mentors have had on my perspective of the profession and my ability to navigate a career path. Professors, clinical instructors, and preceptors played a critical role in shaping my foundation. Building on that, we must continue to support our educators and equip them with resources focused on career satisfaction and career navigation that they can pass on to students.

As the cost of entering the profession continues to rise, it is equally important to help students understand return on investment, loan management, and personal financial planning. At the same time, we must strengthen our advocacy efforts to ensure

employers recognize the value athletic trainers bring and compensate them accordingly.

Finally, we need to explore and implement technology solutions that reduce administrative burden. Many of the challenges tied to improving working conditions such as clinical documentation, data analysis, outcomes management, and value-based care require both time and focused administrative effort. Thoughtfully applied technology can play a significant role in streamlining these demands and supporting clinicians in their work.

What is your response when people ask, “What is NATA doing for me?”

When athletic trainers suggest that the NATA does not provide value, my first response is to listen, understand their needs and identify points of friction. There is always room to learn and improve, and our association is no exception. If they seek more tangible value, I make it a priority to clarify the role of the NATA within the broader Athletic Training Alliance.

NATA plays a critical role in advocacy and

professional development. Its Governmental Affairs and Marketing and Communications teams, along with the NATA Political Action Committee, represent powerful advocacy efforts that individual athletic trainers would not be able to access on their own. In addition, NATA provides the largest continuing education resources and creates the most expansive opportunities for athletic trainers to gather, collaborate, and grow.

These are just a few examples of what NATA does on behalf of athletic trainers.

Get To Know David Gallegos

State and district: New Mexico, District 7, Rocky Mountain Athletic Trainers’ Association

Hometown and state: Las Cruces, NM

Family: I am lucky enough to marry my high school sweetheart. Denise is an elementary educator with more energy than her students. My daughter, Marissa, is in her senior year of Civil Engineering. My middle son, Isaiah, is a freshman studying International Business and my youngest son, Elija, is a high school senior with plans of becoming an AT.

Awards:

Warren Lee Memorial Athletic Training Scholarship, 1997

New Mexico Athletic Trainers’ Association Service Award, 2011

New Mexico Athletic Trainers’ Association, Hall of Fame, 2018

New Mexico State University Outstanding Alumni, 2023

Rocky Mountain Athletic Trainers’ Association, Distinguished Athletic Trainer, 2025

National Athletic Trainers’ Association, Most Distinguished Athletic Trainer, 2025

What item can’t you live without in the workplace?

My private advisory board is the one thing I cannot live without in the workplace. I have had so many great mentors, educators, students and colleagues and I think about them often. When I come across critical decisions at work and want to see things from different perspectives before I decide, I often think about these amazing people and consider the perspectives they would have had. I call these people my mental advisory board and do not leave home without them. The wonderful thing is that my Board is constantly expanding.

What makes this idea so important to me is that it reminds me that leadership is truly never a solo effort. Each person I come across helps me evolve my perspective and transforms

the way I think. Some voices on my board remind me to be bold, think strategically, and speak up, while others remind me to listen, be humble and learn. They provide a balanced perspective that is important especially when avoiding thinking in isolation.

You have your wallet, phone and keys – what is one other thing you can’t leave your house without?

I cannot leave my house without my tech. I am a huge fan of smart phones even when they were not so smart, wearables and most recently my META AI glasses. Tech lives on the cross hairs of fun and valuable, so it is easy for me to put it to use in meaningful ways.

I do think technology can make us better in many ways and more efficient. I can remember having my EMR App on my Palm Treo back in the early 2000’s and documenting on the go. It was slow by today’s standards, but still faster than documenting when I returned to the athletic training facility at the end of a long day. The expansion of broadband data opened the door to internet speed and to telehealth. My original skype name was Sports Injury Solutions. I used the platform to connect with family and friends and to help them with their health questions. These early experiences gave me a glimpse of what technology offers and the possibilities within our profession.

Nowadays tech is so much better and powerful. Not only can I document on the go, but I can also complete telehealth sessions, leverage AI to analyze and generate ideas and share life experiences with friends and family with such ease. When intentionally used, it becomes a strength rather than a distraction. You will be hard pressed to find me without my tech. It has become a natural and valuable part of how I work, learn, and engage.



Rob Marshall, LAT, ATC

I strongly believe that we as an organization needs to be nimbler when it comes to addressing and solving issues for our members. All too often, great ideas from individuals or committees can become bogged down in the layers of our association. This isn't intentional, but our current structure can make it difficult to be efficient and responsive. We as an association have proven recently that we are capable of swift, meaningful action with our response to the H2F campaign for our military athletic trainers. As President I would be committed to addressing our structure to ensure that our current model doesn't impede the progress that we can make and, in many cases, is much needed. I realize that when the term governance is mentioned people can get confused and anxious. When I speak of governance I am speaking of the most affective structure for our members. How can we address issues that our members face daily, develop solutions that address those issues and then efficiently implement the solutions. Athletic trainers are by nature problem solvers; it is time that we remove any barriers that hinder our ability to do just that.

The NATA Board of Directors has begun work on the new strategic plan. As this process unfolds, it is important to remember that the single most important job of the board is to set the direction for the association. While there can be many discussions on directions and priorities, the driving force must be a commitment to the plan once established. A strategic plan cannot be just "talking points". We need to develop a clear and concise plan with measurable outcomes. All decisions on projects, resources and requests must be viewed through the lens of the strategic plan. We are at a critical point in our association, and we need to align all our efforts to achieve the great things that are on our horizon.

It is time for a deep and honest look at our committee structure. Are our committees able to design and implement ideas that align their charge and the Associations Strategic Plan? Is there unnecessary redundancy in committee work? Are the right people at the table? The

volunteers of this association are one of our greatest assets. We need to ensure that their time and efforts are being used to their full potential. As our lives get increasingly more complicated, we need to uncomplicate our structure to ensure that great people can do great things.

Our districts can still effectively serve our geographical areas, but we need to explore deeper partnership between districts and the national organization that can be beneficial for both. We need to align both, so we are complementing each other rather than competing.

Our state associations are truly the foundation of our profession. There is a shared responsibility and interdependency between our state associations and the NATA. We need to develop and strengthen our relationships with states through a demonstrated willingness and desire to collaborate.

Retention and job satisfaction are not a new challenge and certainly not unique to athletic training. I think two specific areas to focus on are self-advocacy and setting selection. We can all agree that settings vary widely across our profession. The schedule of a secondary athletic trainer looks completely different from a clinical athletic trainer. The profession and the opportunities for athletic trainers have grown immensely over the last 20 years. Offering an honest look into the daily lives and schedules of these different opportunities is critical. I spent my first 27 years as an athletic trainer in the secondary school setting. I feel blessed to have known from the start that was the place I wanted to be, but for many they may not be so sure. Increased opportunity now enables our students and professionals to explore other options and interests. Public safety, military or even NASA, options I would have only dreamed about as a student, are now reality. The incredible part of being an athletic trainer, to me, is that our skills are valuable in so many settings. As our lives change, many of us have a desire or a need for our

schedules to change with it. A change in schedule shouldn't require a change in a profession.

The unique position that today's athletic training profession affords us is the opportunity to find satisfaction and still be an athletic trainer. While the NATA is the voice of the athletic training profession, in my experience, the most effective advocacy is done by the athletic trainers themselves. The NATA must continue to arm the members with facts to address legislators, the public, our patients and our employers.

With increased opportunity comes an increase in demand. The NATA needs to continue to produce resources for employers and for members to effectively navigate this issue through things like the salary survey and staffing models. We need to prepare our members to have the conversations and arm them with the metrics to strengthen the argument. We must enable our members to clearly communicate what a great job looks like and what should be expected in terms of salary, benefits and responsibilities. In the

end we must empower each member to have needed, and at times difficult, conversations to ensure a great working situation.

What does NATA do for me?

I love this question because there are so many answers depending on where you work! The short answer is the NATA is your voice in rooms you may not have access to. The easy response is at the federal legislative level and the vital role it plays in the growth of our profession. But it's so much more than that. When the NCAA believed there was an athletic training shortage, they reached out to the NATA. When our members were losing their jobs in the military, it was the NATA that quickly organized and responded to save jobs. There are countless examples of our organization doing critical work on the national level. But as a member myself it has always been more important to me, what does NATA do that tangibly changes my day-to-day practice. I believe we must be better at THAT message and answering the question every member

should ask themselves, "How does my membership affect me personally?" It's different for each of us. I could list many things that I use on a daily basis – continuing education, white papers, research in the journals. However, I have been involved in updating my state practice act through a process that was directly supported by the NATA. Opportunities for leadership growth through volunteering with the NATA. The short answer is when I had a challenge in my professional life, if I turned to the NATA to ask for help, it was there. At times it was through resources directly provided by the NATA. At other times, often some of the most critical times, it was a network of professionals with their own experiences that the NATA was able to provide. In those times, the NATA wasn't an office. The NATA wasn't a brand. The NATA was US. It was during these times that the NATA most clearly demonstrated what it does for me. Now each of us needs to ask ourselves that question and answer it for ourselves rather than relying on someone to answer it for us. §

Get To Know Rob Marshall

State and district: Nebraska, District Five

Hometown and state: Columbus, Nebraska

Family:

Wife: Denise Marshall, ATC

Son: Cyrus Marshall, ATC

Daughter: Harper Marshall

Son: Traedyn Marshall

Awards:

MAATA HOF, NSATA HOF, NATA Servant's Heart Award, NATA Service Award, Nebraska Big Pals/Little Pals, Big Pal of the Year, NSATA "George Sullivan AT of the Year", MAATA MDAT Award, Nebraska State Athletic Administrators' Association Service Award.

What item can't you live without in the workplace?

When asked which item I can't live without at work and never leave the house without, the answer is the same for both questions! My AirPods, Denise gave them to me for Christmas a few years ago and I swear they never leave my ears. To explain, I am a firm believer in "more conversations"! I tend to take that literally. I much prefer to have a conversation over sending texts or emails. I just feel the connection and communication is much better that way. With my schedule I must be able to do both, and often at the same time! So, don't be surprised if you send me an email and then get a call seconds after hitting the send button.