

# Connecting OUTSIDE THE BOX

How a secondary school AT's conversation with COPA's Performing Arts Committee chair highlighted the importance of interdisciplinary and inter-setting collaboration

BY CLAIRE WILLIAMS

**A**lthough networking within athletic training can be intimidating, more often than not, it leads to new opportunities, great connections and a better appreciation for the profession. The NATA Council on Practice Advancement is a great place to expand horizons and learn about just how much athletic trainers can really do.

Among its 10 committees, which span emerged settings, health care administration, private practice and analytics and outcomes, among other topics, COPA encourages interdisciplinary collaboration within athletic training, and its members are more than willing to be of assistance.

"COPA is a group of highly motivated individuals who are subject matter experts within their unique settings and are paving the way to grow the field of athletic training to truly provide health care everywhere," said COPA Performing Arts Committee Chair Amanda Donahue, MS, ATC.

Rich Garcia, ATC, a secondary school athletic trainer and doctoral student, initially reached out to COPA because of the Performing Arts Committee – the dance and cheer teams were among his patients, and he wanted a connection to better serve them and really, he said, to learn more.

Enter Donahue.

"Amanda is one of those ATs who exemplifies a leader, who constantly gives her time up to elevate the profession," Garcia said after connecting with her.

Their conversation led to a connection between settings. One that provided both Garcia and Donahue with a learning experience – Garcia was set with resources and new contacts in the National Basketball Association and Donahue equipped with new insight from a young AT to better serve NATA members as a committee.

"The largest part of our conversation involved discussing the value around making connections and developing relationships both with other performing arts ATs and key stakeholders within your place of work," Donahue said.

Through their conversation, Donahue was able to direct Garcia to resources within the NATA website and COPA and performing arts webpages, as well as outside performing arts medicine organizations, such as the Performing Arts Athletic Trainers' Society, Athletes and the Arts, International Association for Dance Medicine & Science and the Performing Arts Medicine Association. Additionally, she connected him with two other

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As part of the NATA Council on Practice Advancement, the Performing Arts Committee works to represent all current performing arts ATs and provide resources to guide the next generation of ATs in this setting. Chair Amanda Donahue, MS, ATC, pictured above leading a course, encourages collaboration between settings to improve patient care for all ATs.

ATs who work with NBA dance teams, as a way to further the conversation and the potential for future opportunities.

“I feel like a lot of information presented in our meeting is helpful for me to present to my performing arts high school moderators and coaches to help our performers perform healthier,” said Garcia about their conversation.

“To hear the stories about how higher-level performing arts can benefit from ATs services makes me feel confident in that the secondary level can benefit as well.”

Consisting of four athletic trainers from diverse settings within the performing arts, part of the Performing Arts Committee’s service to NATA members is taking the time to connect with athletic trainers like Garcia.

“We are deeply interested in representing all current performing arts ATs and providing resources to guide the next generation of ATs within this specialty,” Donahue said. “We strive to stay on top of the challenges seen in the performing arts athletic training community and advocate for performing artists.”

Networking beyond a particular practice setting was a great experience for Garcia, as well.

“Interacting with different settings helped me to understand what ATs true potential is – limitless,” he said.

“Inter-setting connections, I believe, can help connect ATs who share genuine similar interests, and I don’t think that any of our emerging settings are out of our reach.

“So many opportunities may spawn from these interactions, but I believe the greatest opportunity is to teach and educate.”

Donahue echoed that sentiment, as well.

“There is always something you can take away from another person’s experience to broaden your own scope of practice and to enhance your patient care,” she said.

The networking that transpired between Donahue and Garcia started with an interest and a simple email. It resulted in a connection that was impactful for ATs from different settings, which continues to increase opportunities for collaboration and advocacy.

“My advice? Connect with COPA,” Garcia said. “Connect and learn and share experiences. Connect with these wonderful people and learn more about their experiences – the more confident you are about the emerging settings, the more you can advocate for our profession.”

## Tips for Success

**From Amanda Donahue, MS, ATC, COPA Performing Arts Committee chair:**

*“I always try to keep an open mind and try to learn from others outside of my setting. There is always something you can take away from another person’s experience to broaden your own scope of practice and to enhance your patient care. This can be not only within different settings within athletic training, but also with other health care and fitness professionals.”*

**From Rich Garcia, ATC:**

*“My advice? Connect with COPA. Connect and learn and share experiences. Connect with these wonderful people and learn more about their experiences – the more confident you are about the emerging settings, the more you can advocate for our profession.”*

### BONUS

**From Donahue:**

*“If you are an athletic trainer who thinks out of the box and are interested in working in a non-traditional setting, then COPA is the place to be.”*

For more information about athletic training in emerging settings, including resources, visit [www.nata.org/professional-interests/emerging-settings](http://www.nata.org/professional-interests/emerging-settings). For information on performing arts specifically, visit [www.nata.org/professional-interests/emerging-settings/performing-arts](http://www.nata.org/professional-interests/emerging-settings/performing-arts).

Additionally, Donahue recommends staying up to date on Gather, [gather.nata.org](http://gather.nata.org), where performing arts will be added as a specialization. NATA members, including student members, are also be able to search for mentors on Gather.

To connect with a member of COPA, view the council’s roster, which includes a list of all committees, at [www.nata.org/committee-practice-advancement](http://www.nata.org/committee-practice-advancement). §