

GIVING YOUNG PROFESSIONALS

What They Need

How the NATA Early Professionals' Committee and NATA Career Advancement Committee are working to streamline access, connection and support for members

BY CLAIRE WILLIAMS

“Access, connection and support are the principles of how we create the foundation for our career career. ... It is essential during the early career phase to utilize these principles to help launch your career in a meaningful way.”

– Emily Mulkey, MS, LAT, ATC,
NATA Early Professionals' Committee Chair

Out of the thousands of members who constitute NATA, the young professional community makes up the organization's majority of membership – and they need specific support to ensure success in their lives, professionally and personally. The development that happens between years one and 12 of certification is monumental, life-changing even, and having the resources to assist in navigating that development is important.

That system of support is what the NATA Early Professionals' Committee and NATA Career Advancement Committee are working to solidify for young professional athletic trainers.

Early professionals are defined by NATA as athletic trainers in any setting with one to six years of certification. Career advancing professionals are athletic trainers who have been certified for seven to 12 years. The division between the needs of early professional and career advancing professionals continues to grow, and EPC and CAC are working to not only offer specific resources to each group, but streamline the transition from one career stage to the next.

EPC and CAC are separately focusing on increasing the access, connection and support for all young professionals while tailoring resources and communication to each specific group.

“Access, connection and support are the principles of how we create the foundation for our career,” said EPC Chair Emily Mulkey, MS, LAT, ATC. “No one can easily achieve their dream career alone, and it is essential during the early career phase to utilize these principles to help launch your career in a meaningful way.”

Similarly, but more specific to career advancing professionals, CAC Chair Nicolette Harris, DAT, LAT, ATC, said having tools and resources tailored to the specific stage of your career is vital to professional success.

“As a committee, we believe that access, connection and particularly support are critical provisions for the athletic trainer with seven to 12 years of experience because these individuals are most likely to suffer from decreased career satisfaction and professional burnout,” she said.

“For athletic trainers seeking career advancement, access is less about establishing a professional network and more about securing access to new skills and responsibilities. Likewise, it becomes about connecting with individuals in administrative and leadership positions to obtain the support needed to achieve long-term professional goals.”

They both hope members see the distinction between each population's needs and find the collaboration to address their challenges helpful.

Here's how the EPC and CAC are working toward streamlining the access, connection and support for young professionals as their careers develop.

“Utilizing these networks can offer athletic trainers the support needed to advance their skill set, obtain mentors, stay current with employment and leadership opportunities as well as obtain access to other valuable resources for career advancement.”

– Nicolette Harris, DAT, LAT, ATC, NATA Career Advancement Committee Chair

ACCESS

Emily Mulkey: Access for early professionals is the ability to meet, interact and learn from professionals and mentors that can create career and professional development opportunities. Access is not only access to people; but to resources, educational options and tools that, in combination with mentorships and connections, can establish a strong foundation for individualized professional growth. To create better access to both resources and contact points, we are teaming up with the CAC and the NATA Research & Education Foundation to streamline resources across district, state and committee websites. Through this, we hope to make transitions to new settings, states and jobs smoother.

Nicolette Harris: A foundational goal of the CAC is to ensure that each member in our demographic is well-informed on how to access and connect with their local, regional and national leaders. By providing easier access to leadership, we believe our members can establish these mutually beneficial relationship. This will not only assist the organization in understanding their unique needs, but will also help members increase their visibility with industry leaders, uncover potential opportunities and obtain easy access to established and personalized resources for career development.

CONNECTION

Mulkey: Connection centers around the belief that our networks create opportunities for growth and development. We’re creating partnerships with a variety of other groups and committees to provide connections that professionals can further utilize. This past year, we released a webinar series with the help of the NATA Council on Practice Advancement and the NATA Student Leadership Committee highlighting non-traditional athletic training settings and transitioning into those roles. This coming

year, we want to utilize Gather to create a space for casual and supportive conversation among early professionals.

More collaborations equal more opportunities for professionals to find their connection points to NATA. Both clinically and within NATA, athletic trainers never succeed in silos. Therefore, the more collaboration and connection points we can create as a committee, the more we can accomplish within our pillars of access, connection and support.

Harris: By connecting with other professionals, athletic trainers can establish, build and nurture relationships with peers, leaders and prospective employers. Utilizing these networks can offer athletic trainers the support needed to advance their skill set, obtain mentors, stay current with employment and leadership opportunities as well as obtain access to other valuable resources for career advancement.

SUPPORT

Mulkey: Support can show in many forms, but from the NATA leadership to its membership, it is the tailored resources created to meet the needs of its professionals. It requires the harmonization of these pillars to achieve that strong foundation for professional growth.

To best support our membership, we are looking first to make sure we best know our membership. Through the creation of the coming COVID-19 survey, we hope to best assess how our early professionals have changed during the pandemic. Priorities, life situations, financial and mental statuses were all impacted by the challenges that COVID brought. This may mean that the needs and desires of our next generation of professionals will change. We want to provide the most accurate information to our professional organization and profession as a whole, including our current and future leaders, on how we have all changed and what we must do to transition to the future of athletic training.

Harris: Like Emily said, CAC is currently partnering with EPC to determine the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic not only transition to practice, but professional retention and career advancement in athletic training. It is our hope that information will inform us on the development of supportive member resources, which meet the changing landscape of the athletic training practice and athletic training employment post-pandemic. §

Tips For Success



From EPC: Remember your value and values. As you grow and gain opportunities in this profession, let your values be your guide. Even the hardest of decisions, based off your core values, ensure strong choices. Know what drives you inside and outside of your job. And, most importantly, remember your value. While you’ll never be above doing some of the basics and hard work, your value should never be undersold. We are more than our jobs and can still excel and make this profession a long-term and exciting option for our lives.

From CAC: If a young professional’s career is not advancing as quickly as they would like, it may be time to use their access and connections to speak up and ask for the support or even directly for the advanced position that they want. Performance alone won’t always provide opportunities for advancement; therefore, career-advancing professionals should plan for direct communication with their administration, leadership and mentors that expresses their dedication, value, long-term goals and desire to advance their careers.