

# THE Evolution OF AT CAREER DEVELOPMENT

## A before-and-after look into the NATA Career Center

By Lydia Hicks

As the NATA Career Center statistics reveal in the December 2022 *NATA News*, this member-only benefit celebrated a stellar year as a valuable online avenue for NATA members to find jobs.

Created more than 10 years ago, the NATA Career Center was developed to further NATA's support for members to help them land their desired job.

### AT Career Development Then

According to NATA Historical Commission Chair Roger Kalisiak, AT Ret., in the mid-'50s, NATA included job opportunity announcements in its newsletter publication.

"There would be little sidebars, [for instance] saying, 'By the way, did you know that the University of Michigan is looking for an athletic trainer?'" he said.

This strategy expanded through word-of-mouth transfer of information.

By the early 1970s, the process had progressed to a file system in which job opportunities were listed in card files.

"In 1974, there was a request for about \$2,000 from the board of directors to start to modernize what they were doing by using card files and [the career development team] would post them up on bulletin boards at the [NATA Clinical Symposia & AT Expo]," Kalisiak said.

In the late '70s, the process started becoming more formalized, and the association evolved its members' career support efforts by setting up a kiosk where people could interview at the NATA convention, he said. Then, under the leadership of former NATA Executive Director Eve Becker-Doyle, the system became monetized for schools and universities interested in posting jobs. By the mid-1980s, NATA charged employers wishing to list job announcements approximately \$200 per year for circulation.

However, increased job opportunities for members didn't come without its challenges, the most predominant being communication. Kalisiak said that the communication difficulty stemmed from the old technology of those early years.

"When I graduated in 1973, I sent out like 400 blind letters to different colleges and universities [when looking for a job]," he said. "That was before computers, so we hand-typed all those letters [on typewriters], signed them, put them in envelopes and mailed them out – and I had about five or six interviews in that particular situation."

Not only was writing and posting job applications slow and monotonous, finding the right contact to address in an application also tended to pose a bottleneck in obtaining employment.

"It was also the communication aspect of trying to find the right person to talk to," Kalisiak said. "I went through the NCAA blue book. Sometimes, I would get a letter back from the athletic trainer and, sometimes, the coach. So, I think that was the biggest challenge in acquiring the jobs."

Accompanying the communication barrier was the fact that the ATs who had connections with coaching staffs had a higher advantage.

"The other thing was coaches bringing in their athletic trainer that worked with them at a previous institution, inserting them and letting the other people go," Kalisiak said. "That was a difficult thing because there were people capable of doing jobs, but didn't have the 'in.'"

As the saying goes, "necessity is the mother of invention." With the establishment of the NATA Career Center came a more streamlined and equitable process, which not only increased AT job opportunities, but also connected more ATs with more employers via state-of-the-art online technology.

### The Career Center Now

Not only has the NATA Career Center broken records in terms of the number of postings, participation in it has increased across board. This feat is one of the milestones it was established for.

The NATA Career Center showcases members' professional caliber and helps them connect with future employers. It provides unique benefits to NATA members not only with regards to professional growth, but also support, connection and advocacy. With professional growth, the variety of jobs posted in the NATA Career Center allows an AT, at any phase in their career, to seek out new opportunities for professional development. As a support to members, the NATA Career Center is a member-only benefit, giving members a serious advantage over nonmembers in the competitive job-seeking market. The NATA Career Center is also a hub for connection between job-seeking members and prospective employers. As the world's largest and most comprehensive listing of athletic training jobs, the NATA Career Center connects available positions and employers with ATs ready to elevate their career. In addition to job opportunities, the NATA Career Center provides members with resources that can help them better advocate for themselves with potential employers.

The NATA Career Center works closely with its vendor, YM Careers, to identify new opportunities from the industry. Additionally, the NATA Career Center utilizes feedback from committee volunteers and from the general membership to make changes that better serve members. In years past, this action has led to the addition of form fields that provide more clarity to job seekers as well as the adoption of new features and filters to improve user experience.

Members are encouraged to submit their résumés to the NATA Career Center at [www.nata.org/career-education/career-center](http://www.nata.org/career-education/career-center).

Employers seeking to post job opportunities can do so via the NATA Career Center's webpage as well.

## Updates And Potential For Future Growth

To further advance their careers, members can look forward to networking and employment opportunities available at the in-person NATA Career Center during the 74th NATA Clinical Symposia & AT Expo June 21-24

in Indianapolis. For more information, visit [convention.nata.org](http://convention.nata.org).

As members continue to participate in their own professional growth using the NATA Career Center, this unique AT career network will continue to evolve, helping members grow together with their association and

move the profession forward.

For questions about the NATA Career Center, members can contact NATA Member Services at 972-532-8897 or [membership@nata.org](mailto:membership@nata.org); and employers can contact YM Careers at 727-497-5972 or [clientserv@yourmembership.com](mailto:clientserv@yourmembership.com). \$

## Experiencing the NATA Career Center

Andrea Lobacz, PhD, ATC, who applied for and was offered an assistant athletic trainer position at Columbia University via the NATA Career Center, and Tim Kelly, MS, ATC, an employer whose experience with the NATA Career Center helped his organization find the most qualified candidates, share their firsthand experience using the NATA Career Center to find a job and qualified employees, respectively.

**Andrea Lobacz, PhD, ATC,**  
Associate Professor  
Neumann University

### What inspired you to utilize the NATA Career Center for your job search?

As an NATA member, I was aware of the benefits of the Career Center and had always known it as the go-to spot for AT jobs. I felt confident in using the Career Center in my search and appreciated that all the job listings were true AT positions. I was inspired by students who had graduated in my program before me and other athletic trainers who I was working with who had successfully secured employment through the Career Center.

### What was the AT job search like for you?

At the time of my first AT job search, I was under a significant amount of stress as I was finishing my master's degree program and thesis, while completing a graduate assistantship. I was a GA with a Division I track and field program that was in the midst of championship season, which included a large amount of travel. Hence, my job search time was limited and I felt pressure to find employment following graduation. However, I did not want to accept just any job that was offered to me, I wanted the job to be the right fit. I was checking the Career Center every day for new listings and it was reassuring to know that I was able to view jobs as they opened. Even at a very busy time, through use of the Career Center, I was able to seek out and interview – by phone and on-campus – with several employers who had job openings that met the exact criteria I was looking for.

### How did the Career Center helped you in your AT job search?

I used the Career Center to secure my first job following graduation from A.T. Still University of Health Sciences in Arizona. The Career Center allowed me to connect with staff across the country at Columbia University in New York. Following a phone interview, I met with a staff member at the NATA Clinical Symposia & AT Expo, then traveled to New York for an on-campus interview. While I had other interviews and offers, all possible through the Career Center, Columbia felt like a perfect fit for me and I accepted the offer for employment.

### From your experience, how does the Career Center differ from other job sites?

The Career Center is a not only a comprehensive offering of athletic training jobs just for NATA members, but it also offers the ability to search jobs using AT-specific filters, such as job setting, district and others. This can minimize search time for a job seeker and can help to find the best potential fit in job listings, without having to sort through large numbers of unrelated positions.

### Why is it important for ATs to take advantage of the Career Center?

It is important for ATs to take advantage of the Career Center because you can be sure that job listings meet a specific salary minimum based on the most recent NATA Salary Survey data. Even if you aren't actively searching for a job, the Career Center allows you to set job alerts that can be sent right to your email. Additionally, you can upload your résumé and interested employers can seek you out. The Career Center is made for the AT and provides an excellent job search

experience with many other tools for job seeking and career planning.

**Tim Kelly, MS, ATC**  
Head Athletic Trainer  
U.S. Military Academy

### What inspired you to utilize the NATA Career Center for your hiring process?

Over the years, I have found the NATA Career Center to be the most utilized site for our profession. Utilizing this site provides us with the most qualified candidates for our open positions.

### As an NATA member using the NATA Career Center, what does the AT hiring process look like for you?

This hiring process is one of the most important aspects of my job. I am trying to find highly motivated individuals who will mesh in our unique and challenging environment here at the academy.

### How has the NATA Career Center helped you as an employer in athletic training?

I believe the Career Center assists us in portraying our position, job qualifications, benefits etc., in a manner that helps us identify the most qualified individuals.

### From your experience, how does the NATA Career Center differ from other job sites?

We do not get unqualified individuals applying on the Career Center.

### Why is it important for ATs to take advantage of the NATA Career Center?

I think it is the most effective method to hire ATs in our current environment.