



Introducing Your NATA President-Elect

Learn more about A.J. Duffy III, who will take office as NATA's 16th president in June 2024, in this and future issues of *NATA News* and on NATA's social media channels

What are your goals once you take office as president?

Membership Engagement

Our members are our most precious asset. To provide them with the services they need, we must maintain and increase our membership. This will ensure that funding will be available for the many initiatives, current and future, by NATA.

During my tenure as president, I will:

- Communicate with members weekly
- Engage in informal "Ask A.J." sessions at each meeting I attend
- Meet with CAATE-accredited programs either in person or virtually

Additionally, I will spend time with our members at their place of employment. It could be the sideline during a local middle school athletic event, along the line where Chinook helicopters are built or even at the rehearsal of ballet company.

Simply by listening and working side by side with our members I will directly gain better understanding of their needs and concerns.

Stakeholder Engagement

I would like to continue the conversation with our key stakeholders to discuss the values and

concerns of our membership. Emphasize the message on how we are at the epicenter of the health care – both physical and mental – that we provide. I would also like to have subject matter experts present to these and other groups:

- NCAA
- National Junior College Athletic Association
- National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics
- National Association of Collegiate Directors of Athletics
- Parent Teacher Association
- National Federation of State High School Associations

Additionally, we should expand our reach in other areas such as:

- Associations for risk management
- Associations for human resources
- Boards of education

Recognition

The American Medical Association recognized our profession in 1990. To enhance our position in the U.S. health care delivery system, we need to finalize recognition by the Centers for Medicare/Medicaid Services. We also live in an international society and the globalization of our profession is upon us. We see members regularly working outside the boundaries of our nation; the field of athletic training and therapy is alive and well in Canada, Japan, Ireland and has roots in Spain and Jordan. As the profession continues to permeate the world, we should seek acknowledgment from the International Olympic Committee and World Health Organization to enhance our position in the global health care delivery system.

AT2050

The pièce de résistance will be AT2050. Utilizing the recently released NATA Strategic Plan as a framework, AT2050 will be a comprehensive look into the future of athletic training. The year 2050 has been chosen as it will be NATA's centennial year! This will take the collaboration of the entire strategic alliance, our state organizations and more. This will create a culture of foresight, allowing us to be more proactive and less reactive. Some key data points to evaluate will be (and this is not a complete list) how will the following be affected:

- Membership
- In-person attendance at conventions in the digitized world
- Credentialing
- Education
- The AT job market
- Health care

The findings of this wide-ranging study will give both the short- and long-term successes and challenges that face this great profession of ours. We will work together to find the solutions to pave our path into the future.

What are the most pivotal issues facing the athletic training profession?

Since the inception of NATA in 1950, we have blossomed into a major player in the health care delivery system in our country. We were asked to sit at the table with others in the White House; we are world leaders in concussion research and care. We have seen significant growth in secondary schools and many emerging settings, including the military, performing arts and

public safety. We have seen women join the ranks of the previously male-dominated professional sports. Our members have the drive and desire to expand into worldwide health care opportunities; yet after nearly 75 years, we still face many of the same challenges.

We are still not fully recognized for our knowledge and skill set by many of the same allied health care providers we have worked side-by-side with for decades. In some states, physical therapists have been joined by nurses, occupational therapists and others to block upgrades to our state practice acts, which impede the ability of our members to work in many settings.

Yes, we have made some inroads in the secondary school setting, but are they adequately staffed to provide the necessary health care? We see members at the college/university setting leaving the profession dissatisfied with pay, working conditions and work-life harmony. We see members who feel disenfranchised because of the lack of inclusiveness, transparency and effective communication. What about youth sports? Members are excited to take their skills globally, but may face the same issues as their domestic colleagues.

Over time, disparate points of view have diluted NATA's unity, weakened its strength, potency and ability to support its membership and achieve its goals and mission. NATA must continue to be the "go to" association and the voice of the athletic training profession.

Many of these issues are currently being addressed by NATA, value models, third party reimbursement, task forces on inclusion and globalization of the profession. As your president, I will ensure that NATA will continue to listen to the needs and concerns of our membership, work to resolve them and inform you of our findings in a timely fashion.

Why did you want to be NATA's next president?

I am as excited about this profession today as when I was an undergraduate. I adapted this quote from Fielding H. Yost, former football coach and athletic director at the University of Michigan that describes my passion for our profession: "Let me reiterate the spirit of athletic training. It is based upon an unwavering loyalty to athletic training and all her ways; an enthusiasm that makes it second nature for ATs to spread the word of our profession to the world's distant outposts; a conviction that nowhere is there a better profession, in any way, than this great profession of ours!"

The reason is simple, I wanted to become your next president to work with the 11 members of the NATA Board of Directors, the members of the strategic alliance, the more than 30 committee chairs and many liaisons, the state leadership and the NATA staff to propel our profession forward. Many of our challenges over the past 20 years are still the same: federal recognition, state regulation, strengthening our footprint into the health care delivery system in our varied settings, inclusiveness and work-life harmony. Other challenges will surface, and we will enthusiastically work together to attack them on behalf of our members.

Over the past 35 years, I have served this great profession of ours in many different capacities: as a committee member, a committee chair, coordinated two district meetings and held several elected offices. These positions have been at the state, regional and national levels. Each of these roles honed my skills to become a more effective listener, delegator and communicator. These experiences will allow me to collaborate with these committed leaders for athletic training. I welcome the opportunity to serve you as the 16th president of NATA. §

A.J. Duffy III MS, ATC, PT

Current Position: Head Athletic Trainer & Physical Therapist, Widener University

Career: Head Athletic Trainer & Physical Therapist, Widener University (1990-present); Assistant Athletic Trainer & Physical Therapist, University of Michigan (1984-90); Assistant Athletic Trainer, Temple University (1981-83)

NATA Involvement: District Two Director, NATA Research & Education Foundation Board of Directors (2022-23); Member, NATA International Committee (2021-23); Editorial Advisor, Sports Medicine Legal Digest and NATA News (2020-23); District Two Director, NATA Board of Directors (2015-20); Member, NATA DST Committee (2012-15); Treasurer, District Two (2012-15); Member, NATA Committee on Professional Ethics (2011-14); Member, NATA Convention Planning Committee (2008-10); Convention Co-Host AT, 2010 NATA Clinical Symposia & AT Expo- Philadelphia (2010); Member, NATA Foundation Physician & Collegiate Cohort (2008-09)