



# Strategic Plan 2023-2025



# A LETTER FROM KATHY



It is my pleasure to share our strategic plan with you. When we started our strategic vision casting process in the fall of 2021, our first step was to reach out to you, our members, to better understand your needs, wants and desires for your NATA membership and the athletic training profession.

The member assessment survey was an essential piece of data we collected and analyzed. Your input, along with other pieces of information that provided a full view of the association industry and athletic training landscape, was vital to your NATA Board of Directors as we spent two days in January 2022 vision casting and creating our strategic priorities.

Know that you have been at the center of our work as we set the stage for not only the next three years, but the future of the profession we all love and the association we support.

While the feedback hasn't always been easy to hear, it has been impactful. You have been heard. Whether an active member, leader or nonmember, themes emerged that helped inform where we – the national association – need to go and what is important to the ATs of today and tomorrow. Our path forward is centered on this feedback, and I thank all of you for being a part of that process.

In this brochure, you will get an insider's look at the strategic vision casting process as well as the data that was collected and analyzed. You'll also get a preview of the new strategic plan and its five pillars, which was unveiled to the membership in the fall of 2022.

I hope this not only provides insight into where NATA is headed, but your vital role in getting us there. We're in this together, and while staff and leadership work to operationalize our strategic plan and its five pillars, we need you. Where do you see yourself in the five pillars? How can you help us foster community? How can you lend your expertise to cultivate development, growth and sustainability of the profession? How can you elevate understanding of our profession and your comprehensive skill set as an athletic trainer?

NATA is your home, and we are greAT. Together, we will be better than we ever imagined.

**Kathy Dieringer, EdD, LAT, ATC**  
**NATA President**

# A LETTER FROM DAVE



## Measure Twice, Cut Once

**W**ith some terrible, somewhat mediocre and even pretty decent (as long as you don't look at that one spot) tiling jobs, drywall repairs, cabinet installations, plumbing upgrades and so forth strewn in the wake of my weekend warrior life, I happily admit that I am a DIYer (you know, until I have to call someone).

For someone who has spent a career at a desk, I find building and fixing things very rewarding.

These days you can find all the information you need for the how-tos, including cable networks with 24-hour-a-day programming. Back in the day, there were very limited options. The one that captured me was PBS and "This Old House." I learned many of my "skills" from carpenter Norm Abram (I even have his autograph).

His key axiom is "measure twice, cut once." Great for carpentry and words to live by.

It is fantastic business thinking with great resource utilization and conservation, excellent human capital focus and concentration – all yielding a high-quality result with little waste, including resources and time.

For NATA, our "measure twice, cut once" is comparable to our mission, vision and strategic plan. As you have seen, we have completed the process to update our strategic plan.

Our dedicated board of directors and staff did the heavy lifting and spent the long hours to consider every angle, most importantly, member feedback. The highest praise I can give goes to President Kathy Dieringer, an extraordinary leader, and Associate Executive Director Tamesha Logan, who was exemplary in this process for staff.

These leaders and our organization are great, but we are not without challenges. We serve a profession that works effectively in many different settings, creating specific needs within those settings to help members succeed. In addition, athletic training as a whole requires strategic attention, including within government affairs and public relations.

It is not a question of trying to be all things to all members and all athletic trainers. Our structure, with our diverse group of councils, committees and advisory groups, allow a two-way channel with our board and allow us to tailor benefits to "meet members where they are" (quote credit, Past President Tory Lindley).

To me, it comes down to, if you are an athletic trainer, we are the home for you to help you succeed and provide value to your employer, your patients and your community.

Back to the challenge – how do we resource these activities? How do we prioritize them, especially in economically challenged times?

The answers start with this strategic plan. That plan comes to life when we place as many measurements in it as we can. Solutions are found within those committees, councils and advisory groups. They are found within leaders who will help us map projects to this plan and understand that prioritization is the key.

Following Norm's lead to upgrade our house, we need to expertly order the materials that are required and wisely use them with as little waste as possible, by measuring twice, cutting once.

**Dave Saddler**  
Executive Director





## OUR MISSION:

The mission of the National Athletic Trainers' Association is to represent, engage and foster the continued growth and development of the athletic training profession and athletic trainers as unique health care providers.

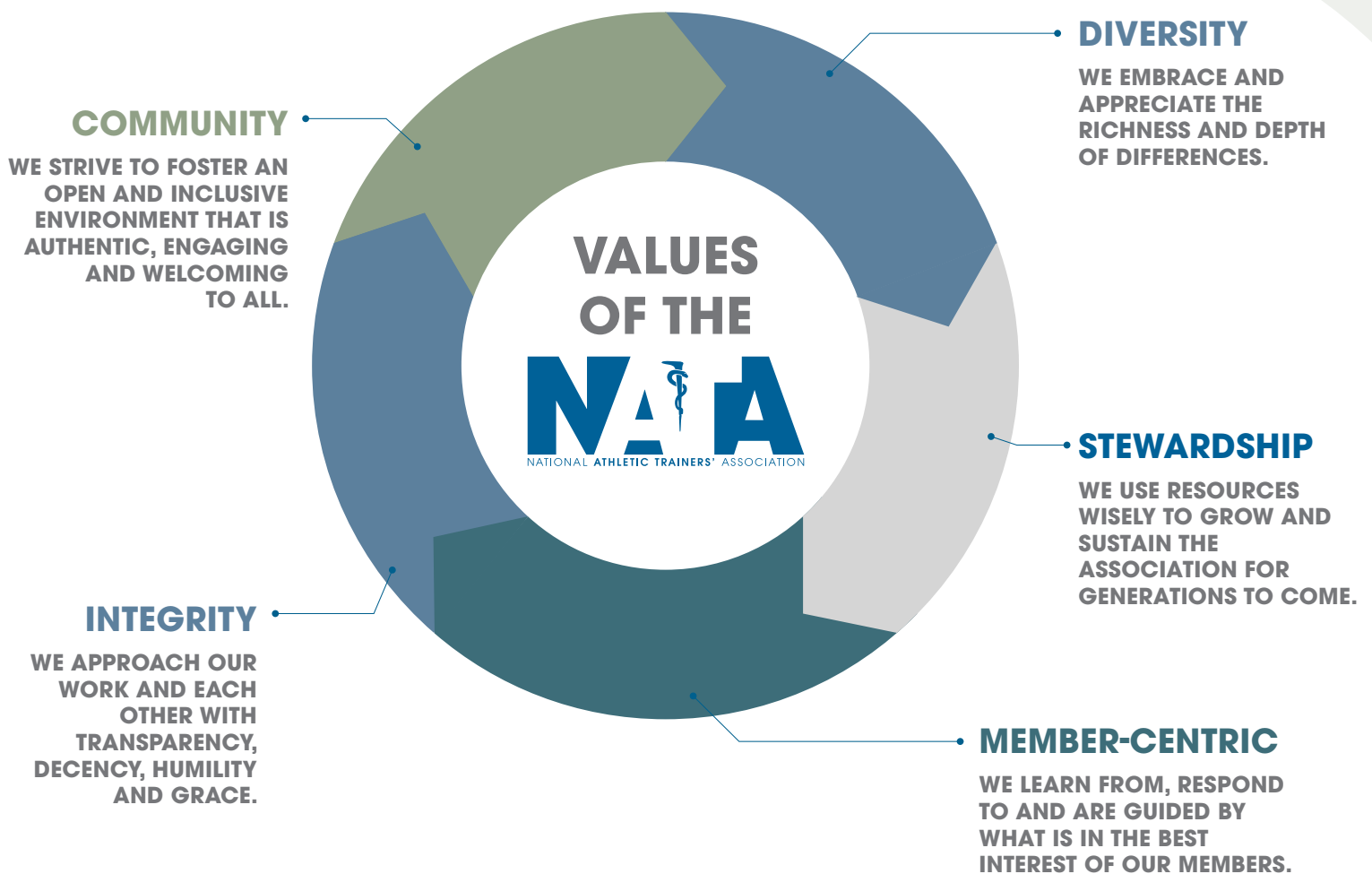
# OUR VISION:

Athletic trainers will be globally recognized as vital practitioners in the delivery and advancement of health care. Through passionate provision of unique services, athletic trainers will be an integral part of the inter-professional health care team.



# NATA VALUES

Our shared beliefs and guiding principles.



# DIVERSITY, EQUITY, INCLUSION & ACCESS COMMITMENT

We are merging our words and actions to inspire our members, leaders and staff to champion and deliver on diversity, equity, inclusion and access within NATA and the athletic training profession.

## TO REALIZE OUR VISION, NATA COMMITS TO:

- 1: Cultivating an inclusive and welcoming environment.
- 2: Providing programming, research and resources to support cultural competency and ensure athletic trainers are equipped with the knowledge and skills to better serve diverse populations.
- 3: Ensuring that the values of diversity, equity, inclusion and access are embedded in continuing education, conferences, communications, and the work of the association.
- 4: Examining processes, policies, practices, communications, structures and barriers with an equity lens to promote authentic engagement, access, and inclusion of diverse individuals.
- 5: Increasing transparency and accountability on diversity, equity, inclusion and access by sharing data and information about our journey and commitments.
- 6: Supporting and intentionally promoting a diverse athletic training profession.

**For more on our commitment to diversity and inclusion, visit:**

[nata.org/deia](https://nata.org/deia)





**OUR GOALS**



# GOAL 1:

Enhance member experience, engagement and community.

NATA is essential to advancing the athletic training profession as well as supporting members transitioning into and currently practicing athletic training. Members are earned and retained by the value and experience we provide that improves their lives. Through frequent and collective member feedback we will advance our community by engaging members, attracting leaders who bring rich perspectives, experiences and supporting athletic trainers who desire to practice at the top of their skill set.

## OBJECTIVES:

- 1:** Clarify value and provide solutions. Establish member value propositions that address the evolving needs within varied membership segments to provide direction in the assessment and development of member benefits and resources.
- 2:** Increase member engagement. Refine and build more compelling solutions that address member needs.
- 3:** Effectively articulate member value. Refine member communications and platforms to deepen awareness of NATA's work among NATA leadership, members and relevant constituent bodies.
- 4:** Strengthen community. Enhance opportunities for NATA to provide professional community for members of all backgrounds, settings and career stages.
- 5:** Expand and diversify leadership. Review and cultivate the pathways and structure of NATA leadership positions to facilitate broader interest, access and engagement.

# GOAL 2:

Cultivate the development, growth and sustainability of the athletic training profession.

As the leading organization committed to the continued growth of the profession, introducing the best and brightest to athletic training, increasing diversity within our profession and supporting the unique and global needs of members practicing today is critical to the sustainability of the profession and the role of athletic trainers in patient care. Through creative and intentional investments in professional educational enrollment, self-advocacy, professional development and by addressing key determinants of attrition, we will meet, and generate even greater, demand for athletic training.

## OBJECTIVES:

- 1:** Attract future ATs. Increase efforts to attract, diversify, facilitate and support the next generation of athletic trainers.
- 2:** Advance knowledge. Identify and develop programs to address impending advances in patient care.
- 3:** Support self-advocacy. Enhance value-driven resources and professional networking opportunities to complement self-advocacy efforts.
- 4:** Examine barriers to AT retention. Establish a disciplined focus to counteract key determinants of attrition within the profession.

# GOAL 3:

Elevate understanding of and regard for the comprehensive skill set of athletic trainers.

The domains of athletic training, along with continued clinical and professional development, have positioned the athletic trainer as one of the most versatile in health care, with a transferable skill set that is reflected in the growing demand and expanding settings. Elevating efforts to educate key stakeholders on the impact athletic trainers have on work, life and sport will create greater clarity on the value athletic trainers provide in all settings, enrich inter-professional practice teams and relationships to support the overall advancement of public health.

## OBJECTIVES:

- 1:** Deepen understanding of AT impact. Increase efforts to expand perception of athletic training to reflect the full scope of practice and return on investment.
- 2:** Cultivate and grow inter-professional partnerships. Leverage and expand the NATA CollaborATe program and other connections to foster deeper appreciation for the depth and breadth of athletic training services.
- 3:** Be a resource for employers. Become a leading source for employers in all settings to enhance understanding of value and optimal compensation structures to support the hiring process.
- 4:** Enhance advocacy support. Leverage At Your Own Risk to increase awareness among key stakeholders and provide greater member support with local advocacy.



# GOAL 4:

Champion critical efforts that influence practice advancement.

Since inception, athletic training has grown leaps and bounds. Its value is undisputed and evident in the growing settings where ATs are leading in all facets of health care – from prevention and diagnosis to emergent care and therapeutic intervention. When athletic trainers are able to practice at the top of their skill set and in work environments that understand, respect and value their worth, everyone wins. Through a disciplined focus and strategy, NATA will continue to influence positive change that benefits members, the profession, employers of athletic training services as well as patients.

## OBJECTIVES:

- 1:** Prove ROI. Quantify the return on investment for athletic training services and widely communicate findings and knowledge to drive compensation discussion and self-advocacy.
- 2:** Expand patient access to ATs. Initiate and champion policies and legislative relationships that allow athletic trainers to practice to the fullest extent of their skill set in all settings.
- 3:** Advance reimbursement. Increase the impact of NATA's legislative and regulatory advocacy in support of third-party reimbursement, state, federal and CMS recognition.
- 4:** Strategic collaboration at all levels. Enhance and align national, district and state strategies to support national legislative and regulatory objectives.

# GOAL 5:

Strengthen member value by optimizing NATA operations and revenue portfolio.

NATA's ability to advance the mission and strategic priorities outlined in this plan requires motivated and knowledgeable staff in the various disciplines of association management, along with passionate volunteers who are dedicated and invested in the growth of the association. In addition, maintaining a thriving revenue portfolio is paramount to NATA's ability to address the current and future needs of the association. NATA is committed to sound stewardship and ensuring the transparency and accountability of member resources. NATA will continue to observe high standards by ensuring programs and initiatives are driven by data and evidence to maximize member return on investment and overall advancement of the athletic training profession.

## OBJECTIVES:

- 1: Increase revenue. Improve existing and explore new revenue streams.
- 2: Ensure adequate infrastructure. Evaluate and maintain sufficient organizational capacity to achieve strategic goals.
- 3: Invest in organizational culture. Assess and reestablish baseline to measure organizational culture as well as employee and member satisfaction.
- 4: Measure outcome and alignment. Refine processes and evaluate outcome measures to optimize resource allocation and strategic alignment at all levels.

# MEMBERSHIP EXIT SURVEY

**Membership retention** is critical to the organization's ability to advance its mission and plan. NATA conducted a special survey to gather insight from members who didn't renew in 2021 and 2022.



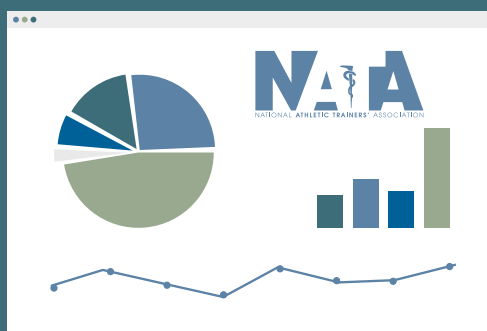
# ANALYSIS OF COST TO PRACTICE ATHLETIC TRAINING

**NATA** is always seeking opportunities to optimize value for members. The AT profession cost analysis provided insight into opportunities to enhance member value in areas such as professional development and liability insurance.

## ENVIRONMENTAL & SALARY SCAN

Periodic assessment of the association management landscape provides insight by which NATA can evaluate and enhance our practices, plans and benefits.

- 1: **Assessed association trends** and projects in areas such as membership, finances, events, continuing education, etc.
- 2: **Assessed the average cost of membership** for similar health care organizations, as well as the impact of external factors – such as inflation – on the cost of membership.\*



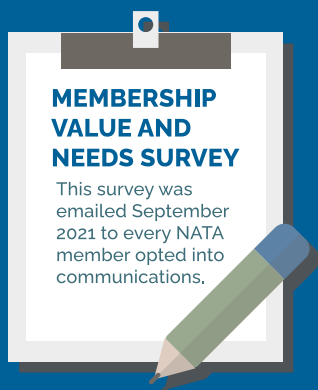
*\*Association Industry Fee Assessment, conducted by the NATA District Secretaries'/Treasurers' Committee*



## COMPENSATION ASSESSMENT

As expected, **compensation** was a **theme** throughout the data collected.

The NATA Salary Survey, typically conducted every two years, allows NATA to measure progression over the years as well as the rate of growth.



### MEMBERSHIP VALUE AND NEEDS SURVEY

This survey was emailed September 2021 to every NATA member opted into communications.

- 1: Our path **Forward Together** required listening first, providing opportunities for athletic trainers – member and nonmembers – to share their vision for athletic training and NATA.
- 2: Qualitative study collected and analyzed to develop themes and trends across three areas of membership: **Volunteer Leadership, Active Membership** and **Nonmembers**.

3: Invitation sent to **43,102** athletic trainers

4: **17.4%** response rate, 30,865 open-ended responses

In addition, conducted focus groups consisted of **Active Membership, Nonmembers** and **Volunteer Leadership**.



# 500+ HOURS OF ANALYSIS

## FRAMING OUR PATH FORWARD:

- 1: **In-depth** data analysis to establish themes.
- 2: **The NATA Board of Directors**, with support from executive and senior staff, analyzed the data to establish NATA's strategic priorities in January 2022.
- 3: After further deliberation, discussion and modifications, the **strategic plan goals and objectives were approved** July 2022.



## KEY FINDINGS

# “WHAT ARE THREE STRATEGIC PRIORITIES YOU WOULD LIKE TO SEE NATA PRIORITIZE?”

### ACTIVE MEMBERS

ADDRESS BURNOUT, WORK HOURS  
AND HIGHER SALARIES.

### VOLUNTEER LEADERS

COMMUNICATE PLANS TO INCREASE  
SALARY, HIGHLIGHT REIMBURSEMENT  
STRATEGY AND ADDRESS CHANGING  
CONTINUING EDUCATION  
EXPECTATIONS.

### NONMEMBERS

LICENSURE IN 50 STATES,  
REIMBURSEMENT/HIGHER SALARIES  
AND WORK ENVIRONMENT (TOO TOXIC,  
TOO MANY HOURS, ETC.)



# DEVELOPMENT PROCESS



**A**thletic training is one of the fastest growing professions in health care. The domains of athletic training, along with continued clinical and professional development, have positioned our profession as one of the most versatile in health care, with a transferable skill set that is reflected in the growing demand and expanding settings.

Since our inception, we have conquered an array of challenges. Our ability to embrace the opportunities and challenges ahead will require focus and an even greater commitment from all aligned with athletic training.

In 2021, the NATA Board of Directors began its work to set a clearer, more focused path around a finite set of key strategic priorities that would gird the work and resources of the association. The process – vision casting – assessed the current state of the profession, where it should be in the coming years and the path forward to achieve this future outcome. The process was divided into phases.

## **Research and Data Collection**

This phase was committed to gathering and learning. A cross-functional team, including athletic trainers who are also leaders in various areas of research, were assembled to develop a qualitative analysis study to provide open-ended feedback. An initial pilot study was launched to test the tool. Following testing, in September 2021, invitations were sent to more than 43,000 volunteer leaders, active members and nonmembers. There was an overall 17.4% response rate across the segments, with an overall 92% completion rate. In total, more than 7,000 surveys were used to establish themes and trends. The data was analyzed through Qualtrics Text IQ to establish

themes and trends across three segments – NATA members, nonmembers and NATA leaders (i.e., committee chair/member). Study areas of focus included personal and professional aspirations, as well as NATA's perceived role, perception around value and the outlook of the profession as well as ideal strategic focus and direction.

In addition to this very important study, a host of environmental data was collected. For example, NATA is a membership association, therefore, data from leaders in association management was pivotal to this discussion. Sources such as American Society of Association Executives, BoardSource and Marketing General Inc. were used to gather insight into industry-specific trends pre- and post-pandemic. Moreover, fee, cost and salary data was collected. Building on the comparator fee assessment conducted by the NATA District Secretaries'/Treasurers' Committee to assess NATA's national membership rate in comparison to similar organizations, additional data was collected to document the average total cost aligned with becoming and being an athletic trainer. In addition, NATA contracted with a third-party agency to conduct an updated salary survey.

## **Analysis**

Leveraging themes and trends identified, as well as all data points collected, the analysis process began with a cross-functional team of managers tasked with providing additional insight based on the data collected. This work group addressed value alignment – member value versus NATA offerings – and optimal ways to enrich the lives of athletic trainers. All information was advanced to senior leadership tasked with developing a comprehensive situational analysis that was advanced to the NATA Board of Directors. With all data

# DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

available, as well as insight from executive staff leaders, the NATA Board of Directors was divided into work groups with the task of conducting and discussing the situational analysis during a two-day, in-person meeting.

## **Conclusion & Development**

In January 2022, the NATA Board of Directors met with a laser focus on leveraging all data, insight and their group's work to begin the process aligning all members of the board around a finite number of conclusions that would ultimately inform NATA's adopted goals and objectives. The board left the meeting with a draft of priorities – critical areas of focus for the continued growth of our profession – and established a task force of board members along with executive staff to finalize the formal language for the plan.

After months of deliberation and negotiations, in July 2022, the NATA Board of Directors unanimously approved the 2023-2025 NATA Strategic Plan. The plan includes five goals that define NATA's strategic focus and desired outcome over the term of the plan. Each goal is accompanied by several objectives that are our path to impact. Our plan objectives will frame and give direction to all aligned with NATA – from volunteer leaders and committees to partners and staff – and guide where we invest our time and resources.

## **Operationalization**

The work of implementation begins. This phase engages all entities within NATA – from committee to staff – in the process of defining their intended contribution to advancing the goals and objectives as well as the metrics and milestones to measure impact. Throughout the duration of the plan, assessing and adjusting, within the confines of the

strategic plan, should be expected as we collectively follow the path to greatest impact for our members and the athletic training profession. NATA members will receive plan updates through NATA communication channels as well as the annual NATA convention.

## **Forward Together**

The plan was designed to clearly align NATA's focus around strategic priorities as defined by our members and with consideration for internal and external realities. Your feedback drove every discussion. Your words remained near and were frequently revisited to ensure your elected board of directors and national staff remained ever mindful of what athletic trainers – practicing in a host of settings – deemed critical to advance the profession. Our ability to advance the goals and objectives outlined in this plan – some of which have been evergreen for years – will require all of us. Together, we will not only sustain our position as one of the fastest growing professions in healthcare, but also enrich the practice of athletic training. Our collective efforts will not only yield greater impact for the patients and athletes we serve, but for the profession of athletic training as well.

This plan is our pathway **Forward Together.**

**FORWARD**  
*Together*



# NOTES

# NOTES



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