

MAKING ETHNIC DIVERSITY *the Norm*

Meet NATA Ethnic Diversity Advisory Committee representatives, members' support for intentional advocacy

BY LYDIA HICKS

Advocacy has been at the heart of NATA's mission, setting it apart from other athletic training professional organizations. This unique and invaluable support for its members, among several other benefits, has spurred many of its members' milestones and association wins over the years.

One of these impactful efforts is the NATA Ethnic Diversity Advisory Committee (EDAC).

Serving in an advisory capacity to the NATA Board of Directors, EDAC helps to identify and address issues relevant to ethnically diverse populations to better support patients and members of the profession. EDAC advocates sensitivity toward cultural diversity, development of cultural competence within the profession and promotion of athletic trainers as leaders in issues related to cultural competence and professional diversity within the health care professions.

Among EDAC's initiatives that have championed these endeavors are its scholarships, mentorship programs, volunteer opportunities, grants and collaborations. (Learn more on the Diversity Resource webpage, www.nata.org/professional-interests/diversity.)

EDAC continues to move the athletic training profession forward with plans to keep making diversity, equity, inclusion and access intentional throughout the profession.

"Just as women in athletic training has grown – when I first got into the profession, you never would have thought that there would be a female president . . . there were very few women on committees and now NATA is dominated by women – that's where I'd like for ethnically diverse athletic trainers to get to," said EDAC Chair Darryl Conway, MA, AT, ATC. "That it's not a surprise to see an ethnically diverse individual on a committee or on a board of directors or up on stage receiving awards, in pictures, in presentations. It's not a surprise; that's the norm, along the same levels that it is for other groups within NATA."

For the patients who members serve, Conway said that EDAC also plans to bring more awareness to certain issues affecting ethnically diverse populations.

"Like in our education programs, when they teach dermatology, you are able to pick out ring worm on a Caucasian individual the same way you are able to pick out ring worm on an African American and that's not taught right now," he said. "There are no books out there.

"It shouldn't be a five-year fight to get Kinesio tape in flesh-tone colors across the multiple flesh tones. Those are the things we would like to advocate for and continue to push forward."

Conway said that members should care about diversity in their profession because it's present in every aspect of human society and health care.

"Members do not just work with Caucasian males every single day," he said. "They work with a diverse patient population, a diverse interprofessional population every single day, so you need to be willing, able and understand issues that affect your diverse group of patients."

EDAC's representatives have committed themselves to showing their AT peers how to acknowledge ethnic diversity and serve patients from different ethnic backgrounds.

"Our committee is incredible – they're hardworking, they're passionate, they care and they are very creative with the ideas they come up with and are willing to carry those ideas through," Conway said.

Below, EDAC's representatives share how ATs can foster diversity within the profession.



**Chair Darryl Conway,
MA, AT, ATC**

"I feel as though the most important aspect for NATA members to foster diversity throughout the profession

is to open your minds, be creative, develop a culture of diversity and be intentional in everything that is done with regards to creating and developing a diverse, equitable and inclusive culture within the organization."

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**District One Rep.
Nicolas Benitez,
MS, LAT, ATC**

"I think it's important for ATs to be cognizant of the importance of diversity in

the workplace and the extent to which representation matters when it comes to fostering a safe and welcoming space for your patient population. Ethnic diversity is more than skin deep, and the lived experience and cognitive diversity of athletic trainers from different backgrounds is paramount to delivering high quality care. Homogeneity of an AT staff cuts down on the number of perspectives and clinical approaches and that will ultimately impair

our ability to care for our patient populations.”
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District Two Rep.
Mercedes Himmons,
PhD, LAT, ATC

“Athletic trainers can foster diversity within the profession in various ways. The

first step would be to highlight and recognize current diverse athletic trainers. The second step is to present opportunities to diverse athletic trainers to have a seat at the tables where decisions are made. This can ensure diverse opinions and perspectives are considered. Third, we need to ensure we are recruiting and retaining diverse people. Finally, athletic trainers can foster diversity within the profession by not perpetuating the cycle of ‘It was hard for me, so it has to be hard for you.’ It creates a better space within our profession to be kind and offer help when colleagues ask instead of pushing them away. Think of what we can achieve when we showcase the diversity we do have and how we can progress forward. It does not have to be difficult.”

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District Three Rep.
Xavion Santiago,
MS, LAT, ATC

“Ola Johnson once said, ‘Diversity is not about how we differ; diversity is

about embracing one another’s uniqueness.’ Embracing one another’s uniqueness is what stands out to me the most about this quote. Diversity is not about simply checking boxes, but creating an environment in which everyone feels comfortable enough to be genuine. Having conversations instead of operating in assumptions; utilizing assets from good quality sources such as NATA and EDAC, as well as your own site; reaching out to other athletic trainers with similar interests, but differing backgrounds; utilizing experts of diverse backgrounds when planning continuing education events to ensure differing perspectives and listening to all voices. Embracing one another’s uniqueness must be intentional and without malice. As Maya Angelou said, ‘In diversity there is beauty and there is strength.’”

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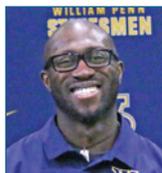


District Four Rep.
Samar Long,
EdD, AT, ATC

“Leverage personal networks to connect students and early

career ATs with mentors and role models. All the diverse athletic trainers I know were welcomed into the profession by others and encouraged as they navigated the start of their careers. I encourage all ATs to connect with a local professional program, their alma mater or a state or district student leadership committee as a way of giving back. Professional service can take many forms, but the most impactful is becoming a preceptor or becoming a mentor. We shape the profession by treating community building as the responsibility of every athletic trainer.”

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District Five Rep.
Abu Ibrahim,
LAT, ATC, CSCS

“Diversity is critical to the progress and success of any endeavor, including the

profession of athletic training. If you are looking to increase diversity, begin simply by looking around you, and if your group is homogenous, actively seek and recruit from those who do not look, talk, think or believe like you. Additionally, you can seek training on diversity to address proper responses to cultural differences, personal or implicit biases and inclusion. The inclusivity serves to generate better ideas and will widen your worldview. This will provide better outcomes for you as a clinician and also for those whom you serve. Diversity is everyone’s responsibility and we have a duty to ensure equity from the inside out.”

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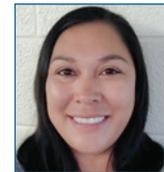
District Six Rep.
Carliitta Moore,
EdD, LAT, ATC

“Athletic trainers can foster diversity within the profession by having a

willingness to understand and acknowledge their own personal unconscious biases. Once the biases have been determined, the athletic trainer must be intentional about change so

that they can make a difference in the lives of their clients. Real change comes from within and creating a culture that is open to engaging in diversity can result from this change. We are a reflection, a walking billboard advertisement, of our profession, and each day that we are intentional about change, others see it and want to join in.”

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District Seven Rep.
Alyssa Fredericks,
MS, LAT, ATC

“Athletic trainers are often the first health care provider that young athletes

see for injuries and illnesses. Athletes come from diverse cultures and backgrounds, so our interactions with them may influence them for the rest of their lives. These individuals may become the future health care professionals who continue the work to serve communities in need. We are truly a profession that exemplifies a culture of caring.”

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District Eight Rep.
Alejandra Merriman,
DAT, ATC, CES

“In order to foster diversity within the profession, I think it is important to first

look at ourselves and determine if we have any bias that we need to address. Everyone may have some sort of unconscious bias that we must address to better ourselves, better serve our patients and better support our colleagues. Once biases are addressed, we can begin to unlearn any health care practice or clinical rituals that could be contributing to any health care or general disparities. Do we have a standard interview process? Are we holding ourselves and our organization accountable? Are we providing equitable resources? Are we educating to move forward and create positive change to promote a diverse and inclusive environment? Asking these questions and fostering diversity will create a safe space for our patients and colleagues, build better relationships, provide compassionate care and, more importantly, provide better care to the patient as a whole.”

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District Nine Rep. Rob Dicks, MA, LAT, ATC

“In my opinion, when talking about ‘fostering’ diversity within the AT profession, it’s going to

take more than just the work of ATs that are diverse. There is much to be done by everyone involved in the profession. There are so many levels of diversity that must be peeled back to the core and understood by all. There should be vital learning experiences and accountability factors held for all. Until it’s discussed as an important sector of the profession with learning modules, accountability and consequences, there will continue to be a large section of the profession that doesn’t believe there is a diversity issue. The best way to make a difference in the diversity model of the AT profession is to make it affect those who are unaffected.”

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District Ten Rep. Jeff Kawaguchi, PT, PhD, ATC

“Athletic trainers can foster diversity in our profession by practicing in a culturally

competent manner – with not just their patients, but also with all of those with whom they interact and serve (colleagues, staff, administrators, parents, etc.). Athletic trainers can also practice cultural humility and understand that support for the underserved populations is a lifelong journey. We must understand and stand against bias (both implicit and explicit), micro- and macroaggressions and all other form of ‘-isms.’ Finally, it is also important to understand that diversity without inclusion is synonymous with tokenism – thus we must strive for equity.”

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District Eleven Rep. Estefania Zavala, DAT, LAT, ATC

“By appreciating and recruiting individuals of different backgrounds. We

each have something to contribute and bring to

the table. Seeing people of color within the profession has allowed me to believe and hope that I could accomplish my goals. They were the manifestation of success if I worked hard and I could do it because those individuals looked like me. I want to be that person for aspiring students striving to make a difference within athletic training. Representation matters.”

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EDAC Social Media Volunteer Nicole Jones, MS, ATC

“Athletic trainers can foster diversity within the profession in many ways.

As health care professionals, we have the

opportunity to care for patients from all different backgrounds. Being culturally competent in all facets can help us provide proper care to our patients. Understanding our patients as a whole will allow us to give the best care, thus fostering a trusting relationship between us, the clinician, and the patient. Also, as athletic trainers, we can foster diversity within the profession by continuing to advocate and support our fellow peers. Celebrating the accomplishments of our fellow athletic trainers will help in building the profession and educating our communities on the importance of having athletic trainers as an integral part of the sports medicine team.”

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TIPS FOR SUCCESS

From the NATA Ethnic Diversity Advisory Committee:

- Be intentional about everything that you do.
- Weave diversity into every aspect of what you do; hiring, committee makeup, how you treat people – really weave DEIA into everything that you do.
- Find a mentor who can help you achieve both your professional and personal goals. It is never too late to seek out a mentor to help with job opportunities, career building, education endeavors, etc.
- Become familiar with what is happening within the profession at the national, district and state levels.
- Stay current with the latest research involving all things related to athletic training. Doing this will ensure that we are giving the best care to our patients.
- Always be professional and serve with care and compassion.
- Treat your patients and athletes as people.
- Always have a great bedside manner. Treat the person, then the injury.
- Have an open mind about many things, but never compromise your worth or character.
- Set boundaries and guidelines that keep you energetic and loving what you do!
- Seek out job opportunities where you’re continuously growing as a leader and clinician.
- Collaborate with peers to assist in providing quality care.
- Collect and analyze patient-rated outcomes along with clinician-rated measures to reflect on areas of strength and areas of improvement.
- Always advocate for yourself and our profession! We are stronger together.

For more information about EDAC’s resources available to members and to connect to the committee, visit www.nata.org/professional-interests/diversity.