

Column: NATA Education Think Tank Highlights

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The following is a brief review of selected topics discussed on the NATA Think Tank Educator Forum. Only NATA members can access the archived messages and discussions. To view this forum, go to: <http://forum.nata.org/thinktanks> (login required).

AT Student Clubs and Iota Tau Alpha Chapters (May 17, 2009 – 4 postings)

Several athletic training programs have student organizations/ clubs. Like other student groups on campuses, the clubs help promote the profession and program and engage in service activities. Because of their high clinical hour requirements each semester, students are challenged to have regular club meetings and activities. At a minimum some clubs try to have one to two meetings and one to two social or service functions once per semester.

Members of one AT students' club visited nursing homes, provided medical services for a road race, and sold soft tissue massages for a fund raiser. Some students found time to enter teams into intramural events or provide first aid services.

Earning money for special events such as travel to conferences was common. Some earned money by selling t-shirts or other items (e.g. food), working concession stands, cleaning athletic facilities, organizing golf outings, and picking up trash alongside highways. There is also grant money available for some clubs through their school and professional organizations. One program articulated that the club utilized a point system to award student involvement. The awards often related to offsetting the students' NATA membership or conference expenses.

Service to the community and the profession were identified as the most rewarding club activities, especially around Athletic Training Month. Students are also encouraged to join the Iota Tau Alpha Society which is the athletic training honor society. Visit <http://prism.troy.edu/~iotata> for more information.

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Using Wii Fit in the ATR and Classroom (May 22, 2009 – 6 postings)

Shigeru Miyamoto designed Nintendo Wii Fit to help people get more active. Wii Sport and Wii Active are other useful systems. These games offer exercises to develop cardiovascular, upper body and lower body strength, balance, and sport-specific skills. Exercises or skills can be adjusted for increased intensity and difficulty. Many have found these programs to be a great motivational tool for both patients and students. It appears that the possibilities and progression in using the Wii are endless.

(http://www.usaweekend.com/08_issues/080629/080629gaming-mario.html; Accessed October 1, 2009).

Changing Entry Point to Entry-Level Master's? (July 22, 2009 – 18 postings)

In the last 35 years or so the number of entry-level athletic training education programs has grown from four to over 370 – about 23 schools have entry-level master's AT programs. Several changes have occurred to help improve the quality of our programs, students, and the profession. Changing the entry-level education to master's programs raises several questions and concerns for our future.

Having an entry-level graduate level program would be similar to other health professions (e.g., PT, OT, PA). These programs would be great for those students who were student-athletes, teachers, or others in health-related disciplines.

An entry-level graduate program would allow the AT student to get more depth of content in evidenced-based practice, emerging rehabilitation trends, and clinical experience. Having a master's degree as entry-level should give AT more identity, respect and understanding from other healthcare providers as well as the general public. This could further help our profession attain third party reimbursement, better hours, and higher salaries.

Several disadvantages were articulated. For some smaller institutions adding a new master's degree would prove to be extremely challenging. This would also affect the athletic departments who hire ATs as graduate assistants while they obtain an advanced master's degree/major from the schools. There was also some concern about those ATs who didn't have a master's degree. Some of the other health professional programs have developed a short track to earn their entry-level master's degree. With so many CAATE programs and few ATs with

terminal degrees, it would be challenging to find instructors for the entry-level master's programs. However, this is the same issue faced by other health care programs. Regardless of the level of the athletic training education, there is a distinction between entry level and expert practitioners—an entry level education cannot prepare a student for everything.

Interesting Websites

1. Academic Careers Online
<http://www.academiccareers.com>
2. Chronicle of Higher Education Job Search
<http://chronicle.com/section/Jobs/61>
3. HigherEd Jobs
<http://www.higheredjobs.com>
4. College Athletic Trainers' Society
<http://www.collegeathletictrainer.org>
5. Indeed – Job Search
<http://www.indeed.com>
6. ORlive (surgery videos)
<http://www.orlive.com>