

# Address to the Attendees of the 2009 NATA Athletic Training Educators' Conference

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**Editor's Note:** *There is a great deal to learn from our colleagues who have had critical and noteworthy contributions to athletic training education. We are pleased, therefore, to periodically include the Robert S. Behnke Keynote addresses from recipients of the Sayers "Bud" Miller Distinguished Educator Award in the current and forthcoming issues of the Athletic Training Education Journal. In this issue's special section we present the speech from R.T. Floyd, EdD, ATC, CSCS who received the Distinguished Educator Award in 2007. The wide ranging contributions by Dr. Floyd are found at <http://www.nata.org/DEAwinners#2007>.*

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This is truly a great honor to be recognized with my fellow distinguished athletic training educators and I want to thank to the NATA Education Council for my selection. I also want to extend my sincere congratulations to Doug, Dan and Kevin.

There are so many people which I need to thank that I can not possibly list them all, but I do want to mention just a few. First I need to thank Dr. Jim Andrews who has taught and inspired me so much over my career. I want to thank Ken Wright for giving me a push and I need to thank Brad Montgomery, John Anderson, Sue Norkus and Lou Fincher for trying to keep me in line.

I have a huge respect for all of you who have taken on the responsibility of being athletic training educators. This is a tremendous responsibility. The 500 or so people in this room and your colleagues back home who could not attend have the future of this entire profession in your hands. Where this profession goes in the future is going to be affected more by you than anyone else. You truly are the gatekeepers.

This is a big responsibility. I am not telling you anything that you do not already know, but the students you select and retain in your programs certainly will have a major bearing on the future of athletic training for years to come. How you manage these students and how you influence them in their formative years as an athletic training professional is extremely crucial.

You certainly have a big task. You have to make sure your program obtains and maintains accreditation. You have to do annual reports and self studies. You have to provide instruction and supervision and you have to ensure that all of your faculty and ACIs cover all of the competencies and proficiencies. You have to ensure that all of your students are adequately prepared to pass the BOC exam. And you have to do all of this within a budget which in many cases will probably be cut some in the near future.

Again not an easy task.

But as hard as all of this may seem, I believe you have a much larger task. I think you have to begin with the end in mind as Steven Covey would say. In this case, I am not referring to the end of athletic training, but the future. What do we really want our profession to be like in 10 years? 20 years? 30 years?

Certainly a big part of this is the ever expanding body of knowledge and number of clinical skills. But this is not just about just teaching them all of the knowledges and skills. That is an impossible task. It is more about teaching them to be resourceful and then to have the desire and dedication to seek out the answers.

This is a profession and not a job. We must select and develop students who will take this to heart. We must demonstrate this commitment and passion in our professional practice and teachings. And we must absolutely expect it in our students.

This profession has advanced in so many ways just in my short career. Our employment settings are no longer just in high schools, college and professional sports. We are in clinics, industry, the military, performing arts and so many more areas. But how did we get there? Was it because of our skill set? Certainly that has a lot to do with it. We can return people back to physical activity quicker and more safely than ever before. We are the very best at this.

But it is not just our unique clinical skills that got us where we are today. A huge part of this is the attitude and approach that we and those before us took in our daily attention to injured patients. The approach I am speaking of is to be resourceful. To explore and exploit all possible resources to get the job done within reason. Athletic trainers are people who get the job done. Athletic trainers find a way to make it happen because they care enough to do that

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little extra. We don't take no for an answer. Athletic trainers are some of the very best at adapting, improvising and overcoming. This attitude and approach is what has helped us make so many advancements. This is why physicians want us in their clinics. This is why we are so valuable to industry. This is why we are making advances in the military. This is why parents want us taking care of their kids. This is not all about science. Some would call it the art of sports medicine.

This mindset and approach is what brought us to the dance. This is what we must remember to instill in our students. To do this we must provide students with opportunities to really experience the rewards in providing excellent patient care. To do that I believe students have to have ownership in the patient outcomes. This ownership is difficult to come by when students are overly supervised and not provided some autonomy.

Again not an easy task.

To develop this takes a real commitment to our profession and most importantly to our patients. We can not always get this done in a regular work day or work week. A profession takes more than 40 hours a week. I hear a lot of concerns of what about me? There seems to be more concerns than ever before about what's in it for me as an athletic trainer. How can I get more pay and less hours? While I understand this, it does concern me. I am concerned that some may be in danger of getting our priorities out of order.

Our #1 priority has to be the patient. Patient first, Not me first. This is where the rewards are – in helping patients do what they could not otherwise achieve without us. I have had a rewarding career and one that helped put a lot of food on my table. But the most rewarding aspect has always been and still is in helping patients get better. I have taken care of most of my needs by primarily concentrating on my need to do what is best for my patients first.

If we consistently do a good job in taking care of patients first then I believe there is plenty of room for advancing our individual careers and the profession overall.

I think one of our biggest challenges is getting this philosophy and mindset embedded into our students as they go through our programs, particularly in the limited time that we have with them. Certainly teaching them the knowledges and skills is critical, but even more critical is teaching them how to be resourceful and committed to the profession and to the patient. If we can accomplish this, then we will have done our job and our future will be secure.

Thanks to all of you for taking on these tasks and for protecting the future of the profession.