

## Embracing Change to Promote Innovation

Kimberly S. Peer, EdD, ATC  
School of Health Sciences, Kent State University, Kent, OH

*I would rather have questions that can't be answered than answers that can't be questioned.* **Richard Feynman**<sup>1</sup>

**A**thletic training education has undergone tremendous change in the past decades. Change tends to create dissonance, and education reform has certainly created a sense of discomfort among many athletic training educators. But as we've questioned our educational process and outcomes, we have indeed changed for the better. We have looked critically at how we designed and delivered athletic training education in the past, questioned what is good and what needs to be changed, and challenged ourselves to rise above the discomfort to create new and exciting educational opportunities to advance the profession. We have become upstanders!

Why is it so important to actively engage in the change process within our profession? We have an obligation as part of the social contract to provide optimal care with the patient at the center of the decision-making process.<sup>2</sup> As a health care profession, we have an obligation to continue to evolve through evidence-based research and practice that is centered in the educational preparation of our students. We have an obligation to improve our teaching to enhance student outcomes as they prepare to enter a challenging health care market. Although skill development is essential to education, we are learning that the broad construct of professionalism provides the foundation to fulfilling the social contract as it defines expectations and obligations within the discipline. This special issue on education was designed to create opportunities for athletic training educators not only to share their innovative approaches to addressing the fundamental skill development inherent in the educational process, but also to embrace constructs of professionalism that transcend our profession.

We have seen tremendous leadership and innovation emerge. Educational initiatives to drive the advancement of the profession through expanded employment venues, residencies, fellowships, and interprofessional collaborations present unique challenges for our educators, and they have risen to meet the expectations. Outstanding educational research

continues to promote innovative approaches to facilitate both didactic and clinical education. Additionally, as we continue to focus on critical issues impacting society and our profession, such as diversity, inclusion, and equity, we are obligated to address this construct of professionalism and professional identity in our academic programs, and these, too, are emerging. With the major constituents of the Strategic Alliance identifying professionalism and/or shared professional values as essential elements within the profession, it is clearly an important component of athletic training education.

Although change can be disorienting, it can also be invigorating. Perspective transformation is the process of changing our outlook during times of change to embrace the process and challenge ourselves to seek opportunities for professional growth. Barnard<sup>3</sup> contends that vulnerability and trustworthiness are the "polestars" of professionalism in health care. We, as educators, need to make ourselves trustworthy through cutting-edge strategies to address the vulnerabilities of the students with whom we are entrusted. As a result, they will take that trustworthiness forward as they care for vulnerable patients who seek their care. This cannot be a tacit process; rather, educating for professionalism must be purposeful and rigorous. Developing professionalism transcends all of the work we do in educational programs. It is inherent in each domain and standard we teach, and it will transcend all aspects of professional practice when our students transition into the profession.

This special issue does just that and addresses contemporary, emerging practices within the profession. Athletic training education is dynamic and evolving. It will continue to evolve for decades to come. As educators, it is our obligation to continue to develop, assess, and disseminate innovative teaching strategies and practices. It is our commitment at the *Athletic Training Education Journal* to do just that. We strive to provide contemporary research on critical issues in athletic training education. Thanks to all of the authors who were willing to share their ideas with the profession. We challenge each of you to continue to push yourself out of your comfort zones to implement teaching innovations in your didactic and clinical education programs.

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*Dr Peer is currently Professor of Athletic Training in the School of Health Sciences at Kent State University. Please address correspondence to Kimberly S. Peer, EdD, ATC, School of Health Sciences, Kent State University, 350 Midway Drive, Room 266A MACC Annex, Kent, Ohio 44242. kpeer@kent.edu.*

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