Professional Degree Discussion

NATA’s Executive Committee for Education Update
Russ Richardson
Future Directions in AT Education

• Strategic Plan

Recommendation #2

*The NATA with Support from the Strategic Alliance, should conduct a detailed analysis specifically focused on professional education in AT.*
Terminology

– Professional Education vs. Post Professional Education

– Currently Professional Education is at both the undergraduate and graduate level

– Consistency about the use of the term “Entry Level”
Progress Report

A “white paper” was developed by 2 workgroups of content experts. The process was under the direction of Sara Brown and Jolene Henning.

– The white paper was intended to identify pro’s and con’s as well as to make a recommendation as to the appropriate Professional Degree for AT.

This is a starting point for the conversation not a decision!
Primary Workgroup

• Consisted of 10 members
• Representatives from:
  – Academia
    • 6 program directors 4 of which are at undergraduate professional AT programs
  – Clinical Practice
    • 4 clinicians
Consulting Workgroup

- 31 volunteer participants as the result of a request for involvement in January of 2013
- Representatives from:
  - Academia
  - Administration
  - Strategic Partners
  - Clinicians
  - NATA BOD member
Motives

• We view potential change though our individual filters. That can be challenging and frustrating. It was for the members of the workgroup.

• Historically as a profession we have engaged in difficult dialogue and have grown as the result.

• Engaging with this topic (and others) is our duty as stewards of the profession.
The examination of the appropriate professional degree was prompted by several factors

• the increasing complexity of the current and future healthcare system;
• the growing need for athletic training-specific patient outcomes research;
• the expanding scope of knowledge, skills, and abilities for the profession of athletic training;
• the need to ensure proper professional alignment with other peer healthcare professions.
General Observations

• Several of the questions confronting this investigation exist in areas not well-supported by existing athletic training research and scholarship.

• In the absence of direct evidence, we were left to examine theoretical models and to make inferences from relevant data to help us decide whether a professional degree change would benefit the athletic training profession.
General Observations

• To date, there are no published studies in athletic training that directly compare the outcomes of undergraduate-level professional education programs with those professional programs at the graduate level.

• Moreover, only a very small number of athletic training programs have made a degree transition to the graduate level and no one has published data examining the effect of the degree change on athletic training patient outcomes.
General Observations

• Therefore, a combination of existing literature, expert opinion, data provided by the BOC and a series of quick-strike polls used to collect data from directors of CAATE accredited programs was analyzed to reach the conclusions represented in this paper.
Process

• Call for volunteers – January 2013

• Primary workgroup
  – Weekly calls to discuss, analyze data, and assign tasks
  – Actual writing of the paper

• Consultant workgroup
  – Helped to validate the direction of the primary group as well as reviewing summary data and reports
  – It is important to note that not everyone was in agreement
Today’s students

• How many of us have heard or said, “Students today are different than when I was a student!”

• Before I offend the students and young professionals in the audience, I believe that being different is a good thing!
Millennials or the Y Generation

Born 1982 - now
• Special
• Sheltered
• Confident
• Team oriented
• Achieving
• Pressured

Core Values
• Optimistic
• Sense of Civic Duty
• Achievement orientation
• Social
• Morality (Spirituality)
• Diverse
“Y” Generation

• Where does this term come from?
GÉNÉRATION
11 Findings in the Report
Finding 1

• Graduate-level professional education will better align ATs as peers to other healthcare professions and should enhance our status and influence in the larger health care arena.
Finding 2

• Transition to graduate professional education facilitates continued evolution in the professional competency requirements to better reflect the clinical practice requirements of current and future ATs in a changing healthcare environment.
Finding 3

• Factors fundamental to providing quality care are likely improved by professional education at the graduate level.
Finding 4

- Professional education at the graduate level enhances retention of students who are committed to pursuit of an athletic training career. Graduate-level education attracts students who are better prepared to assimilate the increasingly complex concepts that are foundational for athletic training practice.
Finding 5

• Transition to professional education at the graduate level would increase the likelihood that education programs are better aligned with other health care profession programs within their institution.
Finding 6

• Professional education at the graduate level should facilitate interprofessional education.
Finding 7

- A strong foundation of health-related basic sciences is increasingly necessary to prepare students for contemporary clinical practice in athletic training.
Finding 8

• Professional education should not compete with general education, liberal arts, and foundational science requirements because it detracts from the effectiveness of the professional educational experience.
Finding 9

• A transition to professional education at the graduate level will result in a more efficient educational system.
Finding 10

- Currently, all state practice acts accommodate graduate-level education in athletic training as meeting the requirements for the state credential. No state practice acts would need to be amended.
Finding 11

• The impact of a transition to graduate-level professional education on compensation levels and employment opportunities is complex and difficult to predict. Multiple factors influence compensation and employment patterns in healthcare.
Recommendation

• Based on these findings, it is the conclusion of this group that professional education in athletic training should occur at the master’s degree level. To avoid confusion, we recommend that the clinical doctorate degree be reserved for post-professional education, and that this degree should signify advanced practice.
No decision has been made!

If this were to happen, there are a number of implications that warrant further investigation.
Implications

• The total cost to the student will increase.

• Traditional graduate assistantship positions, where athletic trainers provide care while obtaining a master’s degree, would no longer be a viable work force strategy.
Implications

• A transition to professional education at the graduate level would increase the demand for doctorally-trained faculty who are prepared to meet the needs of the academy.

• When a profession increases its degree requirements, a common result is decreased minority representation in the student population and a resulting decline in practitioners.
Implications

• Careful consideration should be given to the degree awarded. Having the discipline acknowledged in the degree designation rather than just the degree level (e.g. MS) is common in healthcare disciplines (e.g. DPT, MD) and provides recognition that one has studied in a specific profession.
Next Steps

• Review by BOD and ECE – December 2013
• Focused discussion at the Joint Committee Meeting - January 2014
• Presentations at each District Meeting - January 2014 – July 2014
• Presentation at SEATA ATEC - March 2014
Next Steps

• Presentation during Face Time – June 2014
• Peer to Peer Presentation – June 2014
• Use of a Generational Consultant (anticipate conclusion by July 2014)
• Use of a Health Care Economist Consultant (anticipate conclusion by July 2014)
In Closing

• We have appreciated the passionate, professional, collegial discourse throughout the process thus far.
• We look forward to your involvement as the conversation continues.
• At this time I will attempt to respond to any questions, comments or concerns.
THANK YOU!