

## Kevin M. Guskiewicz, PhD, ATC: Pinky Newell Address – January 12, 2019 – “What’s your roadmap?”

- Thank you for this amazing honor. It’s great coming home. Where I live now, and where my wife and I have raised our four children, there’s a song about being Tar Heel born and Tar Heel bred...and then they usually add in “...and go to hell Duke”...especially during basketball season.
- But, growing up in Latrobe, PA, attending WCU, U. Pittsburgh, and working as an ATC for the Steelers in the early 1990’s – I have always been very proud to be born and bred in District 2; and have always considered myself a lifelong member of the EATA. A place that set me on a JOURNEY, an EXPLORATION, and an ADVENTURE OF A LIFETIME...I’d like to share a little about that journey with you.
- I have enjoyed “coming home” on a few other occasions to speak at the EATA symposium, but none are more special than this...and for that I thank you. Very little has changed thankfully since my last EATA meeting, because the educational program is top shelf, and the interactions and networking opportunities are fantastic. My first meeting was in 1987 (Kutchers, NY)...Dr. Stanley Hoppenfeld gave the Pinky Newell Address.
- 35 years ago - The first “Pinky Newell Address” was given by Pinky himself, just four months before his death in 1984, at the annual meeting of the NATA in Nashville, TN; That was just two weeks after I graduated from High School. Not knowing exactly what I wanted to do with my life, I was struggling a little to find a path...and a year later I became thankful and forever indebted to **Phil Donley**, who took a chance on me as a transfer athletic training student at West Chester University (just 20 miles southwest of here). Ironically **Phil** gave the Pinky Newell Address 25 years ago in 1994, just about the time I was proposing my doctoral dissertation alongside another great mentor **Dave Perrin** at UVA, who gave this address 16 years ago in 2003.
- I’m honored to be included among the ranks of stellar Athletic Training legends, several who have influenced my career and paved the way for so many of us. I would have loved knowing Pinky Newell, who spent most of his career paving the path for future athletic trainers, leaving his mark on practically every aspect of the profession - from the educational reform to accreditation to advancing clinical care...and yes – to helping bridge the gap between research and clinical practice. A passion of mine!
- As best I can tell, from reading and hearing the reflections of my mentors who were blessed to know him - Pinky created a roadmap for what athletic training and the NATA has become. That’s what we should all aspire to do.

- What roadmap will athletic trainers in 35 years from now be talking about, and how will you have contributed to charting that course?
- In that speech 35 years ago, Pinky said.....

I DO HAVE SOME COMMENTS TO MAKE ABOUT THE ASSOCIATION AND THE PROFESSION, THE PROBLEMS THAT WERE FACED, AND THE MEASURES THAT WERE TAKEN TO SOLVE THEM. THE YEARS CAN BE DIVIDED READILY INTO THE ORGANIZING YEARS OF THE FIFTIES, THE YEARS OF STRIVING FOR CREDIBILITY OF THE SIXTIES, THE YEARS OF FIGHTING FOR ACCREDITATION OF THE SEVENTIES, AND THE TREMENDOUS GROWTH YEARS OF THE EIGHTIES.

- If I may continue Pinky's continuum on the decades since then, I would suggest we experienced continued growth, while struggling (some would say enduring, some would say maturing) through education reform in the years of the NINETIES.
- But something special occurred as we approached the turn of the century. There was a major emphasis being placed on research and evidence-based medicine in athletic training. As a result - between 2002 and 2018, the NATA published 27 position statements to help guide clinicians on best practices based on sound research – most of which has been conducted by athletic trainers who have earned advanced degrees in athletic training/sports medicine; and who were committed to adding further credibility to the way we practice as clinicians...My guess is that Pinky would be proud, as he hinted at this in his 1984 address when he said...

BUT OF THE ENTIRE PROFESSION. THE PROCLAIMED PURPOSE OF THE ASSOCIATION WAS TO BUILD AND STRENGTHEN THE PROFESSION OF ATHLETIC TRAINING THROUGH THE EXCHANGE OF IDEAS, KNOWLEDGE, AND METHODS OF ATHLETIC TRAINING.

ONE OF OUR EARLIEST CONCERNS FOR OUR PROFESSION WAS THAT MEMBERS MUST SHARE WITH EACH OTHER THEIR EXPERIENCES, THEIR NEEDS, THEIR DIFFICULTIES AND THEIR OPINIONS.

TODAY, WE MUST, MOST IMPORTANTLY, I BELIEVE, STAY TUNED TO EACH OTHER - WE MUST HEAR AND UNDERSTAND EACH OTHER. WE MUST GIVE TO EACH OTHER AND TAKE FROM EACH OTHER.

- Since 1984, there have been 32 subsequent “Pinky Newell” addresses, given at 32 other meetings of this organization, where just as Pinky called for – “we have given to each other and taken from each other” the experiences that have made us the great allied health profession that we are today.
- Pinky was a leader...a roadmap creator, and that’s really the theme that I’d like to talk about today. Everyone here should be able to look back at some point in their career and be able to point to a way in which they led...a way in which they charted a path for others to follow.
- In my case, I decided I wanted to lead and help create a roadmap in the area of **sport concussion**, because I knew clinicians were at a loss and there was limited research to guide us. It happened because of my own curiosity, but also through some very prophetic advice from my mentor Dave Perrin who returned from the first Mild Head Injury Summit co-sponsored by the NATA in Dallas in 1993. Dave was convinced that the next wave of research in sports medicine would be in the area of concussion, and that I had an opportunity to be at the forefront...and to make a difference for athletic trainers and the profession of athletic training. I’m forever indebted to Dave for that advice. He and I quickly secured a \$15k grant from the NATA-REF, and we thought we were rich! It’s amazing what we were able to accomplish with that small grant.
- Combine that with my continued curiosity, and it’s been an incredibly rewarding journey...one that I am still enjoying. When I was a graduate assistant athletic trainer with the Steelers just a few years before that 1993 summit, concussion diagnosis was primitive and subjective—based on players’ accounts of their symptoms. There were no objective tools for diagnosis. And some could have still argued that the Steelers were doing better than anyone at that time.
- I knew athletic trainers needed validated tools in the concussion tool box...certainly more than just conducting a few neuropsychological tests. Earning my PhD at UVA prepared me to ask important research questions and how to develop a sound experimental design to answer these questions.
- But I knew I needed to eventually be in an environment – a university – where they would embrace this type of research, at a time when most places typically did not allow their student athletes to participate in studies...and quite honestly – did not want to know the truth about concussions.
- I was very fortunate to land at a place like UNC, which not only embraced it, but was ready to champion it. Because of this, we have helped hundreds, maybe thousands, of athletic trainers establish and implement a baseline concussion testing program at their schools. Our research, in collaboration with many others, has helped guide the NFL, NCAA, NFSHA, and other groups to define a

standard of practice for concussion... and we continue to research the ways in which we can continue improving the “concussion tool box.”

- But it hasn't always been easy....In 2005 and 2007, our research team published two research papers that identified a high probability of developing later-life cognitive impairment and depression once a player had sustained three or more concussions during his NFL career.
- It was the last thing the NFL wanted to hear, and the league's own medical committee dismissed our findings. But our athletic trainers new better, and were committed to doing better. I recall a meeting in Chicago, called by the NFL commissioner where all 32 team's AT's and physicians were asked to attend...and to hear the concerns being raised. I recall Ronnie Barnes and John Norwig encouraging me to stay the course and let science pave the way.
- That was great advice. We didn't back down; we expanded our research program and eventually corroborated our findings through longitudinal studies....some of which are ongoing. This is allowing us to find interventions to protect players from concussion and the potential long-term effects....which by the way – we don't believe are nearly as prevalent as the media has led some people to believe. ...and neither are concussions.
- There is not an “epidemic of concussions,” just better reporting, and we have closed the gap between unreported (undiagnosed) and reported concussions. It has never been safer to play sports than it is today – in large part because of the great work of our Athletic Training profession - yet many parents are reluctant to have their kids play contact sports because of what they read in the newspaper.
- However, it is our responsibility to remind parents, athletes, and coaches that even the safest helmet in the world doesn't protect against concussion...but “behavior modification” likely will....and that's where a lot of our latest research is focused. We must work on the prevention side of the concussion equation!
- The most rewarding aspect of our work is that our research has had a trickle-down effect to youth sports, and there is now a heightened awareness about concussions in sport that is likely saving lives.
- People often ask ....how do you know you are making a difference?
  - Higher reported concussion incidence; Longer time to return to play – very few within-season repeat injuries – and emerging data showing that because we are treating them better...the worsened symptomatology following any subsequent concussions is less likely than previously thought.

- 2011 was a really good year...Our research helped reduce concussion incidence on kickoffs by nearly 50% (and has continued for 7 consecutive yrs).
- 2011 was also the year I received the MacArthur Award... after receiving an “out of the blue call.” The nomination process is secret, so I’ll never know who nominated me. It was certainly a lucky break for which I will be forever grateful—but it was a “lucky break” that came after 20 years of hard work and deferred gratification....and surrounding myself with good people.
- I want to emphasize that this research represented a team effort. I couldn’t have done this alone...there were ~40 athletic trainers around the country that helped us validate the BESS, and helped us make it a standard tool in the “concussion toolbox” ....So be sure to surround yourself with good people – people you trust.
- Although I spend a significant amount of my time now in the dean’s office, I still enjoy teaching (mostly co-teaching) and mentoring students...and I will say to the students here today, just as I do my own at UNC -- I believe that excellence is about hard work and determination more than it is about mad-genius Eureka moments.
- Architect Frank Lloyd Wright once said: “You have to go wholeheartedly into anything in order to achieve anything worth having.” I believe people don’t stumble into excellence; it takes commitment and focus.
- Former Secretary of State Colin Powell once said: “There are no secrets to success. It is the result of preparation, hard work, and learning from failure.” But that advice is similar to something I’ve told my four kids so often it is tattooed on their brains: “You will only be as good as you practice to be.”
- Another characteristic that has served me well is to be bold. Don’t fear boldness. Without boldness, progress is measured in increments so imperceptible that it doesn’t feel like forward movement at all. Yes, you will make mistakes. But to be a leader, to differentiate yourself, you have to be bold and take chances. In the words of one of our great UNC faculty members who teaches entrepreneurship – Buck Goldstein – “It’s OK to fail ... just fail fast.”
- As I hope these examples have demonstrated, we’ve tried to be bold in our approach to answering important questions about concussion. We were one of the first universities to institute baseline concussion testing in 1995, and one of the first to put accelerometers in the helmets of our football players in 2004. Being bold means taking risks, but leadership is about taking risks—calculated risks.

- My first significant leadership position at UNC was becoming chair of the Department of Exercise and Sport Science in 2005, a position I would hold for eight years. I decided early on that the department needed to evolve beyond the traditional “P.E.” dept. We needed to develop a few “brands” — ways of distinguishing ourselves from our peers.
- Concussion research was beginning to do this, as we bridged the world of sports with clinical research. Another way to distinguish ourselves was to build a leading exercise oncology program that has developed novel exercise programs for treating breast cancer and prostate cancer. Also ways to identify predispositions to ACL injuries in athletes, especially female athletes. “Exercise is Medicine” tagline was improving our brand! The point is that these were bold, intentional and strategic paths. Our successes didn’t happen by accident.
- When I became dean of the College of Arts & Sciences in 2016, I pledged to be as bold in my deanship as I have been in my concussion research. But boldness needs strategy behind it to succeed. That’s why one of my first acts as dean was to begin a strategic planning process for the College—a road map, if you will. Two years later, we have a road map that is leading to new academic majors and innovative programs that are differentiating our College in important ways...to benefit our students and faculty to lead in this ever-changing global economy.
- Why have I talked so much about strategic roadmaps? ..... Because I believe everybody needs one! No one can possibly map out their entire life—I certainly didn’t imagine when I started out as an athletic trainer 30 years ago that I would get a MacArthur award and become a dean at UNC....But over time, I knew I wanted to focus on concussion research, making a difference in keeping athletes safe and healthy on our playing fields - and I have continued working toward that goal (with a plan!). And when the opportunities arose to serve in leadership positions— I took them...hoping to continue being a change agent for the good. So I made adjustments to my road map, never losing sight of my core goals...and always proud to be an athletic trainer because it’s very important to me.
- Many of you will wind up taking paths you might never have imagined possible. Your road map will no doubt take unexpected twists and turns, but through surrounding yourself with good people, be bold, and stay focused on what is important to you (keeping your head up and often asking WHY?) - you will get to where you need to go. I think Pinky would agree...you too can make a difference.

**Thank you again for this wonderful honor!**