

# I want to attend MSU and be an athletic trainer....

Questions this document will answer:

- 1) Is an athletic trainer almost the same as a weight/strength trainer or personal trainer?
- 2) Can students major in CLEP or health/fitness studies and become certified in athletic training upon graduation?
- 3) Can students major in CLEP or health/fitness studies and attend any university with a master's degree in athletic training to become certified?
- 4) What should prospective students know and presently enrolled students in CLEP/Health Fitness Studies be told?

## **Question 1: Is an athletic trainer the same as a weight/strength trainer or personal trainer?**

**Answer: NO**

Primary Misconception: Athletic training is often confused with personal training. (see attachment) There is, however, a large difference in the education, skillset, job duties and patients of an athletic trainer and a personal trainer. Athletic trainers provide physical medicine, rehabilitative and preventative services. Athletic trainers treat a breadth of patients, including but not limited to: professional, college, secondary school and youth athletes, dancers, musicians and military personnel. Athletic trainers can work in a variety of locations including schools, physician clinics, hospitals, and manufacturing plants. Athletic Training is recognized by the American Medical Association (AMA) as a healthcare profession.

Athletic Trainers (ATs) are health care professionals who collaborate with physicians to provide preventative services, emergency care, clinical diagnosis, therapeutic intervention and rehabilitation of injuries and medical conditions. Students who want to become certified athletic trainers must earn a degree from an accredited athletic training curriculum. Accredited programs include formal instruction in areas such as injury/illness prevention, first aid and emergency care, assessment of injury/illness, human anatomy and physiology, therapeutic modalities, and nutrition. Classroom learning is enhanced through clinical education experiences.

Athletic trainers must attend a program specifically for athletic trainers, just like nurses must attend a nursing school. Both must pass a state board exam to become certified.

## **Question 2: Can students major in CLEP or health/fitness studies and become certified in athletic training upon graduation?**

**Answer: NO**

How to obtain certification as an athletic trainer:

To become a certified athletic trainer, students first must graduate with a bachelor's degree from a CAATE accredited athletic training undergraduate education program or obtain a master's degree from an accredited professional entry-level program. After graduation, students must pass a comprehensive test administered by the Board of Certification (BOC). Once certified, they must meet ongoing continuing education requirements in order to remain certified. Athletic trainers must also work under the direction of a physician and within their state practice act.

What if students are attending a university that does not have an accredited athletic training program? What if students are in a different field of study at MSU?

According to the National Athletic Trainers' Association (NATA) <http://www.nata.org/get-certified> there are only two ways someone who holds a bachelor's degree in an area other than athletic training may become certified. These are:

- Get a second bachelor's in athletic training from school with a CAATE accredited program.
- Get a masters in athletic training from a university with an accredited **professional entry-level master's** degree program. There are fewer than 20 of these. (See list)

### **Question 3: Can students major in CLEP or health/fitness studies and attend any university with a master's degree in athletic training to become certified?**

#### **Answer: NO**

Students who major in clinical exercise physiology or health/fitness studies at MSU and want to be athletic trainers must follow one of the two options listed in Question 2 above...enroll in a professional entry-level master's degree program OR get another bachelor's degree. Southern and Delta State are the only two universities in MS that have CAATE accredited bachelor's degree programs. The closest university with a professional entry-level master's program is the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga. There are a few others that are relatively close: one university in Florida, one in Missouri, four in Texas, and one in Arkansas. All others are much further away. (See attached list.) If students choose to enter a master's program, they must attend one of the colleges/universities from the attached list. All other master's level programs are considered *post-professional* and are for people already certified in athletic training or people who are already health care professionals – doctors, physical therapists, etc. There are many more post-professional master's programs than professional entry-level programs.

### **Question 4: What should we share with prospective students or students already enrolled in CLEP who may not get accepted in PT/OT school right away?**

Most university faculty/advisors would agree that students who have degrees beyond a bachelor's usually have more opportunities in the job market than students who hold a bachelor's degree only. This isn't always the case, but more education never hurts.

What should prospective students understand?

- We do not have an athletic training program at MSU.
- There is no way for students to obtain athletic training certification upon graduation from any of the undergraduate programs in kinesiology.
- If students choose to complete one of the undergraduate programs in kinesiology at MSU, they would have to enter a professional entry-level master's program and pass the board of certification exam in order to become certified in athletic training. Positive point – students would have a master's degree.
- If students do not plan to attend a master's level program, they must go to a university that offers an undergraduate CAATE accredited athletic training program.

What should students in CLEP or Health Fitness Studies understand about their options?

- PT/OT schools are extremely highly competitive. Attending a professional entry-level athletic training program may be a great option for students who aren't accepted right away into PT/OT schools.
- Obtaining this degree and athletic training certification could be just the boost they need to then be accepted into PT/OT school if they desire to do so. There are several athletic trainers in the physical therapy program at UAB right now. This will provide students with another option to help them reach their goal.

If I decide to attend MSU and then a professional entry-level master's program, what institutions offer these and how do I choose the right one?

- There is a list of all colleges/universities that offer the professional entry-level master's degree. There are only about 20 colleges/universities in the U.S. that offer this program. Ask your advisor for this list or contact Amy Prisock, [ahp3@colled.msstate.edu](mailto:ahp3@colled.msstate.edu) for a copy of the list.
- The main factor students should look at is the percentage of students from each program that pass the BOC exam. This information is also available for all students who are interested. Ask your advisor for this list or contact Amy Prisock, [ahp3@colled.msstate.edu](mailto:ahp3@colled.msstate.edu) for a copy of the list.

### **To Prospective Students...**

Our intent is to provide you with quality advising, information, and options that will assist you in reaching your goals. One way we hope to accomplish this is by making sure that you understand what MSU can offer concerning athletic training. Next, due to the many misconceptions about the field of athletic training, we want to share with you information about the majors that are offered by our Kinesiology Department and hope that one of these programs will put you on the road to success.

### **FYI:**

#### **Clinical Exercise Physiology**

CLEP provides students with the knowledge to work in exercise and rehabilitation programs which may focus on improving the health and fitness of healthy individuals or the rehabilitation of individuals suffering from injuries or chronic diseases. Students completing CLEP are prepared to work as exercise specialists in cardiac and pulmonary rehabilitation programs or may choose to enter graduate studies in one of the health professions such as physical therapy or occupational therapy.

#### **Health Fitness Studies**

This program prepares students to work as fitness instructors, exercise specialists, and directors or managers of Wellness and Fitness Centers in hospital, corporate and government settings. Students also can pursue careers in strength and conditioning for fitness enthusiasts and athletes.

#### **Sport Studies**

This program provides students for careers in the sport industry. Students choose business or communication emphasis. Sport business prepares students to work in fields related to management, development, marketing, budgeting, operations, and leadership at the professional, collegiate, and recreational levels of the sport industry. Sport communication prepares students to work in such fields as sport journalism, broadcasting, public relations, media relations, and videography.

#### **Sport Pedagogy**

This program prepares k-12 teachers and coaches through the integration of theory and practice with a goal of producing individuals committed to instilling in every child an appreciation of the need for and benefits of exercise and physical activity as a daily experience.

I hope this information is helpful to all of you.

Amy Prisock, Recruitment Coordinator  
College of Education  
Mississippi State University

*Phone conversation with Carrie Baker, the director of the entry-level master's degree program at the University of Tennessee-Chattanooga.*

*Phone conversation with a representative from the National Athletic Trainers' Association (NATA) and their website (<http://www.nata.org/athletic-training>).*

*Phone conversation with a representative from the Commission on Accreditation of Athletic Training Education (CAATE) and their website (<http://caate.net>).*