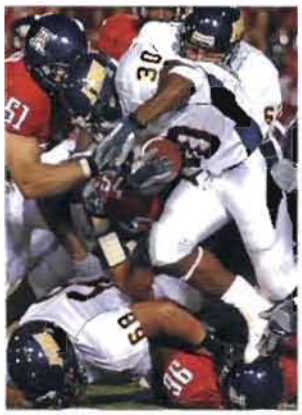
ASPA SPOTLIGHT

Continuous Quality: Far From a "Sideline"

By Paul Gaston, Trustees Professor, Kent State University

The third quarter is under way. The play has ended. And there is a player still on the ground. No, he's standing now, being helped to the sidelines. The camera finds him on the bench. And the announcer says, "He's being worked on by the athletic trainers."



For many of us this is the public face of a complex and multi-faceted discipline that prepares professionals to work at many levels to improve athlete conditioning, to reduce the frequency of injury, to address issues as they occur on the field of play, and to assist in the process of recovery.

For ASPA members, this is a disciple with high standards that have been articulated and are maintained by a relatively new colleague organization, the **Commission on Accreditation of Athletic Training Education (CAATE).** Patsy House, the current executive director of the Commission, is also its first. Since the Commission's founding in 2006, she has coordinated its oversight of 366 accredited programs from headquarters in Round Rock, Texas.

Thanks to a recent strategic planning session, the Commission is now operating with a more clearly articulated mission, namely, "To provide premier accreditation services to institutions that offer Athletic Training programs, verify that all CAATE accredited programs meet standards for professional athletic training education, and support continuous improvement in the quality of athletic training education."

As is the case with most ASPA members, accreditation in athletic training builds on a self-study that tracks explicit criteria and engages "stakeholders in the quality and effectiveness of that Athletic Training Educational Program." The next step is an on-site visit by peer evaluators who audit the program's self-study and review its pursuit of the standards.

Once the site visit report review is complete and the institution has provided a response, the Commission reaches a final accreditation decision. For programs awarded accreditation, the relationship continues with the expectation of an annual report.

At present, the Commission does not host an annual meeting, but does offer educational workshops on athletic training accreditation.

The Commission operates with eleven members, who represent CAATE accredited programs as well as the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American Academy of Family Physicians, and the American Orthopedic Society for Sports Medicine. There is also an administrator and public member on the Commission and liaison representatives from the Board of Certification, Inc., and the National Athletic Training Association. The Commission meets twice a year.

Having been a member of ASPA for just over a year, executive director House describes the value of the Association as "priceless." In particular, she finds the professional development portion of the meetings helpful in "informing and in some respects shaping the direction and the growth of the CAATE."

"We also value the diversity of the ASPA membership, particularly in terms of the disciplines, organization size, and history of the members."

And there's also an important intangible. New to the world of accreditation, executive director House attended her first ASPA meeting after only three months on the job. Her reaction? "A sigh of relief."

She discovered what ASPA members often find in their work with one another: "There are others like me, with similar challenges and opportunities for accrediting bodies and those we service." ■

New Member - MEAC joins ASPA

The Midwifery Education Accreditation Council became ASPA's newest member at the Fall 2009 meeting in St. Louis when the ASPA Board of Directors accepted the recommendation of the ASPA Membership Committee. Midwifery schools and programs accredited by MEAC prepare midwives for national certification as Certified Professional Midwives (CPMs). To date, MEAC has accredited eleven midwifery schools / programs. In addition to the work in accreditation, MEAC also approves Continuing Education Programs attended by professional midwives to maintain and upgrade their skills and knowledge for practice.

MEAC is listed in the FY2010 Membership Directory as well as on the ASPA web site - see Midwifery at: http://www.aspa-usa.org/member_fields_aspa.asp.

MEAC's Executive Director is Jo Anne Myers-Ciecko. When she submitted the membership application, Jo Anne said "We are delighted to have finally reached this point!" Jo Anne looks forward to interacting with the other ASPA members at future meetings, perhaps starting this spring. ■

WELCOME!