



## Joint Statement from the Strategic Alliance BOC, CAATE, NATA and NATA Foundation

### After 2.5 Years of Diligent Analysis, Leaders of the Key Athletic Training Organizations Have Decided to Change the AT Degree Level to a Master's

Decision affecting future ATs was made with the best interests of the profession in mind to ensure a vital place for ATs in the evolving health care arena. Work now begins on the next steps.

Over the past two and a half years the AT Strategic Alliance (BOC, CAATE, NATA and NATA Foundation), under the lead of NATA and CAATE, have been actively engaged in a critical examination of what the appropriate professional degree level should be to best prepare athletic trainers for an integral role in the evolving health care system.

This past weekend a special meeting was held to hear final presentations and to deliberate. The NATA Board of Directors and the Commissioners of the CAATE, with the full support of the Board of Certification and the NATA Research & Education Foundation, have agreed to establish the professional degree in athletic training at the master's level.

Among the data considered in this decision was work produced by the NATA Executive Committee for Education (ECE). This included the *Professional Degree White Paper*, focus groups with existing professional programs at the master's degree level, a health care economist's study specific to athletic training education and numerous open-discussion sessions at state, district and national meetings. Among the CAATE's significant contributions included their knowledge of the accreditation landscape, and the changing higher education environment. They presented expert opinions from Commission physician and administrative members and provided an analysis developed from the CAATE's call for open comments.

The CAATE *Standards for Accreditation of Professional Athletic Training Programs* will be changed to include a requirement that professional programs be at the master's degree level with a specific implementation deadline of no less than seven years. This does not require currently certified ATs to obtain an additional degree. The deadline to require a master's degree to sit for the BOC examination will affect students who are not yet in high school.

A decision of this magnitude requires significant discussion, planning and communication. Over the next several weeks, the alliance will launch a website that will provide more information on the implementation as well as an opportunity for members of the profession to ask questions. The site will also provide a synopsis of the research that went into this decision and responses to questions raised during the months of gathering feedback. An in-person session will be held at the NATA 2015 convention to address “what’s next” questions. The presentation will be recorded and posted online so that all ATs have access to the dialogue. As the process moves forward, there will be several additional opportunities for conversations about next steps. Given the current state of higher education and health care, change is not only inevitable, but necessary. The Strategic Alliance has a responsibility to be the visionaries for the growth of the profession. This decision is not about today. It is about the future and longevity of the AT profession. The decision was not made lightly, and the approach to implementation will be treated with the same seriousness as the decision.

The CAATE anticipates releasing information about the implementation timeline after its August 2015 Commission meeting and looks forward to working with institutions and professional programs as they transition to the master’s degree. NATA and the CAATE will provide tools, resources and best practices to assist with the process, as well as ongoing updates on the implementation and timeline. The goal is to make this transition as simple as possible for all involved.

Athletic trainers have historically played a major role in the provision of health care for life and sport. The AT’s role and scope of practice continues to evolve in response to the dynamic nature of health care. As a result, ATs are considered by physicians to be integral members of the interprofessional health care team.

A critical link to acceptance in the broader health care arena is the ATs level of professional preparation. This decision to shift the degree level is essential to ensuring our future ability to meet the expectations of the health care team, to continuing to improve patient outcomes, and to keeping our profession sustainable for generations to come.

## About the Strategic Alliance

The Strategic Alliance is a group of four leading organizations committed to the athletic training profession and to the delivery of quality healthcare to the public. The four member organizations are the [Board of Certification, Inc. \(BOC\)](#), the [Commission on Accreditation of Athletic Training Education \(CAATE\)](#), the [National Athletic Trainers’ Association \(NATA\)](#) and the [NATA Research & Education Foundation \(NATA Foundation\)](#).

Each member of the Strategic Alliance serves a distinct group of stakeholders, yet all members have a shared interest in advancing the athletic training profession. Members collaborate to research and deliberate current topics of interest to the profession; solicit feedback from the public; and communicate findings and positions to all stakeholders. The Strategic Alliance offers its joint statements in an informed manner based upon what is best for students, patients and the profession.