

Master of Science Program's Response to the Review Team Report

By Valerie Herzog

Introduction

The Master of Science in Athletic Training Program faculty appreciates the efforts of the Review Team to evaluate the program. The team identified several strengths of the program including the quality of the faculty, the quality of the facilities, the rigor of the research component, the exceptional pass rate on the national certification exam (BOC), the variety of clinical sites, and administrative support. We believe that the team's findings will serve to further strengthen the MSAT program.

Identified Challenges and Recommendations

The Review Team noted several challenges including the workload of the program director, communication between faculty, students, and clinical preceptors, student access to the AT lab to practice skills, and lengthy evaluation forms. The following recommendations were made:

1. Hire an Athletic Training laboratory coordinator.
 - a. Currently, the department budget does not allow for the hiring of this position. The faculty are exploring ways to justify the creation of this position and/or ways to fill it at a lower cost such as an hourly position for a qualified athletic trainer.
2. Streamline clinical evaluations
 - a. The faculty decided to eliminate the students' self-evaluation that had been completed at the conclusion of each clinical assignment. We have also begun to review the remaining clinical evaluation forms, but have decided to leave the existing ones in place until the conclusion of the program's external site visit in the Fall 2014 semester. Introducing new evaluation forms in the middle of an external review would make it difficult to report these outcomes to the accrediting body.
3. Preceptor training
 - a. The Review Team recommended a formalized, annual preceptor training. The Clinical Education Coordinator (CEC) did hold a preceptor training in the summer of 2013 and is planning another training for the summer of 2014. Preceptors who cannot attend will receive an individualized training with the CEC when he visits their clinical site, which is done at least annually.
4. Establish a formal external committee
 - a. The AT faculty have begun exploring the formation of an external advisory committee. One faculty member has agreed to take the lead on this project and will develop a list of potential committee members for approval by the rest of the AT faculty. Tentatively, the committee will consist of all AT faculty, the program's medical director, and a preceptor from each clinical site category (high school, clinic, university, etc.) The potential committee members will then be contacted to determine their willingness to serve. We anticipate having the AT faculty meet with the committee once per year, anticipating that our first meeting would occur near the end of the Spring 2015 semester.
5. Focus on graduate students' needs
 - a. The first identified need was the creation of a dedicated space for the graduate students to congregate, study, collaborate, and practice their burgeoning skills in

athletic training. With the addition of the Wildcat Center in the Stromberg Complex, some spaces have become available. The department is currently exploring the possibility of using one of those spaces for a student lounge, but it would likely be open to all students in the department. The department does currently have a small space dedicated to student use in the academic advisement center.

- b. The second need identified by the Review Team was to seek funds for students to conduct and disseminate their research agendas. The WSU Graduate Council has been exploring funding for graduate student research on campus for the past couple of years. The Office of Undergraduate Research was able to set aside limited funds for graduate students to travel to present their research at conferences, but was not able to make any funds available for conducting the research. The program is also working with the Dean of the College of Education to explore additional funding options such as increasing the tuition level of the MSAT program. A proposal to increase the MSAT tuition will be submitted in December of 2014 to take effect in the 2015-16 academic year.
 - c. The third need identified for MSAT students was to allow them to create their own research agendas rather than always being tied to one of the professor's agendas. While this may be ideal for graduate students, it would significantly increase the workload of the MSAT faculty. Students do have the freedom to choose which faculty member they work on their thesis with and each faculty member has different areas of research focus. In addition, most faculty have more than one area of research interest/expertise and two faculty outside of the program regularly advise thesis students, opening up additional areas of research. While the faculty recognize that the graduate students cannot conduct research in every content area of athletic training, they do have a significant variety of areas to choose from including concussions, sport psychology, education/pedagogy, ankle instability, kinesiotaping, strength training and conditioning, proprioception, injury epidemiology, and therapeutic modalities.
6. Dedicated secretarial support
- a. The program is currently supported by both full-time secretaries (one on a 10-month contract and the second on an 11-month contract) in the department. However, one secretary's contract was extended from 10 months to 11 months (as of July 1, 2014), with the additional month being dedicated to the MSAT program to assist with administrative tasks.
 - b. In the fall of 2014, the MSAT program will begin using the new Athletic Training Centralized Application Service (ATCAS) to collect MSAT program applications. This will reduce the workload on the program director of tracking which transcripts have been received, calculating overall and final 60 credit GPAs for each student, and managing letters of recommendation.

The MSAT Program will also be submitting a self-study for reaccreditation by the Commission on Accreditation of Athletic Training Education (CAATE) in June 2014. The CAATE will then conduct a three-day site visit during the fall 2014 semester. The MSAT faculty will also review any recommendations made by the external accrediting body to further explore ways to improve the program.