

MoATA Hall of Fame Spotlight

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Michelle Boyd, MS, ATC

Hall of Fame Inductee 2016

By Katie Sniffen, MS, ATC

Career Beginnings

Michelle grew up in Chicago, Illinois, attending a large suburban high school. As she was trying to figure out a career path to pursue, she narrowed down her interests to either sports or medicine. She remembers one Sunday in particular when she was watching the Chicago Bears game and noticed their athletic trainer run out on the field. She instantly knew that was what she wanted to be. As fate would have it, there was an announcement at school the next day for the athletic training club meeting that night. Michelle went on to pursue her undergraduate degree at the University of Illinois and her master's degree at University of Pittsburgh. During graduate school, she realized that it didn't matter what sport she was assigned to or what setting she was in. She fell in love with the profession no matter where she was.

After a brief stint at Quaker Valley High School, Michelle took on dual roles as Assistant Athletic Trainer and Program Director at Truman State University in 1994. She served as Program Director for 10 years and transitioned to Head Athletic Trainer in 2001. Her long tenure at Truman has seen an evolution of its own. Starting with only two certified athletic trainers and an internship program, the department has grown to have four staff and two faculty for its entry-level master's program. When asked what has kept her at Truman for the majority of her career, Michelle reflects on how much she enjoys the students. In her observation, Truman attracts a certain kind of student...a little nerdy, awkward and very smart. Michelle attributes her stay at Truman to the relationships and conversations she has with them.



Advice for Young Professionals

“Be willing to get out of bed early.” Michelle stresses that there are so many things that can be taken advantage of, but we often choose not to. Whether it’s getting up early, volunteering, reading the extra book, or attending the last conference session, in her experience, it’s those opportunities that have made the difference in her career. Michelle is confident that her path would have been a whole lot different if she hadn’t done those things.

Additionally, Michelle encourages all prospective athletic trainers to try all the diverse ways in which you can practice in the profession. She emphasizes that you don’t have to like football to be an athletic trainer. With the growing options in emerging settings, there’s likely a niche that’s right for you.

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Mentors

Looking back on her training, Michelle is grateful for the faculty and staff at University of Illinois that were passionate about integrating students into the mix. She admired the respect they had as professionals and aspired to earn the same respect herself. Michelle also speaks fondly of Clint Thompson as a mentor when she first started at Truman State. When looking for a job after graduating, she didn't really have any preferences for where in the country she went. But she strategically pursued Truman State because Clint Thompson was there, and she thought she could learn a lot from the then editor of the Journal of Athletic Training. Her intuition paid off as Clint not only taught her directly but connected her with many key people that have further influenced her career.

Memorable Moments

About 15 years ago, there was a new football coach that decided to take the team off campus to Fort Leavenworth for 10 days of two-a-day training. This required Michelle to plan and pack for all foreseeable (and unforeseeable) needs during the trip. "Ten days felt like 100," she recalled, "Everything that could have happened, happened." She then joked, "I'm just starting to be able laugh about it now." She brought several students with her and prioritized making sure the trip was as enjoyable as possible with a "mandatory fun" rule. She recalls insisting that they all stay up late to watch the meteor shower from the artillery range. To this day, those students will tell her that they carry on that tradition with their own students now.

Contributions to the Profession

A common theme throughout Michelle's career is her willingness and initiative to volunteer. Although she always knew she would be an athletic trainer, likely a collegiate athletic trainer, she never planned on playing the role she has as a leader in the profession. From volunteering to review student essays to teaching coaches first aid classes, she has met and formed lasting friendships with the likes of John Donnell. "These were the times I met the key people that got me involved and got me excited," she recalls. "I really love what I do, and it's fun to help other people get the resources they need to do athletic training."

Her volunteerism has demonstrated her passion for the profession and has included serving in many leadership roles across all levels of the profession. Michelle has served roles within the NATA Research and Education Foundation and Board of Certification. She was state President for MoATA, Secretary for the MAATA district, and currently serves as MAATA President.

Michelle's mission is to leave things better than she found them. I don't think anyone would argue otherwise!



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