

## Commentary about ASEP and ACSM

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Recently I was informed of the interchange that has occurred through this service regarding ACSM and ASEP, and after reading the comments from select individuals, I felt compelled to write and share my views.

As many of you know, I co-founded ASEP with Tommy Boone, was president from 1998-2000, and remain functional within the ASEP organization.

I am disturbed that many of my exercise physiology colleagues at the Ph.D. level still do not embrace ASEP. The bitterness, infighting, and plain unprofessional and unethical behavior within Sports Medicine and Exercise Science/Physiology do not speak well for our disciplines and pseudo-professions.

I want to keep this memo as short as possible, so let me get to the point. Nothing speaks louder, more forcefully, or honestly than facts. So let me give you the facts that are at my finger tips regarding exercise physiology in the USA, the accomplishments of ASEP, the professional efforts that ASEP has pursued to promote professional and ethical collaboration with ACSM, and the treatment that ASEP and exercise physiology has received by ACSM.

### **1. Facts About Exercise Physiology: 2001**

- It is a discipline that is at risk for being over-run by clinical professions (nursing, physical therapy, pulmonary therapy, etc.)
- There are probably more than 30 titles used to denote academic programs and degrees that are essentially exercise physiology.
- There are more than 100 organizations that certify exercise-related knowledge and skills. Only one of these requires at least an undergraduate degree in exercise science/physiology – the ASEP Exercise Physiologist-Certified.
- Despite ACSM's inroads into certification, ACSM certifications are not specific to exercise science/physiology-trained candidates, and therefore not professional certifications.
- State licensure of exercise physiologists requires a national professional exercise physiology organization. ACSM is not this organization for reasons of legal, professional and ethical facts.
- Anybody in the country, perhaps outside of Louisiana, can call themselves whatever they like to express the image of competency in exercise-related knowledge and skills.

- The public is poorly serviced, and perhaps likely to be harmed, by the unprofessional status of exercise physiology.
- Undergraduate students in exercise science/physiology remain frustrated at the limited employment opportunities they have after graduation.
- Masters degree students in exercise science/physiology remain frustrated at the limited employment opportunities they have after graduation.
- Many Ph.D trained exercise scientists/physiologists have an identity crisis regarding how they should view and promote themselves, as well as function in the work-place.
- Despite the existence of a professional organization for exercise physiologists (ASEP), many exercise science/physiology trained individuals are reluctant to join and become active ASEP.

These facts do not present a flattering picture of exercise science/physiology. In fact, any individual with compassion for who he or she is within the field of exercise physiology should be down-right disgusted and embarrassed by these facts. Such attitudes should result in action, but as I have commented, from where I view exercise physiology there is very little action to be seen at all!

## 2. **Accomplishments of ASEP**

Since the founding of ASEP in 1997, the following has been accomplished:

- Expanded website
- Opportunities to unite all exercise physiologists.
- A forum for professional interchange.
- Three national meetings (Duluth 1998, Albuquerque 1999, Albuquerque 2000).
- Development of a code of ethics, and other documents pertinent to the development, promotion and recognition of professional standards.
- Two on-line journals (professional issues [**PEP**online] and research [**JEP**online]).
- Completion of a nation-wide academic program accreditation system.
- Completion of the ASEP Exercise Physiologist-Certified Certification Exams and manual.

- Successful offering and completion of the first ASEP EPC certification in Albuquerque at the 2000 conference.
- Collaboration with numerous state exercise physiology certification associations in efforts to unite states in a consistent approach to state-specific licensure.
- Recognition of ASEP by numerous state exercise physiology associations as their national “parent” professional organization.
- Awarding Per-Olof Astrand with the first ever Lifetime Achievement Award in Exercise Physiology, 2000.

Isn't it interesting that many items of ASEP accomplishments directly “attack” the deficiencies of our discipline and profession, as listed earlier!

Furthermore, wouldn't these efforts and accomplishments have greater impact with the support of ACSM. After all, ACSM is a sports medicine organization that recognizes and assists other professional organizations. In fact, the founders of ACSM stated very clearly that this is what ACSM should do – to unite all exercise-related professional organizations to the benefit of the combined knowledge of how exercise influences the human body. Based on this simple, very obvious fact, what has ASEP done to offer itself to work with ACSM?

### **3. ASEP's Efforts To Interact With ACSM**

Prior to the founding of ASEP, and during the years since, ASEP has:

- Discussed the need for ASEP with ACSM presidents, on at least a yearly basis, as early as when Russell Pate was president of ACSM.
- Since 1997, had numerous phone and mail correspondence with ACSM administrators for the need to collaborate.
- Offered to contribute to a formal and open discussion of the professionalization of exercise physiology at numerous ACSM regional and national meetings.
- Mailed letters to ACSM members to provide rationale for the need for ASEP.
- Requested formal recognition of ASEP as an ACSM liaison organization.

Despite these efforts, ACSM continues to refuse to acknowledge the presence of ASEP in a public forum.

As many of you might be aware, I have been vocal about my dissatisfaction with the blatant refusal of ACSM to recognize ASEP. Such expressions have been my personal opinions, and as an exercise physiologist, I have the right to express criticisms of ACSM.

In fact, open and constructive criticism is as much a part of professionalism as any other characteristic. Similarly, the provision of opportunities to voice such criticism is as much a characteristic of a healthy profession as any other.

#### **4. How has ACSM responded to ASEP and Expressions of Criticism?**

- Continued refusal to recognize ASEP.
- Inside admonishment of myself, Tommy Boone and other ASEP members.
- Indirect development of an attitude and “atmosphere” of fear within exercise physiology to join ASEP.
- Promotion of expanded ACSM certifications and registries that directly oppose the efforts of ASEP.
- Support of an attitude of censorship and exclusion to the requests of myself to present the topic of the professionalization of exercise physiology at regional and national meetings.
- Refusal to develop and promote opportunities for membership feedback on the issue of the professionalization of exercise physiology.

I think any reasonably educated and intelligent person can see that there is a stark reality to the fact that ACSM does not want anything to do with the professional development of exercise physiology. In fact, by the very actions, or lack thereof, of ACSM, it is also clear that ACSM wants to be the sole organization that directs exercise physiology. ACSM does not appear to care that there are hundreds (probably thousands if you count the closet supporters of ASEP) of exercise physiologists who disagree. Surely it is clear that ACSM is functioning more like a dictatorship to exercise physiologists than a supporting organization to exercise physiology.

I am fed up with the antics of ACSM. As such, you do not see my name as a member any more. Why should I pay money to an organization that clearly does not respect who I am as an exercise physiologist, and does not welcome the opportunity or support a process where members can express themselves openly without fear of repudiation.

This brings me to the responses by .... And ..... Given all the content of this posting, it is clear that ASEP is needed, and equally clear that ACSM is not supportive of the needs of exercise physiology and exercise physiologists. Thus, it is also clear that if there are people who are not supportive of ASEP, then they too must not be supportive of exercise physiology as a discipline or profession.

Interestingly, each of ... and ... made arguments in their postings that they do not support ASEP because of the unprofessional conduct of Tommy Boone. In addition, they essentially state that because of their efforts within ACSM, they do not want to support

ASEP. They did not mention my name, but by their definitions in the accusations directed at Tommy, I must also be guilty of unprofessional conduct.

Come on, I have faith that many of you are intelligent people. Do you really believe these pathetic excuses? You have two individuals, who despite of the facts, would rather promote divisiveness than support ASEP – would rather insult a man who volunteers hundreds of hours each month to the cause of improving the discipline and profession of exercise physiology, than respect him for it – would refuse to redirect their efforts to where it is needed most, not because it is wrong, but because they have a track record within ACSM and do not want to rock the boat!

It is about time more exercise physiologists stood up for themselves and made a stand to complain about the actions of ACSM concerning ASEP and the professionalization of exercise physiology. Surely the need for improvements is greater than the thought of change! What is there to fear from change? Tommy and I have tried to do so much in our communications with ACSM, and it always falls on deaf ears. I have made such a stand, and I do not care how I am viewed by the ACSM elite. All I care about is that I am an exercise physiologist, and I am proud of who I am professionally. I care that the discipline and profession that I chose to follow in my walk of life is sick and in need of help. I want to help and the facts support why and how I should help – to support ASEP. The facts also reveal the unprofessional and unethical attitudes and conduct of ACSM.

Surely the need to take action and support ASEP is clear. Surely the need to express your concerns over ACSM's refusal to support ASEP is clear. Surely, your actions to express these efforts can only improve exercise physiology, and in so doing, can only benefit ACSM. These are good things, aren't they?

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