

# Journal of Professional Exercise Physiology

ISSN 1550-963X

March 2016

Vol 14 No 3

**American Society of Exercise Physiologists**  
The Professional Organization of Exercise Physiologists

## Time For A Change

Tommy Boone, PhD, MPH, MAM, MBA  
Board Certified Exercise Physiologist

*Change is part of life. And whether you like it or not, it's going to take place with or without your approval.*

*-- Shannon Kaiser*

**T**oday we are living amidst an explosion of science and technology, which brings me to exercise physiology and change or will it be more of the same. Knowledge of exercise medicine has the potential to move exercise physiology to the forefront of healthcare and credibility. I believe the American Society of Exercise Physiologists (ASEP) is the leader in promoting professionalism, academic accreditation, code of ethics, and standards of practice for exercise physiologists. In fact, as strange as it might sound, the truth is unchanging. Exercise physiologists should belong to and support their own professional organization. It is an idea that is simply not complicated or even debatable. The question, therefore, is not "Will exercise physiologists become members of ASEP?" For they certainly will, just as physical therapists are members of the American Physical Therapy Association (APTA).

Ask yourself, "Is it a matter of time that students will either experience change or more of the same?"

For certain, something is wrong with college teachers and their administrators who continued to turn a blind eye to the meaningless college degrees, which exist because the academy does not have a plan beyond publishing research. Teaching is considered an everyday occurrence. It is said that anybody can teach, which is simply not true. There is the notion that after getting the doctorate degree,

*We need to inspire exercise physiologists. There is no point having all the scientific knowledge and hands-on laboratory skills if they cannot inspire change, if they cannot other exercise physiologists to take seriously the ASEP ideas. We need to inspire exercise physiologists at all levels to get involved in the ASEP life-giving change to exercise physiology.*

you are qualified to teach. The evidence for this thinking is all around us. It may be argued as well that unless the emphasis on research is brought under control or at least some critical analysis of the present-day problems in academia, teaching will continue to be of little importance.

Ask any parent, "What is the goal of a college education for your son?" The answer is simple in that 95% of the time parents will say: "I expect the college degree to increase my son and daughter's chances of getting a financially stable job after college." It is no longer right to think of a college education as simply an extension of high school or a place for so-called college teachers to do research. The common sense within each of us would like to believe that a college degree means a better life due to a well-paying job.

*Change is necessary and inevitable. Rather than allowing non-exercise physiologists or misguided exercise physiologists to direct us, I pray we allow the ASEP members to direct this change in exercise physiology and our own lives as healthcare professionals.*

It is pastime that academic institutions make transparent the earnings of college degrees. Too many students are graduating from colleges throughout the United States who are worse off than they were before they started college. The students get it, but they still want to believe in the academic system. Hence, they put out the big tuition and living expenses even though the economic recession is having a dramatic impact on college graduates. Some colleges get this point as well. That is why the University of Louisiana - Lafayette is eliminating philosophy as a major. Yes, students must

learn how to think critically and analytically, but what is the point if the academic major cannot be translated into a career once they graduate?

The idea that college is all about acknowledging knowledge and developing as a person is good as long as the degree program is credible. The more students think about their college experience in reference to their post-college career the better their likelihood of experiencing long-term success. For this reason, students need to know more about what it actually takes to be successful after college. College teachers need to know the connection, if any, to a career and success in the workplace. Much work needs to be done to help students and parents understand that not all undergraduate degrees lead to a good job.

More often than not a college degree is believed to be the source and hope of a better life. It is the vision of being successful and developing a noteworthy future for yourself and your family. The canvas of history is painted with examples of academic achievement. But, unfortunately, too many students find themselves trapped in a time warp of research and more research. The faculty's success is separate from the academic limitations, teaching in particular, that keep the college graduates from being successful.

A career-specific job defined by the academic degree allows for hope in the midst of thousands of dollars that must be paid back. The fact is many college graduates with a four-year degree are buried in debt with few job prospects. In 2008, 81% of adults thought

college was a worthwhile investment. This year, 57% think so (1). But, while it is more true than untrue that a college is still worth the tuition and effort, the issue that isn't being addressed as much as it should be is the responsibility of the department's to offer a credible academic degree and the responsibility of the students to enroll in credible degree programs.

But, first, the unlocking of academic degrees from past and present thinking to stop producing disappointment begins with the administrators, the department chairs, and the faculty. If the faculty frees themselves from the constant redundancy of status quo, if they create and expand their thinking, and if they develop academic degrees that are career driven, then, the whirlwind of despair can decrease. The process of change begins a vision that transforms the exercise science world into a much larger exercise physiology healthcare perspective.

The dozens of similar off-shoots of the traditional physical degree program that are offered throughout the colleges and universities of the 21st century world of academia is enough to major emotional trauma, depression, discouragement, and despair. Enough is enough! That is why the ASEP leaders are doing what can to transform these degree programs to exercise physiology. They understand the importance of a vision to produce change. It was vision that inspired the first professional definition of exercise physiology and exercise physiologists (2). Vision produced the first-ever exercise physiology code of ethics. Vision inspired the development of accreditation guidelines. Vision motivated the writing of the standards of professional practice for exercise physiologists. It was the vision of recognition as a healthcare professional that inspired the college text, introduction to Exercise Physiology (3).

*If you don't think something needs to change, go to the next sports medicine or exercise science meeting and look around. Then ask yourself, "Why aren't the exercise physiologists recognized under their own professional organization?" It is sad to say, but the reality is that the academic exercise physiologists continue to give away exercise physiology to build the future of generic organizations. Meantime, the young people in their 20s are paying the price.*

The wise king of Israel, Solomon, stated in Proverbs 29:18 (KJV), "Where there is no vision, the people perish." His statement indicates that where there is no vision of the future (such as is the case with exercise physiologists), there is no inspiration to change. Instead, status quo is good. Forget about expanding the influence of exercise physiologists as healthcare entrepreneurs. Forget about coming together and building a profession of exercise physiologists. Forget about demonstrating the personal strength to overcome their blind eyes to ASEP and its work to empower exercise physiologists and forget about the members' passion to live their vision.

The ASEP exercise physiologists see the future of exercise physiology. They understand their destiny is driven by the ability to see farther than the physical eyes of their colleagues. They understand that the professionalization of exercise physiology can no

longer be overlooked. Hence, they see the future of exercise physiology and, therefore, they see the destiny of exercise physiologists. Dr. Myles Munroe (4) said it best in his book, *The Principles and Power of Vision*, "Vision is seeing the future before it comes into being. It is a mental picture of your destiny." The ASEP leaders believe the exercise physiologists' destiny is healthcare, which gives purpose and meaning to exercise physiology. They understand the academic exercise physiologists' role in publishing research is important, but real progress for all exercise physiologists is more than just research. Exercise physiology is more, and exercise physiologists can do significantly more if they are willing to think differently and if they are willing to change.

*"Change means movement. Movement means friction. Only in the frictionless vacuum of a nonexistent abstract world can movement or change occur without that abrasive friction of conflict."*

*-- Saul Alinsky*

Think about it for a moment. Do you have a sense of the purpose of exercise physiologists? Do you know why exercise physiology exists? You may say, "I like exercise physiology as it is. College teachers do research and if you don't have the doctorate degree, then, you should find work in gyms as trainers or you should go on to graduate school and become a nurse or a physical therapist." Well, I can't say that such a response is 100% meaningless.

*Change is difficult, so many refuse to get involved. Yet, without change, how can the present-day college degree prepare students for life? Academia is in desperate need of renewal.*

My answer is that the undergraduate degree should be an ASEP accredited exercise physiology major, the students should have been required to sit for the ASEP board certification and, at graduation, they should be recognized as "the" healthcare professionals responsible for prescribing exercise medicine. College majors should not exist as aimless, repetitive classes because the college teachers have their heads buried in the agenda of status quo organizations. Going to college is about living a meaningful life. It is headed towards a destination with a purpose. It is fulfilling the dream of helping others live a healthier lifestyle.

The problem is that most academic exercise physiologists have no vision beyond doing research and attending regional and national meetings to build their resumes to help secure advancement in rank and/or tenure. Research is what gives meaning to their work. But, unfortunately, it is academic busyness that does not give hope to the students' life after college. No doubt that is why many college graduates become resentful of their jobs and colleagues. They find themselves existing rather than living a fulfilling life. Years later they may say, "I wish that I had a better idea of what I wanted to do after college." I can see that having a well thought out plan while in college is the key to being successful.

Frankly, I wish my college teachers had done something to helping me plan for the future. They could have asked the questions: Do you see yourself becoming a healthcare entrepreneur? Do you dream of owning your own successful exercise medicine clinic? Do you think about being ASEP board certified? Do you see yourself helping people of all ages prevent and treat lifestyle diseases and disabilities?

It is depressing for college graduates and frustrating for their parents to believe in the benefits of getting a college degree and, then, find yourself living at home with your parents. Without a meaningful job, life is more about existing than living, wasting one's potential versus growing and experiencing their dreams, and asking "what went wrong" when life could have been altogether different. Meanwhile, the college teacher/researcher still gets his or her paycheck. They are lost in the noise of mediocrity. At first glance, it may come across as normal. When you get a closer look, you see that they are lost in the midst of being ordinary.

*There were four people named  
Everybody, Somebody, Anybody and Nobody.  
There was an important job to be done and  
Everybody was asked to do it.  
Everybody was sure Somebody would do it,  
Anybody could have done it but Nobody did it.  
Somebody got angry about that, because it was  
Everybody's job.  
Everybody thought Anybody could do it but  
Nobody realized that Everybody wouldn't do it.  
It ended up that Everybody blamed Somebody  
when Nobody did what Anybody could have done.*

-- (Unknown Usenet Source)

In Proverbs 23:7, it say, "For as a man thinks within himself, so is he." I believe I was born to promote the development of exercise physiology as a healthcare profession and, in so doing, enable exercise physiologists to become leaders in prescribing exercise medicine to prevent and treat chronic diseases and disabilities. There you have it and, frankly, I have been writing and talking about the importance of exercise physiologists supporting ASEP; the vision of something better for all exercise physiologists for nearly 20 years. I will not bury my dream or passion that exercise physiologists should be acknowledged as healthcare professionals just as physical therapists are embraced. It is my dream. Also, it is the dream of ASEP members. We have the enthusiasm and drive to stay the course. Nobody can stop it from happening, regardless of the resistance, opposition, and challenges.

In fact, you may say, "Really, Tommy. You think your writing is going to make a difference?" My response is found in Proverbs 18:16, "A man's gift makes room for him."

It isn't the fact that I have "x" degrees or this or that education, but rather my vision to live and experience exercise physiology a recognized and credible healthcare profession will make a way for it. After all, it is a gift that God gave me. God will see to it that ASEP will continue its influence on exercise physiology and that the organization will be used to the maximum to help all exercise physiologists be their best at improving the health and well-being of clients and patients of all ages and sex.

*“Creating a vision of your life might seem like a frivolous, fantastical waste of time, but it's not: creating a compelling vision of the life you want is actually one of the most effective strategies for achieving the life of your dreams.”*

*-- Royale Scuderi*

Ultimately, a gift such as I have described requires putting one's life into the work that must be done. There is no reason to acknowledge anyone who doesn't understand the ASEP vision (5). It is a waste of time. What is important is to stop being controlled by the agenda of others, by looking ahead to the next generation of ASEP exercise physiologists, by not allowing others to influence the ASEP professionalization of exercise physiology, and by concentrating our time on the ASEP goals and objectives. As healthcare professionals, we are special, uniquely trained, and understand professional in our support of others who want to become healthier. ASEP exercise physiologists have a clear picture of the road ahead of them. They will learn from their mistakes, overcome obstacles, and never, ever give up.

As long as exercise physiologists hold on to the ASEP vision, there is always the hope and expectation of moving forward. It is my sincere hope that non-ASEP exercise physiologists will decide that they have had enough of being controlled by non-exercise physiologists and that they will declare support of the ASEP professional infrastructure. Becoming a member is the beginning of building our profession. Continuing as members is proof that we are part of God's plan to finish our development as healthcare professionals with the responsibility to oversee the safety and appropriateness of exercise medicine for the betterment of society.

*“If you want to win a war, there are three things you need to know: First, you need to know you are at war. Second, you need to know who or what your enemy is. And third, you need to know what weapons and strategies can defeat your enemy.”*

*-- Matthew Kelly*

*“Never cease to pursue the opportunity to seek something different. Don't be satisfied with what you're doing. Always try to seek a way and a method to improve upon what you're doing, even if it's considered contrary to the traditions of an Industry.”*

*-- Howard Marguleas*

## References

1. Berger, B. (2013). Why a college degree may not be worth it. U.S. News. <http://www.usnews.com/opinion/articles/2013/05/09/why-a-college-degree-no-longer-guarantees-success>
2. American Society of Exercise Physiologists. Home page. <http://www.asep.org/>
3. Boone, T. (2014). Introduction to Exercise Physiology. Jones and Bartlett, Burlington, NY.
4. Munroe, M. (2003). The Principles and Power of Vision. Whitaker House: New Kensington, PA.
5. American Society of Exercise Physiologists. (2015). ASEP Vision. <http://www.asep.org/>