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**Should I Dare Expect Something Better?**

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 *For me, since life is a journey (and a brief one at that), I will not waste my time with the herd of sports medicine types! For me, I prefer exercise physiology over exercise science.*

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| *The fact that we become what we think about most of the time means that if we want to be exercise physiologists, then, we must think as exercise physiologists!* |

 am not in my normal state of mind when it comes to writing an article on why professionalism is our next door to open. Yet, I cannot stop myself from trying to write something. Actually, I am not where I should be, but I will try because it is important to do the right thing. Yet, I understand how that sounds. Here is the bottom line: This is as I feel tonight. Yes, this is Thursday, August 6th, 2015 and I am late in publishing this month’s PEPonline. Not that it matters to whomever, the ASEP message is important and the world of exercise physiologists must step up to the plate. Honestly, it is not a matter of ASEP doing something unbelievable. Rather, it is what the exercise physiologists are going to do! Are they going to step up to the plate of professionalism or not? I think they will.

Here are my disclosures, I absolutely love teaching. I taught college for 44 years. I am retired now and, frankly, I miss teaching. My best calculation indicates that I taught more than 250 academic courses and more than 6,000 students. I would do it again without a blink of the eye. These opinions are mine of course. They reflect my work as a teacher and (as a researcher). Yes, I did research as well. In fact, while I loved doing research, it was more about the students doing good research and learning from it than being recognized as a big time researcher. I didn’t do research to get promoted or tenured. All that seemed to come naturally.

I also want to confess that I cannot see the future. I am simply an average person who happens to be interested in doing what I can to help college students. In short, I believe today's academic setting is out of control. The thinking of the administrators, department chairs, and faculty seems to be more about ensuring the bottom line (i.e., money!) and continued existence of a department than it is about “what is and is not working”. I believe that my time in six academic institutions and especially my 20 yrs as chair of a department of exercise physiology has provided me the right to speak out.

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| *We become what we* *think, what we talk about, and what we do.* |

To teach is to experience something special between yourself and the students. You learn how to teach, what is important, and why students attend college. It is the closest thing I know, except for being a preacher, where you share with the students what you know, what they must learn, and why it all makes sense to pay the high tuition dollars and living costs. We teach students who go on to teach other students. Yes, some students become great teachers. Others write great books, publish research articles, and some become entrepreneurs.

But, strangely, only a few rise to the occasion of greatness. They are the ones on the outside looking in and asking "why" are we still letting non-exercise physiologists tell us how to think and what to do? They have asked the question as well: “Why has it taken so long to see the need for our own professional organization?” It is they who will make a difference in transitioning exercise physiology from just a research discipline to a healthcare profession.

In many departments throughout the United States today, exercise physiology is not what it should be. Rather than existing to benefit the students, it is instead the door of opportunity for the academic exercise physiologists to earn a big research reputation. Don’t get me wrong. I understand the importance of research. But, honestly, the expression “college teaching” should be “college research”. Teaching is something that is required. It is not valued by the so-called teachers!

What is also interesting is that society has changed. By this I mean that students are expecting to find a credible job, that is, a career after college. Academic exercise physiologists must do something about the minimally talked about professional career opportunities for the students of exercise physiology or for the students of exercise science and related degree programs who want to become exercise physiologists by passing the ASEP Board Certification exam.

The ASEP leadership expects that change will take place within curriculum, hands-on laboratory experiences, and evaluation of subjects, clients, and patients. They believe the curriculum will continue to undergo redefinition to include professional development and training central to the professionalization of exercise physiology. There is the ASEP expectation that other more traditional academic areas of study will be de-emphasized to allow for the teaching of exercise medicine concepts, ideas, and application, especially from the point of view of preventing and treating chronic diseases and disabilities.

Entrepreneurial thinking and business skills do not get enough attention in our undergraduate programs. In fact, this is likely an important reason why recent college graduates are not confident to go out and start a healthcare practice. Shouldn’t the academic exercise physiologists teach their students how to start a healthcare business, what it means to operate financially using the fee-for-service approach, and how to protect themselves against a malpractice suit? I think so. They also should be held accountable for teaching students how to evaluate, educate, and oversee a client’s physiology of exercise.

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| *Exercise physiologists have no time to lose. They need to play the game of professional development with all their heart and mind.*  |

I understand the importance of teaching glycolysis and the Krebs cycle. I know why students should learn the specific steps of generating energy for muscle contraction. But, shouldn’t we teach and expect students to adhere to a code of ethics and standards of practice? The ASEP leaders believe it is important that students think of exercise physiology as a profession, not simply as a “field” or a “discipline”. This is not the first time I have said this, and it will not be last. Just as teaching cannot be simply repetition of words, the take home message of the undergraduate degree must be more than it is. There must be more feedback connecting the dots. For example, why are the teachers teaching what they are semester after semester and year after year without even thinking about getting rid of outdated courses and updating the curriculum? It is crazy not to do so if there is going to be any likelihood of the students' success after college.

What is common among the accredited healthcare programs such as physical therapy, athletic training, and others is the profession-specific curriculum with course work that supports the professions’ vision and career expectations. This point is so important that every year after the senior class graduates the department should randomly assess the effectiveness of the course work in the securing and keeping a career-specific job. In short, "Was the degree helpful or not? What do you think was most helpful, least helpful, and what could the department and faculty do better?"

What are the academic courses, hands-on laboratory skills and experiences, and professionalism conversations and lectures that are essential for a Board Certified Exercise Physiologist to do be successful? It is important that the expected outcomes of the college education (such as a Board Certified professional healthcare entrepreneur) define the curriculum. The past association with exercise science and sports medicine is not exercise physiology and, therefore, cannot define exercise physiology.

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| *Sports medicine and exercise science cannot breed and nurture the winning spirit of Board Certified Exercise Physiologists.*  |

In summary, let us identify, talk about, and promote the profession of exercise physiology. We should not lose the opportunities afforded us with the founding of the American Society of Exercise Physiologists. Nor should we let our skills and knowledge be taken from us by non-exercise physiologists. In the end, we are responsible for who we are and what we become. I am happy to be myself. I really do like being an exercise physiologist. I am glad I am part of ASEP, and I understand that change is a lifetime of work. But, I am willing and happy to be part of the process. It is real. It is necessary, and it will define us as winners. Why, because we are not living in the past or the future. We are ASEP Board Certified Exercise Physiologists today!