

**1 Career Opportunities in the Field of Exercise and Sport Psychology**

Ad-hoc Committee on Employment Opportunities

Jessica Lutkenhouse

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## **1 Career Opportunities in the field of Exercise and Sport Psychology**

*By Michael L. Sachs, Ph.D., CC-AASP*

Professionals employed in the field of sport and exercise psychology are often asked a variety of questions from their clients, students, and the general public about their career paths, some of which may include “How do I learn more about the field?”, “Do I have to get a Ph.D. or are there other options?”, and “What are the possibilities after I graduate?” Plenty of resources exist to answer the first two questions, such as The Association for Applied Sport Psychology (AASP) website and the Directory of Graduate Programs in Applied Sport Psychology (Sachs, Burke, & Schweighardt, 2010), as well as Sayette, Mayne, and Norcross (2010). While there is some literature that addresses part of the third question, such as a brochure that was collaboratively developed by the American Psychological Association (APA), the Association for Applied Sport Psychology (AASP), and the North American Society for the Psychology of Sport and Physical Activity (NASPSPA) and an article written by Dr. Patricia Bach (Sachs et al., 2010), information on what one can actually do with one’s degree is still lacking.

In 2009, Dr. Michael Sachs, who is the Past-President of Division 47, Exercise and Sport Psychology, of APA, decided to fill this gap within the research by creating an Ad-Hoc Committee on Employment Opportunities. The purpose of this committee was to develop a position paper outlining the various employment opportunities that exist in our field. Dr. Jessica Lutkenhouse has chaired the committee and Lutkenhouse and Sachs have assembled an excellent group of committee members who have each contributed. The paper reviews a number of specialty areas within exercise and sport psychology by providing summaries, job descriptions, and vignettes or interviews by someone employed in (or very knowledgeable) about the job. We believe that the paper is relevant to individuals who are interested in pursuing either their master’s or doctoral degree in an exercise and sport psychology-related field. It may also be of interest to current professionals who want to expand their practice and/or explore different career opportunities within the field.

The following positions are included in this document in their respective order: AASP Certified Consultants (AASP-CC); Professionals employed in or the liaison to a university athletic department; Clinical Psychologists working with athletes in private practice; Professionals employed by the Army Center for Enhanced Performance; Clinical Psychology, Counseling Psychology, Social Work, and/or Counselor Education Faculty that have an opportunity for sport psychology learning; Academic Advising Counselors that work with student athletes; Fitness Consultants or Lifestyle Coaches; Exercise Science, Kinesiology, or Physical Education Faculty.

We hope this information will prove useful to you and we welcome your feedback on how to make a potential future revision of this position paper even more useful. You can contact Michael Sachs at [msachs@temple.edu](mailto:msachs@temple.edu) or Jessica Lutkenhouse at [JLutkenhouse@Loyola.edu](mailto:JLutkenhouse@Loyola.edu).

## **Applied Sport Psychology Consulting (AASP certified consultant, Association for Applied Sport Psychology)**

*By Alison Rhodius, Ph.D., AASP-CC*

### **Who is AASP?**

"Founded in 1986, the Association for Applied Sport Psychology (AASP) promotes the ethical practice, science, and advocacy of sport and exercise psychology. AASP is an international, multidisciplinary, professional organization that offers certification to qualified professionals who practice sport, exercise, and health psychology. Currently, AASP is the only sport and exercise psychology professional association in North America that offers certification to its members" (AASP website, [www.appliedsportpsych.org](http://www.appliedsportpsych.org)).

### **What is AASP certification?**

"In 1989, AASP established and approved specific criteria intended to demonstrate that individuals seeking certification must have obtained a minimal level of training and experience to provide professional services in applied sport and exercise" (AASP website, [www.appliedsportpsych.org](http://www.appliedsportpsych.org)). AASP certification is designed to reassure clients that the services they are getting are conducted by professional consultants who have received quality supervision and are skilled and competent. Professionals who become AASP Certified Consultants are typically the most competent practitioners in applied sport and exercise psychology because of the intensive certification process. Consultants are trained to successfully teach the variety of "mental skills necessary to perform consistently in training and competition, increase adherence to exercise programs, and to help individuals realize their potential" (AASP website, [www.appliedsportpsych.org](http://www.appliedsportpsych.org)).

Since 1992, AASP has certified a total of 301 people. At the time of writing, there are currently 230 AASP certified consultants. Most have come through the doctoral application route and 15 are certified with a master's degree.

### **What does an AASP certified consultant do?**

There are a variety of paths an AASP certified consultant can follow, some of which include: consulting with individual athletes, teams, and coaches; working as a clinical psychologist in a clinic or private practice; applying sport psychology skills to different performance-related areas, such as the organizational consulting or working with musicians; being part of a sport science practice that specializes in sport medicine, physical therapy, sport physiology, or sport biomechanics. Most AASP certified consultants are primarily based in academic institutions and do applied work on a part-time basis.

### **Academic qualifications**

There are two main academic paths to achieving AASP certification: 1) Doctoral training and 2) Master's training (note that specific degrees are not specified, so various routes can be taken to achieve AASP certification).

In order to attain AASP certification, regardless of the academic route (or degree), there are certain courses and/or competencies that are required. These standards are set so

all professionals have the sound foundational knowledge and skill base to assure competency.

The requirements are as follows:

- ⊃ 3 sport and exercise psychology courses (2 at the graduate level)
- ⊃ One course from each of the following categories:
  - Professional Ethics and Standards
  - Biomechanical and/or Physiological Bases of Sport
  - Historical, Philosophical, Social, or Motor Behavior Bases
  - Psychopathology and its Assessment
  - Counseling Skills (a graduate course)
  - Research Design, Statistics, or Psychological Assessment (graduate course)
  - Biological Bases of Behavior
  - Cognitive-Affective Bases of Behavior
  - Individual Behavior
- ⊃ Demonstrated competence within skills/techniques/analysis in sport or exercise and related experiences (e.g., coaching, clinics, participation in sport)
- ⊃ 400 hours of supervised experience in Sport and Exercise Psychology (This supervision must be received from a current AASP certified Consultant or someone approved by the AASP Certification Committee. Please note that clinical hours with clients do NOT count towards certification requirements, as these hours must be fulfilled with non-clinical/performance enhancement work in Sport and Exercise Psychology only.)

After achieving these requirements, someone with a doctorate can apply for certification using the 'standard application form' (download from the AASP website). Those with a master's degree must use the master's application form (download from the AASP website) and apply for 'Provisional Status'. Once accepted for Provisional certification Status, the applicant must complete 300 additional hours of supervised experiences and send in the supervisor evaluation verifying the additional supervised hours.

### **How much does it cost to become AASP certified?**

There are some additional expenses aside from the cost of the academic courses that are required. At the time of writing, these include:

- ⊃ AASP Membership fee
  - Student membership = \$75
  - 'Early Professional' membership (persons in the first or second year following completion of all requirements for a Master's or doctoral degree from an accredited institution in a field related to sport psychology (e.g., kinesiology, psychology, counseling, etc.) = \$100
- ⊃ Supervision
  - Some supervisors do not charge for supervision, many do. The fees range from \$50-\$250 per hour (See section 'What do I need to do to get AASP certified?' below for more details.)

- ⊃ Application fee
  - Doctoral and Master's application = \$125

### **Are there any additional requirements once certified?**

1. Abide by AASP code of ethics
2. Recertification is required every five years. Recertification requirements are:
  - ⊃ Continuous AASP membership
  - ⊃ Attendance at a minimum of three conferences (*at least one of which is the AASP annual conference, the remaining two may be state, regional, or national conferences which include, but are not limited to, sport and exercise psychology content*)
  - ⊃ Participation in (by conducting or attending) a workshop or course intended to advance sport and exercise psychology knowledge or upgrade skills. The workshop must be comparable to a six-hour AASP pre-conference workshop in terms of the intensity and depth.

### **Target Salary**

The target salary can vary depending on a variety of factors, such as the number of clients a consultant sees on a weekly basis and the hourly/daily rate charged (the average full-time consultant sees 10-15 individual clients per week). People generally take a slightly different path to achieve AASP certification and may have different resources to start with. Key factors that may affect the rates that consultants charge are the geographical area, the sport and level of expertise of the client/team, and the years of experience of the consultant. Many consultants offer sliding scales. In general, the average hourly rate ranges from \$50 (newly graduated consultants) to \$300 (seasoned professionals working with wealthy clients or professional teams). The average range to hire a consultant for the day (instead of the hour) can vary from \$500 to \$3,000 [the former figure may be for working with Olympic teams; however, some consultants, such as those in academia with another source of income, may not even get paid (other than expenses) for their work with Olympic athletes!].

Consultants who are also licensed clinical psychologists or MFTs (Marriage and Family Therapists) have the opportunity to charge health insurance companies, which can help the clients have smaller out-of-pocket payments. However, at the present time most AASP consultants are NOT licensed mental health practitioners.

Annually, the range is greatly variable and often depends on the consultant's level of experience. As a general gauge, the following is an example of someone who is in private practice as a sport psychology consultant:

- ⊃ The novice consultant fresh out of graduate school may not obtain a substantial amount of money the first 2-3 years of practice (unless they have a business background or go into partnership with others). It takes time, diligence, and some luck to get started. The most important aspect is having a great network to get referrals from, which can take a few years to build. A significant amount of time, energy, and money will need to be invested. However, working pro-bono will likely help build your reputation.

- ⊃ After 3-5 years of diligent business practice and picking up a few (2-4 at a medium hourly fee) individual clients per month in addition to some teams/groups, the annual salary may range from \$35,000-\$50,000.
- ⊃ After 5+ years of diligent business practice, solid consulting (5+ new clients per month with a high hourly fee) with many partnerships, a large referral network, and sufficient means for working with groups, the annual salary may range from \$50,000-\$150,000 or above.

### **Work Environment**

There are many different environments in which AASP certified consultants may work. As stated above, most are academics that spend the majority of their time in the university setting (teaching, administration, and consulting with college athletes and coaches). Other applied consultants may work in a private practice and/or on the practice/competition sport site. In addition, many consultants travel with individual clients and teams. This obviously alters their work environment. The consultant may consult with the athletes, coaches, or teams at the hotel, training facilities, field, or even on the bus. Thus, he or she must be able to adapt and work effectively in various settings.

### **Benefits of being AASP certified**

There are many advantages of becoming AASP certified. The following benefits are those outlined on the AASP website:

1. Certification provides a system through which the organization of AASP can assure that consultants are competent to provide quality services and allocate this information to the public.
2. Certification allows AASP to provide quality service to the public. Prospective clients can go to the AASP website to find a qualified consultant to meet their need.
3. Certification can help increase consulting opportunities for AASP certified consultants because wider recognition of the consultant's work can only help their practice and increase marketability.

Other benefits, not outlined on the website, include (but are not limited to):

- ⊃ Doctoral level AASP certification is a prerequisite to being placed on the USOC Registry that allows sport psychology consultants to work with US Olympic athletes and teams.
- ⊃ Certification helps the field grow because as more people become certified more marketing takes place.

### **Key factors to consider**

1. AASP certification doesn't guarantee a job in sport psychology once certified.
2. AASP certification is not required in order to work with athletes at any level. However, many people who call themselves 'sport psychology consultants' (or use some similar title) may not have gone through the same 'credibility checks' as someone who is AASP certified. Thus, becoming certified increases credibility.

**Information for prospective AASP certified consultants outside of the U.S. (international candidates)**

Anyone in the world can apply for AASP certification as long as they have the necessary qualifications, meet the competencies listed above, obtain the required number of consulting hours and have an AASP certified (or AASP-approved) supervisor write an evaluation of the work.

**What do I need to do to get AASP certified?**

A number of institutions claim to be "certification friendly," as shown in the APA's Directory of Graduate Program's in Applied Sport Psychology. However, very few actually offer ALL the courses necessary. Examples of institutions that do offer the necessary courses are John F. Kennedy University, University of Idaho, Barry University, and Argosy University. Some programs require students to do their own consulting work and find their own supervisors. If this is the case, additional course requirements beyond the program's degree are necessary to obtain AASP certification. The AASP website lists various online courses that fulfill the required competencies for those graduates who need to fulfill other core competencies.

Information pertaining to AASP certified supervision can also be obtained on the website. It is important to note that some supervisors require face-to-face supervision meetings (so you should choose someone relatively local to you); however, some may work remotely, for example, via Skype. Either way, the supervisor needs to observe you in action (either in person or through video and audio recordings). The fee for supervision can vary greatly depending on the supervisor's schedules, training, qualifications and level of experience. Some supervisors may not charge for their time, but most will. On average, the cost for an hour of supervision can vary from \$50-\$250.

**Interview with AASP certified consultant in full-time private practice**

*By Alison Rhodius, Ph.D., AASP-CC*

*Most AASP certified consultants are not in full-time private practice, many are in academia. The following is an excerpt from a series of questions asked of a professional who is AASP certified, has a full-time private practice and is able to make a living from this main source of income.*

**1. Describe a typical day in the life of an AASP certified consultant?**

Most days are different and are dependent on the time of year, but here's a typical day: I arrive at the office between 9:30-10 a.m. I check email, mail and return phone calls for about an hour. Then I check my "to do" list for the day and begin or complete projects such as marketing campaigns, speaking presentations, or research for leadership classes (videos, books, quotes, etc.). Between 12-1 p.m I work out in the gym. I have lunch around 1-1:30 p.m. After lunch I continue project work until the first client arrives (typically 2:30 p.m). I meet with various individuals until 5 or 6



p.m and then head out to the soccer field to meet with teams or head into the conference room to teach leadership class. I may have some more individual sessions/meetings between 6:30-8 p.m (depending on the day's schedule). At the end of the day I complete notes, emails, return phone calls. I head home usually between 7-8 p.m.

**2. What are the pros and cons of your job?**

The pros are making my own schedule, I love working with my clients, I enjoy learning something new every day, meeting new and interesting people all the time, and I get to help others succeed.

The cons of my job are that everything is on me...the job is totally dependent on my energy and willingness to progress and follow through. Like most people, my energy is down at times, I waiver on choices and don't follow through as thoroughly as I should. There is no one else to depend on.

**3. How many hours of direct contact do you have with clients per week (on average)?**

The summer and fall are the busiest times for me. I have about 12-15 hours of consulting (teams and individuals); this figure does not include extra presentations and speaking engagements.

**4. Why did you get AASP certified?**

To help create a standard for our field and to take the opportunity to engage in supervision after 10 years of being in practice and therefore enhancing my skills.

**5. Has AASP certification helped your career in any way?**

I feel that my skills grew tremendously [during supervision for certification] and my vision for what I wanted to do expanded by having a fantastic professional to bounce ideas off and she helped guide some key aspects of my vision. I ALWAYS tell others, prospective clients, audiences, coaches, trainers, and physical therapists that I am AASP certified and encourage them to always ask anyone who they work with. There is no other way to know if they are actually properly trained.

**6. Why did you choose this career-path (sport psychology)?**

I found that it was very helpful and interesting in my own competitive career (20 years of equestrian show jumping) and I was interested in helping others discover and apply the skills that I wished I had used further to my advantage.

**7. Was this your plan when going to graduate school?**

YES! This was my plan since the age of 17 in high school.

**8. If you could go back and do it again would you select the same route?**

NO! I would have double majored in business and psychology and then attended graduate school for sport psychology.

**9. Are you an athlete yourself?**

It's getting harder to say that I am still an athlete, although I do identify as one, and have lots of confidence in my athletic skills. I just haven't competed in anything in umpteen years.

**10. Do you think it's important to have athletic experience as an athlete or coach or both in order to be a sport psychology consultant?**

Yes, at the very least a consultant must have significant experience in some performing capacity. It's important to have some understanding of what athletes' commitment, training and expectations are, and how those can affect their choices and functioning. I have worked with a few students who lacked this experience and they seem to have a very difficult time relating to clients and being effective.

**11. Is there anything else you would like individuals thinking about getting AASP certification to know?**

I would like them to know that if they are truly committed to this field then certification is there to protect their education and future business opportunities. Without it, our field will continue to have difficulties advancing and reaching a critical mass. Without a critical mass, too few will benefit from all that we, as Sport Psychology Consultants, have to offer for the immediate future (athletic performance) and life skills development to last a lifetime.

## **Counseling Center / Athletic Department Psychologist (Counselor) Positions**

*By Jack Watson, Ph.D., AASP-CC*

Counseling Center/Athletic Department Psychologist (Counselor) positions are offered at many larger universities. The number and type of available positions varies based on the size and financial structure of the athletic department and university. Some of the larger athletic departments researched for this write-up had as many as 3-4 full/part-time/intern positions for individuals to consult with athletes, while smaller programs had only half-time or contract positions available. While these positions are often paid for and housed within the department of athletics or sports medicine, sometimes these positions are housed within the university counseling center and paid for jointly by the counseling center and athletic department. The size of the university and number of staff employed also affects the essential job functions. In many cases, the person provides both clinical and performance enhancement services to the athletes on campus. Further, counselors who are housed within the university counseling center may see non-athletes as well, but they are often the liaison to the athletic department and will see most of the athletes on campus who are seeking clinical services. Those who provide performance enhancement services usually do so at the request of the college or university's coaching staff. Professionals in this area often find themselves very busy consulting with individual athletes, coaches, and teams.

Please keep in mind that there was considerable variability between the positions and titles of those professionals contacted to obtain reliable information for this position description. While most individuals are currently working at larger Division I universities, the position descriptions themselves are quite different. Some of the differences include where they are housed, how the contract works, their salary, and their job responsibilities. Since there is in fact such variability, it is important to carefully read the job description and call the university to ASK QUESTIONS if necessary. This way you know what you are getting yourself into before making the effort to apply!

### **Position Description**

The *Counseling Center/Athletic Department Psychologist (Counselor)* provides direct clinical (and sometimes performance enhancement) services to university student athletes (and sometimes non-athletes, teams, and coaches). Those who are housed within the student counseling center often contract a certain amount of their time (5-50% is typical) to work with athletes in either a clinical or performance enhancement setting. Those psychologists who are housed within athletics often spend 100% of their time providing services aimed to improve the mental health and enhance the performance of athletes, coaches, and teams.

### **Academic Qualifications**

A Doctoral Degree in Clinical or Counseling psychology, with the ability to obtain licensure as a psychologist in the specific state. In some schools, it may be possible for candidates with a Master's Degree in Counseling or Social Work with a background in sport psychology to receive a position in a student counseling center.

Those with a Master's Degree are also required to obtain a professional license in their discipline.

### **General Qualifications**

1. Training in the application of applied sport psychology
2. Experience working in clinical settings with college students and student athletes
3. Licensure or license eligible as a psychologist, counselor, or social worker in the state where the university is located
4. AASP certification (on some occasions)
5. Must be able to effectively communicate in both oral and written form

### **Target Salary**

The target salary varies based on education, experience, job requirements, and geographical location. The range tends to be from \$45,000 to \$80,000 a year.

### **Work Environment**

The Counseling Center/Psychologist (Counselor) for Athletics position is often housed in either the university student counseling center or in the department of athletics. While the primary appointment can be in either of these settings, the individual often has ties to the other organization via staff meetings and/or salary. If primarily housed in the student counseling center, the psychologist may provide psychological services to both athletes and non-athletes, but is likely to see the majority of athletes who enter the center. When housed within the athletic department, the psychologist often provides psychological services only to athletes and athletic department personnel, and may provide other performance enhancement services to athletes, teams, and coaches. The general psychological services provided are those that should be provided only by licensed psychologists.

## **Counselor Employed by a University Athletic Department Vignette**

*By Glenn Pfenninger, M.S., AASP-CC*

*The following was written by a professional in the field who has held previous positions at the University of North Texas Counseling Center and the Southern Methodist University Counseling and Testing Center. After becoming an AASP-Certified Consultant he took a step away from the university setting and now runs Ignite Performance Group, which is a performance psychology private practice that focuses on athletes, business professionals, and other high achieving performers. He has provided us with some insight that may assist in understanding the nuances of working with athletes in a university setting.*

### **1. Describe a typical day in the life of a counselor working with athletes in a university.**

As in most positions in applied sport psychology, or in applied psychology, the job varies from day to day. However, there are specific job functions that occur consistently. For example, the counselor meets individually with student-athletes to

discuss a variety of issues that may be clinical (depression, anxiety, substance abuse) or performance-related (focus, goal-setting, imagery), or a combination of the two (burnout, overtraining, injury). Most of the time athletes present with the performance issue and the clinical concern arises as the athlete discloses more information.

Depending upon the relationship with athletics and the job description, part of the daily activities could entail working with teams and coaches. This may involve developing leadership strategies, reinforcing positive coaching techniques, and creating a plan to enhance team cohesion. It is also common that the counselor would supervise graduate student interns who have their own caseload of athletes and/or teams. In addition, if the counselor has a contract with the counseling center, he or she may provide therapy services to students who are not athletes.

## **2. What are the pros and cons of the job?**

The main pro is working with new challenges every day, as the job is consistently changing. In addition, the one-to-one interaction and the development of college-aged athletes are personally very fulfilling. If you are in a flexible environment that fosters good communications with athletics and allows you to think out of the box, the job can be even more rewarding.

The main con is managing the bureaucratic issues associated with working in an academic institution. It can be difficult to navigate the relationship between the counseling center and the athletic department. If handled well, this con will diminish.

## **3. How many hours of direct contact does the counselor have with athletes?**

This varies on a day-to-day basis. Some days a counselor may work directly with several athletes for 7 or 8 hours. Other days they may have no direct contact, but may attend practice or competition. Observing the team in their natural environment is often part of the job. Not only does it help in building an alliance with the athlete and coach, but it provides a better understanding of the specific performance demands on the individual and team. Unfortunately, most of the time this would require the counselor to work evenings or after hours when the teams are practicing or competing. During these days the counseling caseload may or may not be decreased. There also tends to be a cycle in the semester when the therapy caseload is lighter due to the fact that the students have mid-terms or a holiday break.

## **4. Do you see opportunities to move up career-wise and/or financially?**

This depends on the organizational structure of the athletic department and university. Oftentimes a counselor may start as full-time in the counseling center and serve as the liaison with the athletic department. Then, they may or may not move to half-time in each department (where the two departments share pay). In some schools there may be opportunities to move to full-time in the athletics department. This depends on a variety of factors including the athletic director's receptivity to sport counseling for athletes. Despite the increased interest in and evidence for sport psychology, most universities have not yet moved towards this model.

In terms of pay, most universities work on seniority systems. Therefore, pay may increase with the amount of years one work in the system. There may also be a raise given if one's qualifications and/or productivity changes.

## **Position Description for Clinical and Sport Psychologists in Private Practice**

*By Jack J. Lesyk, Ph.D., CC-AASP*

*“There are so many different ways in which a licensed clinical psychologist can develop a sport psychology practice that it is difficult to provide a general job description that would apply to all. The description below is a description of my particular practice, which I hope will be useful to others.”*

### **Position Description**

Provide clinical, counseling, performance enhancement and educational services to athletes, families, coaches and administrators. Most of the work occurs in a private office setting, with occasional trips to practice and competition venues, as well as conducting on location workshops for school, business, and sport organizations. Typical work week is Monday through Thursday, 10:00 AM to 9:00 PM. Friday, 10:00 AM to 5:00 PM. Monday through Thursday my work is devoted mostly to seeing clients in the office. Since many clients are in school or at work during the day, it is necessary to provide extensive evening or weekend hours. I have chosen to do late evenings instead of weekends. Fridays are devoted to necessary paperwork, creative projects, writing, and sometimes consulting with athletes at their practice venues.

### **Degree Requirements**

A Doctoral Degree in Clinical or Counseling Psychology (Ph.D. or Psy.D.) is required with a valid license as a psychologist in the state of one's practice. One of these two degrees is required for licensure in most states.

### **General Qualifications**

There is no template for creating a private practice so it is necessary to be ambitious, creative, and patient. Initially one must be willing to do *pro bono* work and frequent speaking engagements to develop visibility and demand for services in one's community. Some knowledge of business practices as well as marketing is valuable. Professional membership in both the Association for Applied Sport Psychology and Div. 47 (Exercise and Sport Psychology) of the American Psychological Association required as well as Certified Consultant, AASP.

### **Target Salary**

This is totally up to what the professional can develop in his or her community. A reasonable yearly income for private practice in most U.S. areas can range from \$50,000 to \$150,000.

### **Work Environment**

Most of the work is done in a private office that the professional needs to obtain, furnish, and maintain. Office location is very important since sport psychology is a small specialty and many clients will travel considerable distance for consultation with someone who is well qualified. Location near an Interstate highway is definitely an asset. Office expenses can be curtailed by office sharing with other professionals. In my case, I share a lease with two other mental health professionals, who do not practice sport

psychology. Each of us has a full-time private office, plus we have three additional offices that we sub-lease to other mental health professionals. Thus, our monthly rent is relatively low.

### **Additional Comment**

One of the special aspects of having an office-based sport psychology practice is that my clients are self-selected. This means that they, themselves, (rather than a coach, team owner, or athletic director) have actively sought out the services of a sport psychology consultant. Thus, most of my clients already know about sport psychology and are highly motivated and invested in the process. They seem to establish rapport quickly, are honest during our assessment phase, and conscientious in completing outside exercises and preparations for sessions. This is much easier than working with a team where the coach or athletic director may have contracted a sport psychologist consultant, without the necessary desire and commitment of all of the team members. Occasionally, I do find a high school age athlete who has been pressured by a parent to work with me. We are usually able to address this quickly and form a healthy working relationship.

## **Clinical and Sport Psychologist Working in Private Practice Interview**

*By Jessica Lutkenhouse, Psy.D.*

*The following interview was conducted with Dr. Jack J. Lesyk, who is the director of the Ohio Center for Sport Psychology in Beachwood, Ohio. Jack obtained his B.A. in psychology from Penn State University and his Ph.D. in clinical psychology from Case Western Reserve University. He is AASP certified, is President-Elect of AASP, has been in private practice for almost 30 years, and has been involved in teaching as an Adjunct Assistant Professor at Cleveland State University. Jack has worked extensively with a diverse range of athletes ranging from scholastic to professional, world-class, and Olympic. He is also well published in the field of sport psychology and runs yearly training workshops for professionals interested in starting a practice in sport psychology. Check out Jack's website to sign up for his well-attended conference: <http://www.sportpsych.org/work3.html>*

### **1. Describe a typical day in the life of a Clinical Sport Psychologist in private practice?**

My weeks vary depending on a number of factors, but generally I am in the office providing clinical, counseling, and performance enhancement sessions to athletes, families, and/or coaches. When I'm not seeing clients I'm busy with documentation, creative projects, writing, and observing or consulting with athletes at practice.

### **2. What are the pros and cons of your job?**

There are so many advantages because I love the work itself and I love the people it brings me in contact with. Not just the clients, but also the professionals in the field of sport psychology. I like the challenge, the flexibility, and most importantly the daily contacts I have with athletes. Most athletes are very practical and motivated, so they tend to work very hard, which allows them to benefit from our sessions.

The main con would be the hours. In order to make it economically feasible, I have to put in long hours later in the day. The alternative would be working Saturdays, which is something I never wanted to do. The collegial loneliness is another drawback. I share an office with a few other professionals, but I don't run into them much. Lastly, the office paper work, billing, and insurance issues are all aspects of having your own business that can be a hassle.

**3. How many hours of direct contact do you have with athletes?**

On average, I see 30 clients a week. During my heavy weeks I may see as many as 40.

**4. Where do you get most of your referrals from?**

When I first started the practice, most of my referrals came from giving talks to teams and coaches. Since my practice has become busy I rarely do this anymore. I have never done much advertising, but in the past 3-4 years I've been getting a lot of referrals from my website. *(Here's Jack's website for those who are interested in learning more about his practice. [www.sportpsych.org](http://www.sportpsych.org))*

**5. If there was one piece of advice you could give to a student interested in this career path what would it be?**

Go with your passion! If there is something you want to do, stick with that instinct. It is also important to get to know people in the sport psychology community by talking to as many current graduate students and professionals as you can. AASP and D47 are the best ways to do that.

**6. Do you see opportunities to move up career-wise and/or financially?**

Career-wise probably not since I'm working independently. Financially, maybe if I had more time and pursued some other possible options such as working with teams. There are various things one can do as a business owner, which I have not yet exercised since my practice is currently very busy.

**7. Why did you choose this career-path? Did you always know you wanted to work with athletes?**

I didn't necessarily plan to take this path. Actually, I started out at Penn State majoring in engineering. I was not enjoying my courses so I decided to take an introduction to psychology course and I fell in love with it. I ended up getting my BS in psychology and was accepted in Case Western Reserve University's Ph.D. program. After graduate school I worked for 16 years at inpatient hospitals with patients suffering from long-term chronic mental illness. Then, I went into administration and worked as the assistant CEO of a mental hospital. Although I've always been interested in sports, it was not until later in my career that I started studying sport psychology. Most of what I've learned has been self-taught. I've done a lot of reading in the field and attended various professional workshops and now, probably 80% of my clients are athletes.



**8. Are you an athlete yourself?**

Yes, I became a regular athlete and exerciser as an adult. When I was younger I played a few sports, but mostly for fun. In 1979 I started running as a way to help me quit smoking and become healthier. I was working in a hospital at the time and would run during lunch. Each day I went a little bit longer and within two years I was running marathons. In the next 10 years I ended up doing 14 marathons and my marathon running is actually what led to my interest in sport psychology.

## **ACEP Performance Enhancement Specialist Position Description**

*By Jack Watson, Ph.D., AASP-CC*

### **Position Description**

An Army Center for Enhanced Performance (ACEP) Performance Enhancement Specialist (PES) teaches mental skills and performance enhancement techniques to Army Soldiers, Families, and DA (Department of the Army) Civilians. Teaching is conducted in group and individual settings, and includes general education in human performance along with personalized training on how to acquire and apply specific mental skills and techniques that cultivate the mental and emotional strength necessary to thrive in an era of overwhelming demands and persistent conflict. The mental skills and techniques taught by ACEP include: Building Confidence, Goal Setting, Attention Control, Energy Management, Integrating Imagery, and Team Building. Using these principles, PESs help Soldiers to become high performing “tactical athletes” and help foster high performing “unit teams” in preparation for, during, and following combat operations. Specifically, PESs teach performance psychology to further promote excellence and efficiency during physical, technical, and tactical training, as well as during the challenges of combat operations. PESs also provide tailored education to facilitate Wounded Warriors in their transition back to their units or to civilian life. ACEP teams are comprised of 3-5 PESs and led by a Site Manager with seasoned prior military experience. PES tasks, responsibilities, and additional duties include: (a) attend training exercises and field operations as requested by individual units to serve as a performance enhancement consultant and to coach Army Soldiers and Leaders on the acquisition of performance psychology techniques and their application to individual military tasks and unit operations; (b) provide tailored educational programs and workshops to help Army families and DA Civilians living and working in demanding environments achieve success and accomplish personal, professional, and family goals; (c) utilize simulation technology and biofeedback in accordance with established guidelines to demonstrate performance enhancement principles and to personalize the acquisition and application of performance psychology techniques; (d) recommend improvements to all aspects of ACEP operations; (e) perform routine ACEP operational duties; (f) conduct assessment, assist in program evaluation, and support research projects being conducted locally; (g) assist or provide ACEP program overview briefings to VIPs and high-ranking leaders when required; (h) develop and maintain professional development relating to all aspects of performance enhancement, academic proficiency, and Army-related knowledge; (i) perform additional duties as required.

### **Degree Requirements**

A master’s or doctoral degree in performance, sport, cognitive, social or human factors psychology. AASP Certification or other professional certifications related to performance psychology or education are highly desirable.

### **General Qualifications**

A PES must have experience working with adult clients developing performance enhancement skills, education and training for use in a physical or motor performance arena. Additional required skills include: Excellent oral and written communications

skills; experience teaching large, small, and individual audiences; ability to work well within a team environment; desired skills include: Familiarity with biofeedback techniques, military environment, and audio visual technology.

### **Target Salary**

The lowest yearly salary tends to be around \$55,000. However, the salary may increase with experience and/or start out much higher depending on one's educational and experiential background.

### **Work Environment**

An ACEP PES has an individual or shared office, with privacy available for individual sessions, on a military installation. The daily environment will be split, depending upon the requirements, between a classroom teaching environment, individual mastery sessions, and field training environment to observe soldier training, participate or give training. A PES is expected to get out of the classroom and observe soldiers in a field environment in order to gain an understanding of the skills, training objectives, and outcomes necessary to succeed as a soldier or unit in the Army.

## **Assistant Director of the Center for Enhanced Performance Interview**

*By Jessica Lutkenhouse, Psy.D.*

*The following interview was conducted with Doug Chadwick who is the Assistant Director of the Center for Enhancement Performance (CEP) at West Point in New York. Doug went to West Point to obtain his undergraduate degree and played on the Army football team. After serving in the Army in Germany and Iraq, he then went to graduate school and studied under Ken Ravizza in the Applied Sport Psychology Program at California State University, Fullerton. Doug is currently in the Active Duty Army and has traveled overseas to work with soldiers fighting for our country. He is starting intensive training in June 2010 and will be returning to Iraq in November 2011. It is important to note that his position is somewhat different than the aforementioned ACEP Performance Enhancement Specialist Position. Here is a brief job description provided by Doug to get a better idea of what his role is prior to perusing his interview:*

***“Assists the Director, Deputy Director and CEP Program Directors in all aspects of the instruction, development, planning, coordination, and implementation of the Performance Enhancement, Academic Excellence, and Military Enhancement Programs. Instructs PL360-Psychology of Elite Performance and RS100-Student Success Course. Teaches mental skills for enhancing leader development and improved performance during each phase of a cadet's 47-month West Point experience. Conducts team and individual performance enhancement training for the members of 25 varsity intercollegiate athletic teams, 26 competitive clubs, as well as cadet companies and active duty Army personnel as they pursue excellence in academic, athletic, military, and leadership endeavors. Promotes performance enhancement training to the West Point community, the U.S. Army, and the sport and performance psychology field.”*** - Doug Chadwick, Rank of O3/Captain through O4/Major

**1. Describe a typical day in the life of an ACEP?**

As a military person in the Center for Enhanced Performance, my day varies based on the time of year and the day of the week. There are three main programs that we conduct at the center, which are the Academic Excellence Program (AEP), the Performance Enhancement Program (PEP), and the Military Enhancement Program (MEP). I work within all three programs by teaching and doing individual performance enhancement work. For example, I teach an academic support course for first year students, which covers a variety of topics (e.g., goal setting for academics, stress and energy management, time management, among others) to help prepare the students for life at West Point. I also teach a class in the Behavioral Science and Leadership Department called *The Psychology of Elite Performance*, which is an open curriculum course that follows the CEP model for performance enhancement. Still, a good portion of my day is spent engaging with individuals or collective elements from our Division 1 athletic teams. I have 3-5 individual appointments throughout the day that may involve supportive counseling, using biofeedback for teaching self-regulation and relaxation response, or working in our kinesthetic room with our athletes where we can practice specific skills in game-like scenarios. I also spend a lot of time in the practice and competitive environments to help the athletes apply the mental skills.

**2. What are the pros and cons of your job?**

The main pro in my job is the actual applied work that I do. Most of my day is spent with individual athletes and teams, which is very rewarding. The only con would be that on the military side there is really only one of us that will have the opportunity to move forward in the field. More opportunities for advancement would be preferable.

**3. How many hours of direct contact do you have with clients per week (on average)?**

Again, I would say this varies based on the time of year. In the fall I travel with the teams, and do 2 team sessions during my travels. However, I also stay in the hotel with them so I am available if a coach or athlete wants to consult. During a typical week, I spend on average of 20 hours providing direct contact services to athletes or coaches.

**4. What is your role in the organization?**

Right now I serve as the Assistant Director. I had the opportunity to temporarily serve as the Deputy Director last year and I hope to eventually go back to graduate school to obtain my doctorate so I can one day return to this position. It is a doctoral-level officer position.

**5. Do you see opportunities to move up career-wise and/or financially?**

As I said above, that is one of the drawbacks of working in the military for the CEP. I may be able to move up to Deputy Director and eventually the Director position, but this is the only chance for further advancement. However, civilian professionals who start at the Center for Enhancement Performance have the

possibility of advancing depending on their entry level.

**6. Why did you choose this career-path (sport psychology)?**

Honestly, the opportunity came up serendipitously. I was planning on leaving the Army after my initial 5-year commitment and I ran into an old friend who at the time was working for the CEP. He talked to me about what he was doing and it seemed interesting. I needed to command in Iraq first, but it timed up well to get into grad school. After my first tour in Iraq, the Army sent me to graduate school and Ken Ravizza helped me to translate the skills I had learned and applied as an athlete into the soldier context (confidence, attention control, goal setting, energy management, etc.). I found these skills to be really useful while I was in Iraq.

**7. Was this your plan when going to graduate school?**

I thought that I would be focusing solely on sport performance, but Dr. Ravizza was really into the idea that these skills are critical to any performance. The CEP steered me towards working with Ken because of his great reputation and his close relationship to the people in our organization. I had no idea how much time I would get to spend with him discussing the different mental skill applications, but Dr. Ravizza is an amazing mentor. I was very fortunate to have as much contact with him as I wanted, and I really appreciate and treasure that relationship now.

**8. If you could go back and do it again would you select the same route?**

I don't think I would change anything. I believe things unfolded the way they did for a reason. Sometimes it's difficult to see the meaning behind some of the things I have had to do, and some of things I will need to do in the near future. However, I have been really fortunate to have some great mentors in the field of Performance Enhancement who have helped me find purpose in my unconventional path. I just hope that I am able to continue down this road for the rest of my career.

**9. Are you AASP certified?**

I just became AASP certified in the last year.

**10. Having just been through the AASP certification process, is there anything you can suggest to those of us interested in becoming certified?**

The process is intentionally difficult. In order to professionalize the field, there needs to be a standard level of education and supervised practice. While it can be frustrating and difficult at times, the process should help you to hone your skills and become a better professional. Stick with it and the process itself will help you to develop into a creditable practitioner.

**11. Are you yourself an athlete yourself?**

Yes. I played Army football and also wrestled a little during college. It's nice because I actually get to work very closely with the team I played for. It helps that I understand almost exactly what the athletes are going through.

**12. Do you think it's important to have athletic experience as an athlete or coach or both in order to be a sport psychology consultant?**

I don't think it is necessary, but I think it helps to understand the athletes' experience and to connect with them. If you were never involved in athletics and spent time watching sports this may help you connect, but if you don't know the language of the sport then it may be hard.

## Overview of Doctoral Program Faculty Positions

*By Sherry Schweighardt, M.A.*

According to the Directory of Graduate Programs in Applied Sport Psychology, 9<sup>th</sup> Edition, there are 46 colleges and universities in the United States and Canada that offer doctoral studies in exercise and sport psychology, with new programs in universities and professional schools appearing each year (Burke, Sachs, Fry, & Schweighardt, 2008). There are different types of programs and wide variability among types. The intent here is to provide the reader with a general overview and to offer suggestions that may help prospective applicants find a program that meets their needs. Following this section you will find additional information to provide further clarification, such as specific position descriptions, an interview with a current faculty member, and two examples of graduate programs.

Programs generally fall into one of the two categories compared here. Exercise and Sport Psychology programs may include Kinesiology, Physical Education, and Exercise Science, while Clinical Psychology programs may include both Clinical and Counseling Psychology programs that have a specialization or concentration in Sport Psychology. Exercise and Sport Psychology programs are usually housed within the Kinesiology or Exercise Science department, while Clinical Psychology programs are housed in the Psychology department. Some programs offer a complete specialization or “track” in sport psychology served by one or more faculty members, while others offer some coursework in exercise and sport psychology as an option within a more generalized program. Physical Education and Kinesiology programs may be more likely to focus on educational sport psychology. They usually require coursework in exercise physiology and sport sociology, in addition to work in psychological skills training. Programs housed in Psychology departments, on the other hand, tend to emphasize general psychology training and clinical experience. These programs usually include sport psychology as a special interest area within the practice of psychology.

It is critical for the prospective student to consider potential career objectives before selecting a program. This is especially important if you are interested in a career that requires licensure or certification, such as private practice or consulting. Clinical psychology and counseling programs that are accredited by the American Psychological Association (APA) are usually structured to provide students with the necessary coursework and directed preparation for licensure. Exercise and Sport Psychology programs, on the other hand, are not subject to such accreditation and therefore graduates are required to gain additional experience and coursework if they are interested in a career that requires a license. Depending on your long-term career goals, it may be important to ask questions about licensure preparation before applying to the program.

Larger doctoral programs with more faculty members and those that lead to certification or licensure are more likely to have a greater number of established opportunities for research and applied clinical work. Division I universities and schools with a larger population of student-athletes may already have a sport psychologist working with the teams, which usually makes it easier to gain direct one-on-one supervised experience. However, programs with specific “tracks” and sizable externally-funded research projects sometimes require incoming students to commit to working with specific faculty members on designated research projects. Smaller programs are usually

more flexible, and a better fit for students with interdisciplinary interests that do not fit into a standard “track.” Make sure you do your research to find out the program requirements and expectations before you apply.

The type and availability of interpersonal guidance and support is also an important factor to take into account. The larger the program, the more students you are likely to have as colleagues. This is important because peers within a doctoral program provide the needed practical and emotional support during clinical rotations, research, and dissertation writing. However, smaller programs may afford greater access to faculty members, student-initiated research, applied work experience, and more opportunities for direct collaboration within the department. Both large and small universities usually offer support for dissertation-writers through their libraries or writing centers, which can be a highly useful resource.

Types of funding for doctoral students can vary widely among programs. Larger programs often have more funding available for graduate students; however, there may be a greater number of applicants for the available spots. Some have fellowships available that are offered to a select number of top-notch applicants, which may cover tuition or provide a stipend. Most programs offer teaching and research assistantships that provide tuition and a stipend in return for 20 hours of work doing lab research or teaching courses. Some teaching assistants help professors with classes by grading papers or running lab sessions, while others are responsible for independently teaching sections of undergraduate courses. Be sure to inquire about the courses you may be asked to teach, and possible opportunities for financial assistance if that is important to you. A typical stipend for a full-time, first-year student may range from \$12,000-\$16,000 for a nine- or ten-month academic year (plus tuition remission).

As noted earlier, below you will find a program description for a Clinical Psychology Doctoral Program with a Concentration in Sport Psychology and a description for a Sport and Exercise Psychology Program. There is, however, a wide-range of programs. The best way to get a "real-life" perspective is to contact the American Psychological Association, Division 47's student representative. Another helpful resource is the Directory of Graduate Programs in Applied Sport Psychology (Sachs et al., 2010).



## **Doctoral Programs in Clinical Psychology with a Concentration in Sport Psychology**

*By Andrew Wolanin, Psy.D.*

There are a number of colleges and universities that offer doctoral studies in clinical psychology, some of which afford students the opportunity to have an emphasis or concentration in sport psychology. Such programs tend to view sport psychology as the application of psychological theory to a unique population, rather than as a distinct subfield that is separate from other applications of psychology. Thus, the emphasis is focused on the assessment and intervention of individuals across the lifespan, including athletes. The program is usually housed within the Psychology department, but offers either specific classes in sport psychology or optional academic experiences as part of a general clinical training experience.

One possible advantage to receiving training in clinical psychology with an emphasis in sport psychology is career flexibility and broader professional marketability. Obtaining a doctorate in Clinical Psychology makes one eligible for state licensure as psychologists, which opens an array of employment opportunities such as private practice, medical settings, academics, and business and organizational consulting. Sport psychology consultation and services are often a piece of the psychologist's productivity, rather than an exclusive area of professional work. This creates income flexibility and professional balance. This training path also allows for career evolution since it prepares the individual to competently address both clinical and performance-related issues that are common in athletics.

In examining various doctoral programs in clinical psychology, the prospective student should consider the differences between a Psy.D. (Doctor of Psychology) and Ph.D. (Doctor of Philosophy). While it is beyond the scope of this document to outline all of the distinctions between the degrees, some basic differences will be noted. One distinction that is often cited in the literature is the amount of focus on research and applied clinical work. Psy.D. programs are traditionally thought of as more clinically-focused, while Ph.D. programs are thought of as research-oriented. Although this is still the case for some, there has been a shift in the field that involves more Psy.D. programs with research requirements comparable to Ph.D. programs and more Ph.D. programs with a strong emphasis on clinical practice. The degree of research that is conducted and the amount of training in evidenced-based practice varies based on the program. The integration of sport psychology is often consistent with the research requirements, the overall training model, and the theoretical orientation of the faculty.

Some other distinctions include the amount of applicants admitted, whether or not funding is available, and the length of time that it usually takes students to graduate. Psy.D. programs tend to admit more students, as demonstrated by Norcross and colleagues (2004) study that found a 41% acceptance rate for Psy.D. programs (an average of 33 students per year), a 17% acceptance rate for practice-oriented Ph.D. programs, and a 11% acceptance rate for research-oriented Ph.D. programs. Regarding funding, Ph.D. programs generally offer more financial assistance for students to engage in research. Ph.D. and Psy.D. programs both offer work-study positions, university grant assistance, and teaching or research assistantships. In general, Psy.D. programs offer less funding. According to Norcross and colleagues (2004), approximately 20% of students

who entered Psy.D. programs received a full financial assistance package, while the comparable numbers for Ph.D. programs were 57% for equal-emphasis and 84% for research-oriented programs. Finally, students in Psy.D. programs usually finish more quickly, with the average time being five years in comparison to six years for Ph.D. students.

**(Editor's note: The above is also true, in large part, for Counseling Psychology Doctoral programs. For more information on clinical versus counseling psychology, please see Sayette et al., 2010)**

## **Doctoral Programs in Exercise Science, Kinesiology, and/or Physical Education**

*By Bradley J. Cardinal, Ph.D.*

The vast majority of colleges and universities have Departments of Physical Education from which the field of Kinesiology has emerged. Today, Physical Education and Kinesiology may be entirely independent free standing departments or programs within a college or university, or they may be one unified department or program, but with a variety of names or name combinations possible (e.g., Exercise and Sport Science; Health and Human Performance; Health, Physical Education, and Recreation; Kinesiology; Physical Education; Sport Science). While there is a movement to unify the field under the singular name of Kinesiology, many names and name combinations do persist. Likewise, such departments are housed within many different colleges or schools on a campus, including but not limited to: colleges or schools of Education; Health (or Health Professions, or Health Sciences); Health and Human Performance (or Services, or Sciences); Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance; Liberal Arts (or Liberal Arts and Sciences); Physical Activity and Sport Sciences; Public Health; Professional Studies (or Programs); and Science. Understanding this is important, particularly as it may relate to the nature of one's academic work, colleagues, and available resources. For example, if you are working in a Kinesiology Department housed within a College of Public Health, your immediate colleagues and collaborators (the students you interact with and teach) and the expectations that you encounter in terms of earning tenure and promotion may be very different than if you were working in a Department of Physical Education within a College of Education. That is, each entity will have its own unique mission-based focus, and this is important to be mindful of since it impacts the future directions and opportunities that will be available to you. For example, in some departments faculty may be asked to teach activity- or service-based classes, whereas in others this would be unheard of.

Whatever type of department or college/university you are located in, the more broad-based it is in terms of curriculum, the more likely it is to offer courses and/or degree program concentrations or emphases in Sport Psychology or Sport and Exercise Psychology. Also, even if a department does not offer a concentration in Sport or Sport and Exercise Psychology, such courses are often included in the curriculum of other majors within the Kinesiology Department (e.g., Athletic Training, Exercise Science, Fitness Program Management, Physical Education, Pre-Allied Health, Sport Management). For many of these majors it is common to take at least one course in Sport or Sport and Exercise Psychology, but the coursework may be labeled under different names (e.g., *Behavioral Aspects of Movement*, *Behavior Change*, *Exercise Motivation*, *Performance Enhancement*, *Psychology of Athletic Performance*, *Psychology of Coaching*, *Psychology of Human Movement*, *Psychology of Injury Rehabilitation*, *Psycho-Social Dynamics of Sport and Exercise*). Some of these classes are specific to one type of major or concentration, whereas others are not. These are all things to be mindful of since teaching students with diverse interests and professional areas of application can be quite challenging at times. For example, if you are accustomed to using sport examples exclusively, but your students are focused on becoming physical therapists, your examples, while perhaps interesting to some, may lack relevancy for most. You can

equip yourself to handle this by becoming more familiar with a wide variety of physical activities and sports through diverse work experiences both within and outside of sport. Observing and collaborating with professionals in other settings will also help you apply relevant examples to your lectures.

There are also different types of colleges and universities (e.g., 2-year community colleges, liberal arts, comprehensive universities, research extensive), and unfortunately which positions are open where is beyond your control. It is important to be realistic about the job opportunities that do become available, with the vast majority being at small and mid-sized colleges and universities that offer bachelor's or bachelor's and master's degrees only. Since the vast majority of faculty openings will be at colleges and universities without doctoral programs, it is important to realize that you will *most likely* find employment in a college or university with a different academic culture compared to where you received your doctorate (i.e., you will *most likely* have heavier teaching and service expectations).

Relatively speaking, there are very few doctoral granting institutions in Kinesiology and even fewer that offer concentrations in Sport or Sport and Exercise Psychology. Those few positions that do arise within doctoral granting departments often require post-doctoral experience (either as a post-doctoral researcher or as a faculty member). Increasingly, these positions require a strong publication record in top tier journals and a solid record of securing external grants with a clear plan for diligently continuing this course of action indefinitely.

Given the extensive variability described above, the example that follows is based on a comprehensive, state-supported, regional university. It is a tenure-track opening for an Assistant Professor in a Department of Health, Kinesiology, and Leisure Studies. The department offers both the bachelor's and master's degrees, and it is housed in a College of Education and Human Development. Keep in mind that this is only one example of what is commonly available in the field, as tremendous variability exists. The vast majority of positions will require that the applicant is willing and able to teach and advise students in more than one area of study within the department. Even in departments where this is not the case, having some breadth of knowledge is usually beneficial to help you collaborate with other faculty who are working in another domain. Therefore, it is highly recommended that those focusing on Sport or Sport and Exercise Psychology have the ability to contribute to one or more sub-disciplinary areas of study within Kinesiology.

### **Position Description**

The Department of Health, Kinesiology, and Leisure Studies (HKLS) is recruiting for a tenure-track Assistant Professor who can contribute to our growing undergraduate Kinesiology major and Athletic Coaching minor. We are especially interested in someone who can contribute to our needs in the social and behavioral aspects of Kinesiology and Health, including Sport and Exercise Psychology and at least one and preferably two of the following areas: History and Philosophy, Motor Learning, Measurement and Evaluation, Research Methods, or Sport Sociology. A 12-credit hour teaching load is maintained each academic term, with excellence in teaching, student advising (including master's projects and theses), research and scholarship. Professional and university

service is expected to earn tenure and promotion. Summer teaching opportunities are available within our Master of Education degree program.

### **Degree Requirements**

A doctoral degree in Kinesiology or closely related field is required for tenure track vacancies in 4-year institutions. Doctoral programs at major research universities may also require post-doctoral experience. A master's degree is typically sufficient to teach in a 2-year institution; however, 2-year institutions rarely recruit faculty just for Sport and Exercise Psychology. Instead, the faculty will primarily teach activity- and service-based classes with one or two specialty courses allowed per year (sometimes on an overload basis). Other duties that may be required in 2-year institutions include coaching, working in campus recreation, or administration.

### **General Qualifications**

1. The ability to teach courses in Sport and Exercise Psychology.
  - a. In addition to an overview course in *Sport and Exercise Psychology*, courses such as *Behavioral Aspects of Physical Activity*, *Exercise Motivation*, *Psychology of Coaching*, *Psychology of Sport Injury Rehabilitation*, *Psychophysiology*, etc. may be required.
  - b. Faculty may teach additional classes beyond their primary area of expertise, such as *History and Philosophy*, *Motor Learning*, *Sport Pedagogy*, *Research Methods*, or *Sport Sociology*, or *Physical Activity courses*. A willingness to expand your knowledge so you can teach a wide-range of courses is important.
  - c. Administrative duties may also be required, such as Undergraduate or Graduate Program Coordinator, Internship and/or Practicum Supervision (not only in Sport and Exercise Psychology, but also in areas such as Fitness or Wellness, Athletics, etc.), or Physical Activity Class Coordination.
2. The ability to provide academic and career advising to students in the major and minor (both undergraduate and graduate).
3. The ability to supervise undergraduate and graduate student projects, theses, and dissertations (at doctoral granting institutions/departments only).
4. Depending on the institution, you may be asked to oversee or supervise a college or university affiliated student organization or group, and/or possibly have the opportunity to work with an intercollegiate sports program.
5. A willingness to engage in university and professional service, some of which may include department, college, and university level committees, manuscript reviewing for journals, or serving in elected and/or volunteer leadership positions in professional organizations.
6. Maintenance of an active research program.
  - a. There may be an emphasis on including student researchers and mentoring students in the research process (e.g., Honor's College and/or International Degree Program theses).
  - b. The expected amount of scholarly activity will fluctuate across institutions with Research Extensive/Doctoral granting departments having the

heaviest demands and 2-year institutions having the lowest demands. An increasing requirement at Research Extensive/Doctoral granting departments is that research is grant-supported and published in refereed journals.

### **Target Salary**

Salary will vary considerably based on the following factors, including whether or not the university faculty are unionized vs. non-unionized, geographic location and the associated cost of living in a given area, and faculty rank. Most appointments are made for 9- or 10-months, with additional summer teaching opportunities available for extra pay. Beyond base salary, comprehensive benefits packages are usually granted. These benefits include such things as dental, medical, and pension and/or retirement contributions. Therefore, it is important to be mindful of “total compensation,” not just base salary. Additional opportunities for teaching online classes and grant-supported salary enhancements may be possible.

### **Work Environment**

The work environment will vary considerably depending on the size and type of institution and the type of academic department. At some institutions, faculty members are granted a high degree of autonomy, while at others there is a greater expectation for collaborative teaching and research. Regardless of the degree of autonomy in teaching and research, academicians are expected to work cooperatively with others in providing service and advising.

## **Faculty Position Interview**

*By Bradley J. Cardinal, Ph.D.*

*The following was written by Dr. Brad Cardinal, a full-time faculty member in the Department of Nutrition and Exercise Sciences at Oregon State University.*

### **1. Describe a typical day in the life of a faculty member in your department?**

Academics tend to plan their life in quarter or semester long intervals. Throughout each week time must be devoted to teaching, research, and service. The amount of time devoted to each area will be a function of personal preference, skill, experience, and aptitude, as well as institutional expectations for advancement, including the awarding of tenure. Most faculty members work more than 40 hours per week, and as a result, might view themselves as workaholics. However, the nature of the work and where it occurs is often individually determined with only a set number of hours “visible” in terms of being in class, office hours, meetings, etc. As such, people outside of academe may view your workload as very light. Beyond the visible hours worked, a great deal of time is devoted to preparing course materials and assessing student work. Blocking out time for research and writing is essential for long-term success (i.e., earning promotions and obtaining tenure). In addition, all faculty members must engage in service work, which can be especially daunting if too much is assumed. Typical ranges for service may be from 4-10 hours per week,

with Assistant Professors closer to the lower end of the spectrum and Full Professors closer to the higher end of the spectrum. Figuring out how to balance all of this takes time and there is no single formula that works for everyone. To be successful you need to be disciplined in using your non-visible work time to generate observable “products” (e.g., journal articles, grants).

## **2. What are the pros and cons of your job?**

The main pro is that college and university campuses are intellectually and artistically rich and diverse environments. There can also be a great deal of autonomy, and yet collaborative opportunities are available. Helping students grow, develop, and succeed is remarkably rewarding. In addition, there are opportunities to propose new coursework and degree programs. Getting paid to learn, grow, innovate, and contribute to one’s field of choice is great, as is “working” while watching or participating in physical activities or sports.

A con is that the reward structure can be relatively ambiguous since faculty reviews are infrequent and there are generally only two major opportunities to be promoted (i.e., Assistant to Associate and Associate to Full Professor). The process for moving from Assistant to Associate Professor is more clear-cut than is the process for moving from Associate to Full Professor. Also, accountability and expectations continually seem to increase and there can be departments or situations where people work in “academic silos,” which can make collaboration or even talking to one-another difficult. Furthermore, because state supported universities and colleges have lost a great deal of public support over the years and both public and private institutions can only set tuition rates at a certain level before higher education becomes cost prohibitive for many, faculty are increasingly being asked to obtain support for their research and programmatic areas of study (e.g., vis-à-vis grants and contracts). This may result in a loss of some autonomy. Most college and university faculty work more than 40 hours per week.

## **3. What percentage of your time is devoted to triad of teaching, research and service?**

It truly varies; however, my workload distribution is approximately 50% teaching, advising, and mentoring students; 35% research and scholarship; and 15% service. I have colleagues with very different workload distributions. For example, a well-funded researcher can buy-out of her/his teaching and, as a result, may be at 10% teaching, advising, and mentoring students; 85% research and scholarship; and 5% service. On the other hand, I have colleagues that are in the opposite position with workloads of 75% teaching, advising, and mentoring students; 10% research and scholarship; and 15% service. To obtain promotion and tenure, excellence in teaching and research are expected; however, what constitutes “excellence” will vary from institution to institution. Also, service is important and often quite gratifying, but excellence in service in and of itself will rarely be enough to be promoted or earn tenure.

#### **4. Do you see opportunities to move up career-wise and/or financially?**

The traditional career trajectory for an academic is to be hired as an Assistant Professor; then to be promoted to Associate Professor, which is usually, but not always, accompanied by the awarding of tenure after a probationary period of 5-7 years. Once promoted and tenured, the pathway to becoming a Full Professor is not very clear-cut. Some people never advance beyond Associate Professor. Each promotion brings a pay raise of approximately 10%. Tenured Associate Professors and Full Professors may have opportunities to pursue a variety of administrative roles both within and outside of the department (e.g., Graduate Program Coordinator, Department Chair, Assistant Dean, Dean, etc.). The career path for those interested in working in a Research Extensive University may require Post-Doctoral experience prior to obtaining a tenure-track faculty position, and also articulating a clear line of independent and fundable research, which includes probable sources of funding.

#### **5. Why did you choose this career-path? Was this your plan when going to graduate school? If you could go back and do it again would you select the same route?**

From the first moment I stepped on a university campus as an undergraduate student I knew this was the place for me. I didn't always know in what capacity and my understanding of the different roles and responsibilities of university life have increased immensely over the years. Which area to focus on in Kinesiology also wasn't always apparent to me, but as I gained work experience my true areas of passion emerged. I love being a professor (i.e., teacher, mentor, scholar, public servant) and I would choose the same path again. It is an honored and well-respected profession, but it is even more than that for me. It is a lifestyle; perhaps even a higher calling.

#### **\* If you are interested in this type of position check the following websites:**

American Academy of Kinesiology and Physical Education: <http://www.aakpe.org/>

American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance:

<http://www.aahperd.org/>

American Kinesiology Association: <http://www.americankinesiology.org/>

American Psychological Association, Division 47 (Exercise and Sport Psychology):

<http://www.apa47.org/>

Association for Applied Sport Psychology: <http://appliedsportpsych.org/>

Chronicle of Higher Education: <http://chronicle.com/section/Home/5>

HigherEd Jobs: <http://www.higheredjobs.com/>

Inside Higher Ed: <http://www.insidehighered.com/>

National Association for Kinesiology and Physical Education in Higher Education:

<http://www.nakpehe.org/>

North American Society for the Psychology of Sport and Physical Activity:

<http://www.naspspa.org/>



## **Doctoral Programs Examples**

*By Sherry Schweighardt, M.A.*

*The following provides descriptive information for two well-regarded doctoral programs in Exercise and Sport Psychology. The program at West Virginia University is housed within the school of Sport Sciences, while Florida State's program resides within the department of Educational Psychology. This information is for the prospective graduate student, but may also be helpful for those interested in learning more about the program at West Virginia University or Florida State. Students interested in other graduate programs may find the following books helpful: **Directory of Graduate Programs in Applied Sport Psychology, 109<sup>th</sup> Edition** ([Sachs](#) et al., 2010) & **Graduate Study in Psychology, 2010 Edition** (see [www.apa.org](http://www.apa.org)).*

### **West Virginia University Program Description**

*\* Information compiled by Sam Zizzi, Ph.D.*

**Number of Full-time/Part-time Students:** 16 full-time only

**Number of Faculty Members:** 5

#### **Average Number of Credits/Years to Completion**

- ⊃ Students entering with a bachelor's degree = 5 years to Ph.D.
  - A master's in community counseling (CC) and a master's in sport and exercise psychology (SEP) is also obtained within that 5 year period
- ⊃ Students entering with a master's = 4 years to Ph.D.
  - 60 credits in CC masters and about 40-60 credits in SEP masters
  - The amount of credits depends on the degree the students enters with

#### **Requirements for Entry to Ph.D. Program**

- ⊃ Accept students with Master's or Bachelor's degree
- ⊃ Psychology /Kinesiology double major preferred, but not required
- ⊃ Minimum GPA: (3.0+ required, 3.5 preferred)
- ⊃ Minimum GRE or other test score: 1050 Verbal + Quantitative
- ⊃ 50-60 applicants per year, 2-4 accepted

#### **Funding Sources**

- ⊃ Fellowships: 2-4 available per year, \$12-20 K per year
- ⊃ Assistantships: All non-fellowship students (10-15 yearly) placed in TA/RA positions at \$12-13K per year
- ⊃ Fellowships/Assistantships are merit-based
- ⊃ External Funding: Several grant-funded research projects are available to support faculty and students
- ⊃ Internal Funding: Available for travel and research for students.

**When Students Graduate**

- ⊃ Typical jobs: 75% or more get placed in academia
- ⊃ Typical salaries: \$45-55K starting salaries

**Other Important Information About the Program****Collaboration between departments**

There is significant collaboration between the departments. For example, there is collaboration between Community Counseling (master's) and Counseling Psychology Ph.D., and with Educational Psychology for the Research/Stat core. There is also collaboration with Athletic Training for psych of injury coursework, and Exercise physiology and Nutrition for behavioral health research and work.

**Licensure and AASP-CC**

All coursework during the program can be directed towards AASP-CC, if that is in fact the student's career goal. Students also become license eligible at the master's level so they can pursue their license in professional counseling (LPC).

**Clinical Work and Internship Component**

There is in fact a good amount of clinical work required. The students engage in applied work for four semesters in the SEP track. This takes the form of a field experience or internship such as working in the following areas: college or high school athletics, youth sport, national teams, and exercise consultation (weight loss programs, exercise adherence).

**Research in This Department**

Two current research topics include:

- ⊃ Professional issues in sport psychology (ethics, supervision, training)
- ⊃ How to change health behaviors for weight management

Two recent dissertation topics include:

- ⊃ Evaluation of a wellness program for college students
- ⊃ A multimodal mental skills intervention for injured athletes

**Food for Thought Before Applying**

- ⊃ Large faculty group
- ⊃ Very active in research
- ⊃ Science practice model with two psychologists on faculty
- ⊃ Lots and lots of applied work for students
- ⊃ An extensive course load
- ⊃ High research expectations
- ⊃ <http://www.wvu.edu/~physed/sportpsych/spmain.htm>

**Florida State University Program Description**

*\*Information compiled by Kelly Barcza with assistance from Robert Eklund, Ph.D. and Gershon Tenenbaum, Ph.D.*

**Number of full-time/part-time students:** 33 full-time, 20 part-time

**Number of Current Faculty Members:** 3

- ⊃ Dr. Gershon Tenenbaum, Dr. Robert Eklund, Dr. David Eccles (current faculty)

**Number of Credits/Years to Completion**

- ⊃ M.A. 38 credit hours (2-3 years)
- ⊃ Ph.D. 77 credit hours (3-4 years)

**Requirements for Entry to Ph.D. Program**

- ⊃ Prospective students must have a master’s degree to be considered for a Ph.D.
- ⊃ Most students have backgrounds in psychology, sports studies, kinesiology, and/or counseling, however, this is not a requirement.
- ⊃ Minimum GPA: 3.2 grade point average (on a 4.0 grading scale) in all work attempted while registered as an upper-division student working toward a bachelor’s degree.
- ⊃ Minimum GRE or other test score: Combined GRE score of 1000 and at least a verbal-400/quantitative-400 score is required. Official TOEFL results are required of all international applicants whose native language is not English and who have not studied in an English-speaking country for at least one academic year. A minimum score 550 on the paper-based test, 215 on the computer-based test, or 80 on the internet-based test.
- ⊃ Number of applicants accepted fluctuates from year to year and depends on the strengths of the applicants as well as how many students are graduating from the program. However, approximately 5-7 students are accepted each academic year.

**Funding Sources**

- ⊃ Fellowships: In 2009-2010, 1 College Teaching Fellowship at \$6300 for the year (fall/spring) and 1 Fulbright scholar (full funding)
- ⊃ Assistantships: In 2009-2010, 14 positions, funding from \$1600 to \$1900 per semester
- ⊃ Fellowships/Assistantships are merit based.
- ⊃ External Funding: Fulbright scholarship and federal aid
- ⊃ Internal Funding: No other sources in addition to above

**When Students Graduate**

- ⊃ Typical Jobs: FSU graduates are prepared to work in academic positions at the College/ University level, in research institutes, and as coaching educators for College/University or sport organizations. In accordance with the Scientist/Practitioner model, the emphasis is on training students for faculty positions in Sport and Exercise Psychology. Opportunities may include part-time consulting with amateur and professional athletes and teams and, on rare occasions, full-time consulting.

- ⇒ Typical Salaries: \$30,000-\$80,000

### **Other Important Information About the Program**

#### **Tracks, Specialties, Options in This Program**

The professors work individually with the students to develop a program of study that best suits their needs and expectations.

#### **Collaboration with other Departments**

Students are required to take classes in the Exercise Physiology and the Counseling Psychology Programs

#### **Licensure and AASP-CC**

Students who choose to participate in the Applied Sport Psychology Internship can work to acquire the CC-AASP credential. Licensure is not an expected or natural outcome for the student.

#### **Clinical Work and Internship**

Eight credit hours are required for Ph.D. students and four credit hours are recommended for master's students. The internship hours can be fulfilled through applied sport psychology experience or research experience. Two internship examples include:

- ⇒ Working on a research grant proposal
- ⇒ Sport psychology consultant for a FSU varsity team

#### **Research in This Department**

Two current research topics include:

- ⇒ Attention allocation and variability of movement under pressure in sport
- ⇒ Parental feedback effects on children's goal involvement, emotions, and behaviors in sport

Two recent dissertation topics include:

- ⇒ Melissa Murray: Computerized pedagogical agents as an intervention to increase youth physical activity. The 2009 Dissertation Award for the Association for Applied Sport Psychology
- ⇒ Kimberlee B. Bonura: The impact of yoga on psychological health in older adults. The 2008 Dissertation Award for Division 47 of the American Psychological Association

#### **Food for Thought Before Applying**

- ⇒ It is unique because it provides equal opportunities for research and applied experiences for students.
- ⇒ The professors are willing to assist students in fostering their research ideas and including them on research grants. Often students are encouraged to present and/or publish their research work.

- ⇒ The program also provides opportunities for AASP certification and supervision.
- ⇒ Students are given the opportunity to work with Division I athletes, as well as high school and local athletes to gain applied sport psychology experience.
- ⇒ All students must meet minimum requirements for admission. Other factors that increase likelihood of admission include research and work experience, demonstrated writing proficiency, and a commitment to advancing theory and research in the field of sport psychology.

## **Faculty Position in Undergraduate Psychology, Social Work, or Counselor Education Departments with opportunities for Sport Psychology Learning**

*By Carrie B. Scherzer, Ph.D., CC-AASP*

Most colleges and universities, if not all, have either a Psychology Department or someone teaching Psychology classes, possibly housed in a liberal arts, social sciences, or humanities department. Sport Psychology is not a prominent sub-discipline in many colleges and universities, so it is unlikely to find more than one or two faculty members with an interest in sport psychology within a Psychology Department. One notable exception is Springfield College in Springfield, MA, where there are several sport psychology faculty members within the Psychology Department. As such, it is more likely that a faculty member with sport psychology interests will be hired on the basis of their clinical psychology, social work, or counseling training and qualifications, rather than their sport psychology training and qualifications.

There is a wide variation in the job demands across the different disciplines (i.e., Clinical Psychology/Social Work/Counselor Ed), and there are also major differences based on the type of academic institution (e.g., liberal arts, research I, undergraduate colleges, comprehensive universities). The example that follows is based on a tenure-track appointment in a Psychology Department at a public, undergraduate, liberal arts college. Since there is such variability between positions, it may not be accurate for all positions in this area. Thus, it is important to carefully read the job description and call the university to ASK QUESTIONS if necessary. This way you know what you are getting yourself into before making the effort to apply!

### **Position Description**

The primary responsibility in this position is teaching Psychology classes. The course load will vary depending on the school. Course load variability can range from one class (three credits) each semester to more than four classes (twelve credits) each semester. At a liberal arts school, a three-three load (three three-credit classes each semester) is fairly typical. In addition, there may be the expectation to supervise students completing internships and independent research. It is important to note that professors at smaller institutions may only be able to teach one sport psychology course per year, or even every other year. This, of course, depends on the needs of the department.

Other responsibilities often include academic advising for students in the major/discipline, service to the campus and community at large (academic and non-academic), and research. There may also be an expectation to perform clinical work (e.g., having a private practice or working with a local mental health agency). Typically, these are academic year appointments, with some flexibility in the summer. There is usually an opportunity to teach summer classes if desired.

### **Degree Requirements**

A doctoral degree is required. For clinical or counseling programs, there may also be the stipulation that the applicant is licensed or license-eligible in the state of the job, or that the applicant is required to obtain his/her license within one to two years. Some schools will consider hiring applicants who are ABD (all but dissertation), but the

applicants are usually required to complete their dissertation and obtain their degree within one to two years after hire.

### **General Qualifications**

1. Ability to teach Psychology classes
  - a. Often new faculty members are expected to teach Introductory Psychology, Statistics, and/or Research Methods, in addition to other classes in their area(s) of expertise.
2. Ability to provide academic and career advising to students in the major
3. Ability to supervise students conducting internships
4. An active research program
  - a. There may be an emphasis on including student researchers and mentoring students in the research process.
  - b. The expected amount of scholarly activity will fluctuate based on the type of institution. For example, at the public, undergraduate liberal-arts campus referenced, the expectation is one conference presentation or publication (e.g., book chapter, article in peer-reviewed journal) per year.

### **Target Salary**

Salary will vary based on the previous experience of the applicant and the location of the job. The starting salary for a new graduate can be expected to be in the \$40,000 - \$45,000 range for an academic year (9-10 month) appointment, with cost of living adjustments for metropolitan areas. Applicants who are licensed may be able to earn additional income by having a private practice or working for a local mental health agency or hospital.

### **Work Environment**

The work environment will also vary depending on the size of the institution and the type of academic department. At some institutions, faculty members are granted a high degree of autonomy, while at others there is a greater expectation of collaborative work. For example, some schools offer classes that are team-taught, which would necessitate a higher degree of collaboration. Regardless of the degree of autonomy in teaching and research, most academicians are expected to work with others in providing service and advising. Again, depending on the specific institution, the pressure to publish research will vary. For non-Research I institutions, one publication per year (on average) will likely be sufficient, while the expectation will be higher at a Research I school. Some liberal arts schools may also accept conference presentations in lieu of publishing.

## **Undergraduate Psychology Department Faculty Interview**

*By Carrie B. Scherzer, Ph.D., AASP-CC*

*The following was written by a licensed psychologist who has a tenure track appointment in the undergraduate psychology department at SUNY, Potsdam. She also has a small private practice.*

### **1. Describe a typical day in the life of an academic employed in your setting?**

In academia, it is hard to characterize a typical day, especially since every day contains a mix of activities. In any given day one might spend time teaching classes, meeting with students during office hours, preparing lectures, grading student's work, attending committee meetings, and working on scholarly activities (i.e., research). Many academics are given a certain amount of flexibility in creating their teaching schedule to suit their own preferences. They may also have the opportunity to select which classes to offer. While academic positions are typically full-time (i.e., 40 hours per week), it is rare to spend 40 hours per week in the office. However, it is also common to spend many hours working outside of the office (e.g., replying to student e-mails at home, grading and lecture preparation outside of the office). As a new faculty member, it is not uncommon to spend over 50 hours per week engaged in work-related tasks.

### **2. What are the pros and cons of your job?**

The pros of this type of position include the variety of activities and the flexibility of the position. It is hard to get bored when you are involved in so many different tasks throughout the day. Oftentimes, you may also tailor the job to meet your interests. For example, if you have an interest in sport psychology, you may be able to teach sport psychology classes, engage in sport psychology research with your students, and provide outreach or campus services geared towards athletics. You may also have time after work to do private sport psychology consulting or have a private practice.

The main con if you have an interest in sport psychology is that you may be on an island of one within the Psychology Department. This can get lonely, which is why it is so important to take advantage of professional organizations and networking opportunities. Doing so will help you stay connected to other professionals and up to date on the latest research in the field. As mentioned above, another con is that you may not have many opportunities to teach sport psychology classes. Since there are so many other tasks and demands to complete throughout your day, you may not have as much time as you would like to devote to sport psychology work or research.

### **3. Is it common to work directly with the student athletes and/or coaches by providing clinical or performance enhancement services to the school? Does this require someone to be a licensed psychologist or an AASP certified consultant?**

Working clinically with student athletes and/or coaches would not be advisable, due to potential dual relationships. Most, if not all, colleges have either a counseling center or a local clinician to refer students to if they need clinical services. Offering performance enhancement services to the athletic department (at large) or to individual teams/coaches is a great way to get involved and get known on campus. On our campus, we have a program called Academic Coordinators (ACs); the ACs are volunteers from the faculty and staff who work with teams to provide another level of advising and support. You do not need to be licensed, AASP certified, or even trained in psychology to do this.

### **4. Is this anything else you would like to convey to students and professionals who may be interested in pursuing an academic position?**



Overall, working in a Psychology Department that supports one's interest in and passion for sport psychology can be deeply fulfilling. Many students are naïve about the field, and through their coursework often become interested in either pursuing advanced study in sport psychology and/or applying what they have learned to their own lives. This seems to be especially true for collegiate student-athletes enrolled in a sport psychology class. Having a unique area of expertise that is different from other Psychology Department faculty also provides you with a way to stand out in your department. It is very rewarding to be able to educate both students and faculty about the field and the opportunities that exist for additional training and employment.

**Athletics Academic Counselors and Life Skills / CHAMPS Coordinator  
Positions**

*By Jessica Lutkenhouse, Psy.D.*

Academic Support for Student Athlete positions are offered at most universities. The number and type of available positions varies based on the size and financial structure of the university. Larger athletic departments that have more funding likely have a more extensive academic support program for their athletes. The size of the university and number of staff employed also affects the essential job functions of the athletic counselor. For example, at smaller colleges there may only be one or two full-time staff providing direct academic counseling services to student athletes. As such, these individuals may have more demands and responsibilities. At The Ohio State University (OSU), on the other hand, there are currently 23 staff employed within the Student Athlete Support Service Office (SASSO). Not all staff have the same role in the office; however, all individuals collaboratively work together to serve the academic, personal, and professional needs of the student-athletes.

The Student Athlete Support Service Office at OSU will be used to exemplify what an *Academic Counselor of Athletics* position may look like. Keep in mind that there may be significant differences between OSU's academic athletic counseling positions and those available at other universities. For example, some universities also require their counselors to be heavily involved in the administrative and marketing aspects of athletics. There are also director positions available at some universities that require additional responsibilities and a higher degree and/or different experience. Since there is such variability between positions, it is important to carefully read the job description and call the university to ASK QUESTIONS if necessary before applying.

### **Position Description**

The athletic academic counselors that work for SASSO provide direct counseling services to student athletes. They are assigned to specific teams, and work with college advisors to assist students with academic standards and general course selection. They also monitor the student-athletes' academic progress and ensure that each individual is advancing toward their degree. An additional part of the counselor's job is to meet with prospective student-athletes and parents during the recruitment process to answer questions and provide information that may be important in the individual's decision about attending the university (i.e., campus support to assist the athlete in managing both academic and athletic demands).

The athletic academic counselor may also be involved in implementation of the CHAMPS/Life Skills program. This program is in line with the mission of the National Collegiate Athletic Association, which is to support intercollegiate athletics as an integral part of the campus educational program and the student athlete as an integral part of the student body. As such, the athletes are required to attend educational seminars that are geared towards helping them manage the difficulties associated with being a collegiate athlete. The academic counselors may be required to teach and/or create the curriculum for these seminars that are based on the following five domains: academics, athletics, personal development, career development, and community service.

### **Degree Requirements**

A Master's Degree or an equivalent of education and experience is required. For example, the current counselors at OSU have graduate degrees that vary from Guidance Counseling, Higher Education, Sports Administration, Student Affairs Counseling, Sport Psychology, and Physical Education / Health & Sport Studies.

### **General Qualifications**

1. Experience with academic advising and interpreting curricula or equivalent combination of education and experience
2. Experience in student personnel work or counseling
3. Ability to effectively supervise and work with coaches, staff, and student-athletes
4. Knowledge of, or the ability to learn the university's academic rules/regulations
5. Familiarity with NCAA and OSU policies and guidelines
6. Effective oral and written communication skills
7. Basic computer skills and knowledge of software, such as word and excel

**Target Salary** \$40,000 - \$45,000 Annually

### **Work Environment**

The Student Athlete Support Service Office at OSU provides athletic academic counseling and advising across the university, to ensure strong academic support for student athletes. The staff collaborates with the Department of Athletics and other university departments to enhance academic, personal, and career development programming. They also partner with the community to bring services and career opportunities to student athletes.

Staff currently working for SASSO include: Athletic Academic Counselors, Learning Specialists, Academic Resources Coordinators, Office Managers, Front Desk Coordinators, Office Assistants, Assistant Academic Counselors, and tutors.

## **Academic Athletic Counselor Interview**

*By Jessica Lutkenhouse, Psy.D.*

*The following is an excerpt from a series of questions asked of a full-time academic counselor working at The Ohio State University. This individual is also the Lifeskills Coordinator for the department.*

### **1. Describe a typical day in the life of an Academic Athletic Counselor at OSU?**

I'm not sure there is such thing as a typical day. Each day is different, which is what I enjoy. I can be found doing anything from helping a current student-athlete with an issue, emailing a recruit, visiting with an on-campus recruit and their parents, or working with a coach on a recruiting issue or a current student athlete issue. In addition, each day I try to spend some with my teams at practice. This is a good way to catch students if I need something and touch base with a coach. Most days also include some type of meeting, either within our staff or with other college advisors on campus. There is definitely variety in this job and each day brings something new.

**2. What are the pros and cons of your job?**

The main pro is that I have a lot of direct interactions with students and it is very rewarding to see them succeed both academically and athletically. It is also nice that there is so much variety in each day of work, and we have the opportunity to work and collaborate with so many different departments on campus.

The only con I see is that there can be a lot of pressure and stress associated with eligibility issues, depending on the level of administration and coach's support.

**3. How many hours of direct contact do you have with student athletes?**

During the average week, I am usually in direct contact with athletes for 30 hours.

**4. What is your role in the organization?**

The title of my role is *Athletic Academic Advisor/CHAMPS/Life Skills Coordinator*. I work with specific teams on the academic side of eligibility. Our CHAMPS/Life Skills Program focuses on supporting the student-athlete throughout their college career by enhancing their experience within the context of higher education. I am OSU's coordinator of this program and I organize a variety of presentations to student athletes. Examples of presentations provided to the athletes may include: goal-setting and time management, study skills, academic support programs, developing self-esteem, dealing with depression, personal and social development, and career planning.

**5. Do you see opportunities to move up career-wise and/or financially?**

Yes, I believe there are opportunities to move up in this field. The most common advancement would be a position of assistant director and, eventually, a Director. From there, a move over to Athletics Administration is very possible. All these positions come with different responsibilities and, of course, with more financial compensation.

**6. Why did you choose this career-path? Was this your plan when going to graduate school? If you could go back and do it again would you select the same route?**

I chose this career because I enjoy sports and like the interaction with student-athletes. Yes, this was my plan when I was going to both undergraduate and graduate school; however, I didn't specifically know I wanted to work in Academics. I did know that I wanted to work in intercollegiate athletics in some capacity. If I could go back and do it again I would definitely select the same route. It has been very rewarding for me thus far.

**7. Are you an athlete yourself?**

I played soccer in college for 4 years and still keep active by working out regularly.

**\* If you are interested in this type of position check out the following website:**

<http://www.nfoura.org/>

## **Fitness Consultant and/or Lifestyle Coach Positions**

*By Lois A. Butcher-Poffley, M.Ed, Ph.D., CC-AASP*

*\* There are a variety of titles used by professionals who employ mental skills training and other sport psychology techniques to help their client's attain personal and/or fitness-related goals. To avoid confusion, and for the purpose of staying consistent in this position description, the title Lifestyle Coach will be used.*

The positions in this area are very diverse, depending on the setting, the population of the clientele, and the professional's training. For example, many Lifestyle Coaches work in fitness centers, while others may maintain a private practice, or work as a consultant. It is very common that a Lifestyle Coach is certified to personal train and/or teach group fitness classes, which would allow them to incorporate various components of mental training into their client's physical training. This may be required if the Lifestyle Coach works in a gym, but is not required in all settings. Services offered by the Lifestyle Coach may be added on to a gym membership (e.g., one free session to the member with additional sessions purchased at the member's discretion), or may be a component of a larger sport psychology/performance enhancement consulting service. It is also possible that this type of service may be a part of a medical or clinical/or counseling practice that focuses on improving a client's psychological health through a prescriptive medical rehabilitation program. Such practices tend to be sought out by the client, or recommended as an adjunct to additional services the individual is already receiving. It is important to note that these practices are often not covered by insurance. Most of the time the client is required to pay out of pocket.

Lifestyle Coaches may choose to advertise their services as exclusively in that domain (e.g., John Smith, M.Ed., Lifestyle Coach), or they may offer this type of coaching as an adjunct to their clinical or counseling practice on an as-needed basis. To excel in this type of position and maintain credibility, it is important that the individual has a background in exercise and fitness. In addition, a thorough understanding of psychological skills training and sport psychology is critical to most effectively meet the client's needs.

There is wide variability between positions and venues. It is important to be sensitive to the focus and needs of the business or organization by practicing in a manner that is consistent with their philosophy. However, it is also critical to follow the ethical guidelines and/or requirements of your profession. For example, if you are using the term "Licensed Psychologist" you should comply with the APA Ethics Code. Finally, in atypical exercise settings (e.g., a managed care or outpatient therapy setting), it is a good idea to assess the client's openness and receptivity to exercise and other healthy lifestyle changes as a stand-alone or adjunct treatment.

### **Position Description**

The Lifestyle Coach provides direct counseling and/or consulting services to individuals interested in improving their physical well being and overall quality of life. Their relationship with the client is typically short-term, with the aim of helping individuals achieve balance in their life by meeting their fitness, health, or personal needs.

**Degree Requirements**

A Master's degree and/or equivalent or more advanced degree, with a strong background in fitness and exercise science is recommended for this position. Education training in counseling and sport and exercise psychology is also helpful.

**General Qualifications**

1. Experience with exercise, fitness environments, and training
2. Experience in coaching and/or counseling
3. Ability to effectively create and develop programming for clients
4. Knowledge of basic exercise principles (e.g., overtraining effect, exercise progression) and fitness training methods, (e.g., weight training, cardio, flexibility exercises)
5. Extensive knowledge about the impact exercise has on physical and mental health
6. Ability to effectively communicate, understand, and relate to clients to help them meet their individual needs and goals
7. There are a variety of commercial certifications available for this type of service (usually found online). It is recommended the practitioner pursue these types of certifications with a cautious eye.

**Target Salary**

Lifestyle Coaches are usually self-employed, which makes compensation highly variable. The salary is contingent upon many factors, some of which include geographic location, type of facility (fitness center, fitness club, YMCA, hospital), client load, and fees charged per client. If the consultant is employed by an organization, the company may receive a percentage of the fee charged per session. In most company settings, the fee per session is set by the company and can range from \$60-\$100, with the Lifestyle Coach earning anywhere from 50-75% of the fee. If the Lifestyle Coach is the sole proprietor of their business, they keep 100% of the session fee, which can range from \$60-\$100 (or higher based on the professional's training and the services provided) per session.

It is important to include a word about income tax issues in this summary, because self-employed consultants will need to file their income/earnings as independent contractors. In addition, many companies require their personal trainers to file as independent contractors to avoid extra paperwork. It is easier for the company if they are not responsible for deducting the wage tax. Tax planning then becomes critical to the practitioner and they must complete the proper IRS forms to ensure their financial stability.

**Work Environment**

As mentioned above, there are a variety of settings that may hire a Lifestyle Coach and the work environment depends on the setting. Managed care/HMOs, corporate fitness centers, and the military are but a few that may be interested in such services. In addition, weight loss centers and bariatric health groups may be possible routes to obtain additional clients. Many Lifestyle Coaches work as private practitioners, incorporating performance enhancement services into a more traditional counseling practice.

Generating a client base for these professionals typically comes from advertising, word of mouth, and referrals from other colleagues. Usually, if employed by an organization, such as a fitness center, the Lifestyle Coach works as a sub- or independent contractor. Most Lifestyle Coaches work directly with their clients and additional opportunities may exist for the professional to provide lectures and workshops to other colleagues in the setting,

## **Lifestyle Coach / Fitness Consultant Interview**

*By Jessica Lutkenhouse, Psy.D.*

*Many Lifestyle Coaches become involved in the performance enhancement aspect of fitness after working as a trainer and seeing the amazing psychological changes that can occur when a person becomes physically fit. This was the case for Erin Kennedy, the Lifestyle Coach who was interviewed for this summary. She recently graduated from The University of Denver's Sport and Performance Psychology Master's Program and is looking forward to becoming more involved in the fitness consulting industry.*

### **1. Describe a typical day in the life of a Lifestyle Coach?**

My day tends to vary depending on the clients I have. I tend to plan my sessions the evening before since I have multiple sessions throughout the day. Planning the actual exercises used [i.e., upper body, core, etc.] and their intensity level [i.e., low, med, high]) is critical to reduce the risk of injury and maintain the clientele. I tend to arrive at work at 5:30 a.m. in the morning so I can prepare the fitness equipment. I then work with the other coaches to discuss strategies. At 6:00 a.m. we start our physical training component, which includes a dynamic warm-up, workout of the day, and static stretching. After the session I process with my clients their experiences and if they feel their fitness and health-related needs have been met. Since I supervise the other coaches I am required to communicate regularly with them throughout the day to make sure they are working in a manner that is consistent with the organization's mission.

### **2. What are the pros and cons of your job?**

The number one pro is that I get to directly impact another human being in a positive way every day. If I can bring a smile to someone's face while they are making efforts to lead an active and healthy lifestyle, then I have done my job for the day. I also love training our coaches. Coaching education is a passion of mine and it is very rewarding to train other professionals by helping them better themselves in this business.

The main con is the financial aspects, especially during tax season. Being an independent contractor means monitoring my taxes and finances much more closely than I would if I had a full-time job with benefits. It is also limiting in terms of the hours I can work since many of my clients work during the day.

### **3. How many hours of direct contact do you have with clients per week (on average)?**

Each week I have 6-8 direct hours of contact with the clients within my company, which is a very small number compared to the amount of time I actually put into the session preparation and other organization demands, such as training my coaches.

**4. How did you become involved with Lifestyle Coaching?**

While pursuing my M.A. degree in Sport and Performance Psychology at the University of Denver I wanted to obtain a position where I could apply knowledge I was learning in school to a related field/setting. I came across BCOR Fitness in Colorado and they hired me as a coach, which eventually led to my supervisory role.

**5. Why did you choose this career-path? Do you plan to continue in this role after your finish graduate school? If so, will there be any changes?**

I chose this career purely to relate my knowledge in school to an applied setting. Now that I have graduated I am looking to obtain a full time position with a national organization that is more secure financially.

**6. What is your role in the organization?**

Currently, I am the head lifestyle coach and fitness director at BCOR Fitness. In this role I help manage the facilities and supervise and train other coaches. I am also in charge of the BCOR Certification and Coach School that the instructors attend.

**7. Do you see opportunities to move up career-wise and financially in this role?**

Absolutely! Since we are a smaller company there is always room for growth. I have already moved up to my current position within just a year and a half and I foresee great growth in the coming years.

**8. If you could rewind time would you head down the same career path?**

Of course. This has been an amazing experience for me. Not only have I made great contacts and learned a lot, but I also made a difference in the lives of others by pairing my educational training in coaching education with my passion for fitness.

**9. What role does fitness play in your own life (e.g. are you an athlete yourself)?**

I played sports in high school and college, but took a break for a few years. Becoming involved in the field of performance enhancement has encouraged me to re-visit my passion and I have since completed my first triathlon, half marathon, and several bike races. I rarely go a day with being physically active. I have seen what living a healthy lifestyle can do for an individual and I believe that anyone working within this industry must live what they teach.

**10. Is there anything you would like to tell students or professionals who are interested in this career path?**

The fitness industry is a great field to be in no matter what your goals are in life. You do not necessarily need to be extremely fit or have a certain graduate degree. If you are healthy, have the drive and passion for learning, and have a desire to help others, then you are likely to excel in the field.



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