

Top Five Things I Have Learned



Carlos Gual, a senior athletic training student, shares what he has learned over the past four years at the University of Central Florida.

Challenging Myself

Book learning has always been really easy for me. Memorizing origin and insertion is easy. Knowing rehab exercises is easy. Everything in the Arnheim book is easy for me to memorize and recall on a test. However, applying it on the field is what makes athletic training a challenge for me. I see the knowledge that my ACI's have and I want to be at their level. I get frustrated when I do not see what they see as fast as they do. I have realized that the reason they know the material better than I do is because of experience. I take that and I apply and challenge myself a little more each day. I ask "why" and "does this make sense."



Attention To The Small Stuff

As a student in the profession, it is simple to just sit and wait for your ACI to ask you to complete a task or do them a favor. However, I am blessed to have an ACI who gives me the freedom to make decisions. He takes a step back and allows me to think about what needs to be done. I love the look on my ACI's face when he asks me to do something and I already have it completed before he even asks. Athletic training as a student can sometimes be routine. You come in, fill up coolers, hook up people to Estim, do rehab, cover practice and clean up. However, when you can point out the small things that need to get done like cleaning things that don't always get cleaned, looking for the shortage in supplies, or even correcting the athletes when they break an ATR rule, it can really set you apart.

Speaking To Different People

Nobody is the same. Nobody speaks or listens or responds to conversation the same. I have learned to pick up on personal characteristics of my athletes. There are some that I can sit and say jokes to, there are some that are sensitive and you cannot be rude to, then there are others that do not comply and you have to be rude to in order to get them to do what they need to do to improve. This lesson for me is important because I also apply it in life when I meet people. Conversations are different with different people. Being able to change the way you talk to different people can really help you to get what you need out of your athletes.

Going The Extra Mile

Sometimes as an athletic training student, the thought crosses our mind that our clinical sites are for free labor and to work on competencies. I feel very differently. My ACI made it clear that I am not supposed to be only a student when I am there. Instead, I'm supposed to be an extension of who he is. I have to enforce ATR rules, help with athlete compliance and make sure that I am consistently accomplishing not only what I need to do as a student, but what my ACI needs accomplished. Some of the athletes I work with do not feel comfortable going to my ACI for everything. A lot of times they call me to schedule rehab, look at their injuries and treat them. For this, I have to be on the same page that my ACI is on. Sometimes the athletes feel that because I am closer to their age that I will be on their side. I have to make it seem that I am while being on not only my ACI's side but the side of coaches as well. This goes far beyond any competency and a 20-hour limit that many programs put on their student. However, it prepares me for the future.

Leadership

This is the biggest lesson I have learned. Many people think that leadership is being on top and delegating. I beg to differ. True leadership is being able to get dirty for those you lead. It is being a servant for the ones you lead. I have had the pleasure of serving 50-plus students as our student organization president. It is hard to be in a leadership position however, there is not one time where I did not think of them as I made the decisions I made. Every time I hear the word "leadership," I am reminded of something I read on a flight back home with my team: "By the strength of the leader's commitment, the power of the team is unleashed."