

Meet Our ACSM Past Presidents



Russell R. Pate, Ph.D., FACSME
ACSM President 1993-94



Name: Russell R. Pate

Education: B.S., Springfield College, 1968; M.S., University of Oregon, 1973; Ph.D., University of Oregon, 1974

Current or most recent affiliation: Department of Exercise Science, University of South Carolina

Honors & Awards:

- 2012** Honor Award, American College of Sports Medicine
- 2015** Lifetime Achievement Award, President's Council on Fitness, Sports and Nutrition
- 2014** South Carolina Governor's Excellence in Scientific Research Award
- 2008** Distinguished Alumnus Award, Springfield College
- 1996** Russell Research Award for Faculty Research, University of South Carolina

Professional Interests: Physical activity and health in children and youth; Public health implications of physical activity

ACSM Service: President-elect, President, Past-President, 1992-1995; Chair, Health and Science Policy Committee, 1994-1997; Chair, Regional Chapters Committee, 1982-1988; President, Southeast Chapter ACSM, 1982-1983

Questions to answer *What first inspired you to enter the exercise science/sports medicine field? What made you decide to pursue your advance degree and/or line of research/service?*

My father was a physical education teacher, coach and school district coordinator of physical education and athletics. When I started college, I thought I would pursue a career similar to his. But I was a competitive distance runner, and I was drawn to the scientific basis of performance. As an undergraduate student at Springfield College my exercise physiology professor was Wayne Sinning, and Wayne pulled me into the lab – first as a subject and later to do a senior project. Based on those experiences I decided to pursue graduate education in exercise physiology.

As a student, who were your mentors and what role did they play in your professional development? As a professional, was there anyone who was also instrumental in your career development?

As mentioned above, Wayne Sinning was instrumental in sparking my interest in exercise physiology. As a graduate student at the University of Oregon, I was greatly influenced by my thesis and dissertation advisors, Cliff Brubaker and Gene Evonuk, respectively. Also, I was fortunate to study with H. Harrison Clarke from who I learned a great deal about both statistics and child development.

Are there any students who you feel you have mentored that have gone on to play any significant roles within ACSM?

I have been honored to mentor Ph.D. students who have gone on to establish outstanding careers. They include Linda Syzmanski, Stewart Trost, Peter Bodary, David Branch, John Sirard, Felipe Lobelo, Dan Bornstein, Jonathan Mitchell, Kerry McIver, Jennifer O'Neill, Won Byun, Erin Howie, Erika Lau, Samantha McDonald, Morgan Clennin, Michaela Schenkelberg and Emily Shull. Also, I have mentored post-doctoral fellows who have gone on to do exceptional work, including Karin Pfeiffer, Joao Almeida, Sharon Ross and Jennifer Trilk.

What is it about exercise science/sports medicine that still inspires you today?

I believe that physical activity exerts an enormous influence on human health, at both the personal and community levels. Further, I believe that physical activity behavior during childhood and adolescence lays the groundwork for lifelong health and fitness. In this context I am inspired to learn how we can effectively promote physical activity during childhood through public health interventions. In addition, I am inspired to advocate for the federal, state and local investments that will be needed to translate effective interventions to broad community implementation.

Why and how did you decide to get involved with ACSM? How did your service help you grow as a professional? How do you feel you were able to get elected to its highest position?

I became involved with ACSM as a graduate student at the University of Oregon. In 1973 the ACSM Annual Meeting was in Seattle, and a few of us drove from Eugene to Seattle to attend. By comparison to today's huge convention, the meeting was tiny...my recollection is that all programs were held in a single ballroom in the conference hotel. For me, it was love at first sight. I so enjoyed the scientific program and the opportunity to rub elbows with leaders in the field. I think I was able to become a leader in ACSM because, early in my career, I made myself available to serve the college, first at the regional chapter level and then in the national organization.

What are your most memorable moments from your service to ACSM?

Two of my most memorable moments with ACSM were: 1) delivery of the Wolfe Lecture at the 2016 ACSM Annual Meeting and 2) receipt of the Honor Award during the 2012 ACSM Annual Meeting. In both cases, I was very nervous about the talk I was to deliver. Also, in both cases I felt exceptionally honored and humbled to have been selected by the college's leadership.

How did you become a Fellow and in what year? How do you feel that played a role in your development as a professional?

I pursued Fellowship in ACSM as soon as I felt that I had met the criteria. Advancement to fellowship opened the door to my serving on ACSM committees which, in turn, led to service in leadership positions in ACSM (e.g., Board of Trustees membership and service as an officer).

“ Stay true to the science. ACSM’s unique role is to foster high-level science as it relates to the many professional and academic interests of its members. ”

What were some of the main issues confronting ACSM at the time of your presidency?

I was fortunate to serve in the ACSM presidency at a time when physical activity was gaining a foothold in the public health sector. Also, it was a time when the epidemiologic evidence linking higher levels of physical activity to reduced risk for development of cardiovascular and other chronic diseases was reaching maturity. Supporting ACSM's expanding role in the "physical activity public health arena" was a major theme of my presidency.

What do you think are your most meaningful contributions to the field of exercise science/sports medicine?

I think my most important contributions have been:

- Helping to establish the Department of Exercise Science at the University of South Carolina as a leading academic unit in the field of exercise science;
- Supporting an expanded role for physical activity as a focus of the public health community; and
- Contributing to the body of knowledge on physical activity behavior in children and youth.

What advice would you have for future leaders of ACSM?

Stay true to the science. ACSM's unique role is to foster high-level science as it relates to the many professional and academic interests of its members. Other competing professional societies may serve the narrow professional interests of some exercise science/sports medicine specialties more effectively than ACSM. But no other organization can compete with ACSM's ability to deliver the science to professionals who seek to expand their knowledge of the scientific underpinnings of our field.

What advice would you give to students who are looking to pursue a career in exercise science/sports medicine?

Welcome! You are joining a profession committed to the application of physical activity in ways that promote the health and well-being of participants. Also, you are joining a remarkable group of professionals who love physical activity, exercise and sport because of the positive contributions they make to quality of life.