

Meet Our ACSM Past Presidents



Janet Walberg Rankin, Ph.D., B.S., FACSM
ACSM President **2012-13**



Name: Janet Walberg Rankin, Ph.D.
Education: Ph.D., Nutrition with minor in Exercise Physiology, University of California at Davis, 1977-1982
B.S., Zoology, Duke University, 1973-77
Current or most recent affiliation: Professor Emerita, Virginia Tech Department of Human Nutrition, Foods, and Exercise
Assistant, Associate and Professor, Virginia Tech, 1982-2018
Honors & Awards: ACSM Citation Award, 2018
SEACSM Scholar Award, 2018
SEACSM Service Award, 2001
Virginia Tech Certificate of Teaching Excellence, 1993

Professional Interests: Nutrition's impact on body composition and performance of athletes
Nutrition's influence on inflammation in human health
Active transportation barriers, value and impact on the environment and health

ACSM Service:

2011-2014	President-Elect, President, Past President
2000-2002	Vice President
1996-1999	Member, Board of Trustees, elected to three-year term as trustee for regional chapters
1986-1988	Member, Executive Board of Southeast American College of Sports Medicine (SEACSM), elected to two-year term
1986	SEACSM Membership Chairman
1987	SEACSM Newsletter Chairman

Offices held:

Below are beyond those that were part of my service as president or VP (e.g., Budget and Finance, Administrative Council, Nomination, Awards)

Committees:

2015-2020	Past President's Advisory
2014-2018	Priscilla Clarkson Legacy Lecture selection committee and selection committee for Clarkson Undergraduate Research Travel Award
2013-2016	Active Transportation Task Force (chair 2013-15)
2006-2010	Appointed member, Obesity Task Force
2005-2010	Associated Editor, <i>Medicine & Science in Sports & Exercise</i> .
2008-2009	Member, writing team, ACSM position stand on role of physical activity for weight loss and maintenance
2000-2006	Annual Meeting Program Committee, appointed program area representative for "Metabolism and Nutrition" area in 2003
2002-2005	Chair, Interest Group Forums Committee
2002-2006	Member, Nominating Committee
1999-2006	Member, Distance Learning ad hoc committee
2002-2005	Regional Chapter Committee, elected as representative from Southeast ACSM chapter
2002-2003	Member, Advancement Committee

ACSM Service (continued):	2000-2002	Member, Awards and Tributes
	1999-2003	Member, International and National Alliances Task Force
	1996-1999	Member, Budget and Finance Committee
	1996-1999	Ex-Officio Member, Regional Chapters Committee
	1991-1996	Member, Public Information Committee
	1988-1991	Member, Preventive and Rehabilitative Programs Committee
		Member, Exercise Test Technologist Subcommittee of above committee

Q&A: *What first inspired you to enter the exercise science/sports medicine field? What made you decide to pursue an advanced degree and/or line of research/service?*

After my zoology undergraduate degree, I entered a nutrition department at UC Davis that did not include an exercise focus. I was in a lab studying obesity using a rodent model. My advisor, Judy Stern, allowed me flexibility in choosing a specific area to pursue. I chose to look at the effect of chronic exercise on body composition and health of the obese rodent model. This led me to take some classes and explore committee members in the exercise physiology program. I learned about ACSM from some of these professors (e.g., Paul Mole). When it came time to present some of my dissertation results, I went to my first ACSM meeting in 1981, as well as FASEB. ACSM immediately felt like home and has been inspiring me ever since!

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?

My dissertation advisor, Judy Stern, exemplified a successful, hardworking, impactful scientist and so inspired my pursuit of an academic career. Most of the people who inspired me professionally after my academic training were members of SEACSM and/or ACSM. My department head, Ron Bos, was the executive director for SEACSM when I began at Virginia Tech. He encouraged me to attend the regional meeting and eventually run for election to the board. This organization and the people I met as a result of my membership had a lifelong impact on me. The list of outstanding people who added to my professional development from the SEACSM and ACSM family is long. For example, the leaders I got to work with in my early years at SEACSM were ACSM stars like Russ Pate, Scott Powers, Larry Durstine, Mindy Millard-Stafford, Dianne Ward, Mark Davis and so many more. My involvement in ACSM followed my commitment to the regional chapter. At ACSM, I added a wider group of people who became important to me: Priscilla Clarkson, Bob Sallis, Larry Kenney and other ACSM leaders set the bar for contributions to the organization. You develop a special bond with those on the executive committee while you are president, so I will always have a special connection with Barbara Ainsworth and Bill Dexter. In addition to the members, I learned continuously about running effective programs and initiatives from the ACSM staff and directors.

Are there any students you have mentored who have gone on to play a significant role within ACSM?

Regular involvement with students made being a professor an ideal career for me. I had the privilege to work with many outstanding graduate students. Several are ACSM stars. Stella Volpe is a once-in-a-lifetime friend, colleague and former student. As many know, she continues to contribute to ACSM in myriad ways, but I would like to especially point out her exemplary work in the minority mentoring program. Janet Wojcik has mentored many students who have presented their research at SEACSM and was recently the chair of the legacy task force I began during my presidency, ActivEarth.

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

It is so easy to be on the physical activity bandwagon since exercise improves virtually every aspect of our health. In spite of this consistent, long-standing fact, it is exciting to continue to read about the latest research that supports this truism. In my retirement, I enjoy incorporating new findings into a class I began teaching, Fit over Fifty: Why and How, to adult learners.

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?

As mentioned earlier, my colleagues and department head at Virginia Tech were very involved in SEACSM, so this was a segue for me to explore the organization. After getting elected to the executive board, I saw how important but also fun it was to work with colleagues to help move the organization forward. Only after I was highly engaged with the regional chapter did I consider getting more involved with ACSM. There is no doubt that working in leadership at the regional level made me more interested in ACSM office. Similarly, it made me more qualified for involvement at the national level since the ACSM nominating process values contributions at the regional level during decisions on candidates for committees and national office.

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

I loved attending and presenting at the various regional chapter meetings while serving as ACSM president. I was introduced to many dedicated and inspirational leaders. I also feel lucky to have been part of several national meetings that developed from collaborations with other organizations for the ActivEarth initiative. For example, ACSM was a key leader and organizer for a UN side event at the UN Summit on Climate Change in 2014. Similarly, we helped initiate and organize a highly successful new interdisciplinary conference on the health impacts of active transportation with the Transportation Research Board in 2015. Of course, the night I received the ACSM Citation Award was thrilling, memorable and humbling.

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 became a fellow in 1986. This is an important step that communicates the fact that you want to commit to service in the organization. I am sure that earning this designation contributed to my appointment on multiple committees of ACSM and later in leadership offices.

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

Then, as now, there are always decisions related to the scope of ACSM initiatives and activities. Our potential involvement is broader than our finite financial and people resources. We conducted a strategic planning process that allowed us to create a framework to help with these decisions. Membership numbers and distribution among professional categories was a discussion topic.

How can we make ACSM most attractive to a breadth of potential members? For example, a discussion during this period to increase appeal to basic scientists resulted in the addition of a basic science focus for each annual meeting.

“ Meet as many people as you can at meetings from diverse areas and fields so that you have a wide perspective on priorities. **”**

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

I hope that my connections and mentoring of students is my primary contribution to the exercise science field and ACSM. In addition, I believe I will be remembered as an advocate for regional chapters. My election to the ACSM Board of Trustees was as a representative from the regional chapters. I have always felt they are a critical part of the ACSM portfolio. There were also various specific initiatives (e.g., ActivEarth) or products (e.g., position stands) in which I had significant involvement or leadership roles that I hope have lasting value.

What advice do you have for future leaders of ACSM?

Not surprisingly, based on my previous answers, I believe it is important to get involved at the regional chapter level. This means bringing your graduate students to present their research, submitting and presenting sessions yourself, and serving to help the chapter run smoothly. Meet as many people as you can at meetings from diverse areas and fields so that you have a wide perspective on priorities. The side effect of this is the broadening of your personal connection to people who could be important in your life and career. Stay involved in the regional chapter even after you are engaged in the national organization. It is important to continue to bring students you mentor to meetings to expose them to the organization.

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

After you find a university program and advisor who fit you, work hard! Work ethic and enthusiasm can take you far. Attend professional meetings, present your research and step outside your group of small friends when there. Introduce yourself to other students and professional members of the organization. Ask them about how they got where they are. People take different paths, and this may help you in your own path to be successful. Step out of your comfort zone to volunteer to help in the organization. All that you give will be returned to you with interest.