



2024 President-Elect Nominee

Meet the Nominee

INTEREST IN SERVING AS TACSM PRESIDENT

I still clearly remember my first Texas ACSM Annual Meeting as a first-year PhD student in 2010. I was presenting on a topic I didn't know a lot about, and I can recall being grilled by the poster judges for it. Over the years, the Texas ACSM organization and annual meeting made me a stronger student and ultimately faculty mentor as I began bringing my own students to meetings. TACSM has always prided itself on being a student-focused chapter. This is something I have valued as a student, faculty member, and in my last 6 years on the TACSM Board of Directors. I would be honored to continue to serve this chapter in the role of President. My goal and focus in this capacity would be to put on a great annual meeting with engaging speakers and ample opportunities for student-focused professional development.

BIOSKETCH

I completed a PhD in Exercise Physiology from Texas A&M University (2015) and Master's (2009) and Bachelor's (2007) degrees in Kinesiology from Sam Houston State University. I was an Associate Professor at Stephen F. Austin State University where I worked in the Department of Kinesiology and Health Science from 2015-2022 prior to my current position at St. Edward's University in Austin, TX. My research interests are in applied endurance exercise performance. Most recently, my focus has been on the impact of advancements in footwear technology on running economy and performance. I have served on the Texas ACSM Board of Directors in the role of Continuing Education Director for the last 6 years. In this position, I have coordinated the logistics of our fall and spring lecture series each year.

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I have a passion for serving and participating in TACSM. I have been contributing to the annual meetings for the past 13 years, ever since my Ph.D. mentor (and past TACSM president) Dr. Peter Grandjean encouraged me to become involved with the chapter. As a graduate student, I found the opportunity to share my research and learn from others to be an enriching experience. I was humbled and thankful for the chance to serve such a student-focused organization as a non-medicine representative. If elected, I look forward selflessly serving and dedicating myself to the many duties that are inclusive of the 3-year presidential role, including implementing policies, preparing the budget, and proposing the agenda for the 2026 Annual Meeting. The opportunity to remain involved with TACSM is exciting, as I wish to have input into the organization that has inspired me. I hope that my leadership can inspire others.

BIOSKETCH

Rhett Rigby holds B.S. and M.S. degrees in Biomedical Engineering, and a Ph.D. in Kinesiology, Exercise, Nutrition and Health Promotion from Baylor University. At Texas Woman's University, he is an associate professor in Health Promotion and Kinesiology and the co-director of the Institute for Women's Health. He also mentors students who compete in the Texas Space Grant Consortium (TSGC) Design Challenge at NASA. He is externally funded through the TSGC and the Human Animal Bond Research Institute, allowing him to investigate how equine-assisted therapy affects adults with neurological disease. He has over 60 publications and abstracts in peer-reviewed journals and books and has more than 70 research-related presentations. He is an active member of the American College of Sports Medicine, the Texas Chapter of the American College of Sports Medicine, and the NSCA. He served on the board of TACSM as a non-medicine representative from 2017 to 2020.

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2024 Non-Medicine Rep Nominee

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INTEREST IN SERVING TEXAS ACSM

The TACSM conference has consistently been a highlight for both myself and my students since I joined UTEP in 2012. Due to its student-focused nature and the tremendous opportunities it provides, TACSM has become one of my favorite conferences. Now, it has become an annual tradition for my entire lab and me to actively participate and contribute. Having served TACSM in various capacities since 2012, including roles as a judge and reviewer, I am deeply honored by the nomination to serve on the TACSM Board of Directors and make a more meaningful contribution. UTEP, being over 600 miles away from Dallas, has lacked representation in TACSM, and I am eager to bridge this gap. My involvement as a founding member in developing the Rio Grande chapter of the American Physiological Society and my current role as the Chapter rep to the National APS have equipped me with valuable experiences to benefit TACSM.

BIOSKETCH

Dr. Sudip Bajpeyi is a Professor in Kinesiology at UTEP. He holds a Ph.D. in Bioenergetics from East Carolina University, NC, and received postdoctoral training in endocrinology at the Pennington Biomedical Research Center, Louisiana. Dr. Bajpeyi's research explores the intricate connections between nutrition, physical activity, and alternative interventions to combat the obesity and type 2 diabetes epidemic. With a successful track record of conducting several human clinical trials and NIH funding, his current R01 investigates muscle contraction-induced glycemic control and metabolic health in a sedentary population. Dr. Bajpeyi's commitment to mentorship is exemplified by the achievements of his students, who consistently secure awards in poster presentations, SRDA grants, manuscript awards, and more at TACSM each year. He serves as the Director of the Interdisciplinary Health Sciences Ph.D. program and also the undergraduate Honors program at UTEP. He is particularly dedicated to fostering opportunities for students from underserved and minority backgrounds.

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This is my 10th year bringing students to the TACSM conference to present research and network. I have taken on a variety of volunteer roles at the annual meeting, which has shown me the tremendous value TACSM brings to preparing the next generation of researchers and practitioners in exercise science. I am ready to serve the organization at the leadership level on the Board of Directors. As a board member, I would leverage my experience of mentoring young researchers to further TACSM's goal of supporting the development of emerging talent in the field. I am committed to help guide strategic initiatives that create opportunities for students to jump start their careers through TACSM's offerings for research, education, networking and skill-building.

BIOSKETCH

Vipa Bernhardt is an Associate Professor in the Department of Health and Human Performance at Texas A&M University-Commerce. She is the director of the Research Opportunities in Athletics, Recreation, and Human Performance (ROAR-HP) Lab and program director for the B.S. Kinesiology & Sports Studies as well as M.S. in Health, Kinesiology, and Sports Studies degrees. She completed a PhD in Biomedical Sciences at the University of Florida followed by postdoctoral work at the Institute for Exercise and Environmental Medicine in Dallas. Her main research has focused on elucidating the mechanisms underlying dyspnea on exertion in adults with obesity. Other research populations she currently works with include athletes, college students, and tactical personnel with the ultimate goal of improving and monitoring health and performance. She competed at the 2004 Olympic Games and the 2013 Underwater Hockey World Championships.

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The two main reasons I chose a career in academia are a love of research and having the opportunity to work with exercise science students. One of my favorite things about TACSM is that it incorporates these two passions. TACSM, especially the Annual Meeting, focuses on students by creating exciting student-focused research opportunities. We all have limited personal resources, and I want to spend my time and energy on people and organizations that best align with my principles and goals. TACSM is an organization well-suited to nurturing my interests. Since joining TACSM, I have volunteered as an abstract and/or poster judge at several meetings, and I look forward to an opportunity to further serve the people, especially students, of TACSM.

Melissa Markofski, Ph.D.

Associate Professor
Dept. of Health & Human
Performance
University of Houston

BIOSKETCH

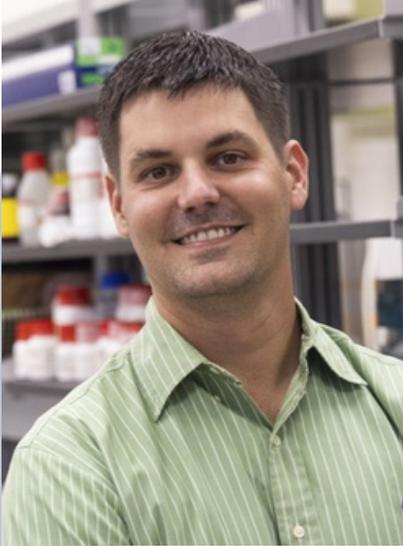
During my 20+ years working in the exercise profession, I have held a variety of positions, including as an Evaluation and Testing Student Assistant, physical therapy aide, personal trainer, and senior fitness advisor. Although an exercise science professorship was my ultimate career goal, the experiences I had before graduate school gave me a deeper understanding of our profession and the skills needed for the career goals of our students. The course I most frequently teach is Exercise Testing and Prescription. My greatest fulfillment is in teaching students applied skills. These skills include exercise testing and techniques, as well as all aspects of research—from research question development to presentation of results. The global hypothesis for my lab is that exercise is essential for healthy aging. In particular, exercise supports healthy aging by keeping skeletal muscle health and functional, while simultaneously optimizing the immune system. On a personal note, I like to maintain my fitness with weightlifting and running, and also enjoy traveling

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My interest in serving on the Board of Directors stems from the desire to serve an organization provided a positive impact on me and my career. TACSM has a unique role in developing the future of sports medicine by investing in students. Over a decade ago, I was one of those students who received my first opportunity to write a grant proposal, present data, and network with top scientists at the annual meeting. As a faculty member, TACSM has provided me with mentorship opportunities with students in my lab and through my service as a poster judge and grant reviewer. If elected, I would continue to push forwards TACSM's mission by promoting opportunities for students.

Michael Wiggs, Ph.D.

Assistant Professor
Health, Human Performance
& Recreation Department
Baylor University

BIOSKETCH

Dr. Wiggs is a faculty member at in the Health, Human Performance, and Recreation Department at Baylor University. He holds a B.S. and Ph.D. in Kinesiology from Texas A&M University. Prior to joining Baylor, Dr. Wiggs received post-doctoral training at the University of Florida followed by a faculty appointment at UT Tyler. Dr. Wiggs' research focuses on the intersections of exercise physiology and skeletal muscle metabolism, with a special interest in the intracellular signaling pathways responsible for regulation of muscle size. Specifically, the lab has projects directed at understanding the effects of cancer on musculoskeletal health using rodent models to understand the role of mitochondrial function in cancer and/or chemotherapy induced skeletal muscle atrophy.

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