As identified by McChesney and Peterson,¹ there are a variety of factors that can influence an individual’s professional satisfaction. Where we work will certainly have some degree of influence on our perspective on our careers. Professional satisfaction for athletic trainers depends on not only their individual personality traits and qualities but also matching those qualities to a setting that will be best for them individually.

Athletic trainers have a multitude of settings in which to use their knowledge and skills as allied health professionals. The purpose of this article is to evaluate various athletic training employment settings. I interviewed ATCs in several different employment settings regarding their perspectives on where they were employed.

Questions Used as a Basis for Conducting the Interviews

What have been your past employment settings?
What is your current employment setting?
Why did you choose your current setting?
What do you enjoy about your current employment setting?
What do you least enjoy?
What are the challenges you experience in this setting?
What are the benefits of being employed in this setting?
What personal qualities do you think are most important for an ATC working in this setting?

The questions that were used to guide the interviews are listed in the sidebar.

Emily Yancey, High School Athletic Trainer

Emily Yancey (Figure 1), ATC, works full-time as the athletic trainer at Kingman High School in Kingman, AZ. She obtained this job right after completing her undergraduate degree and has been at Kingman for 2 years. Kingman High School has about 2,400 students, of which nearly 600 compete in interscholastic athletics. Emily is the only ATC for these high school athletes. She has a 10-month contract, with Christmas and 2 months in the summer off. She also teaches two sports-medicine classes during the school year.

Emily chose to work in the high school setting because she enjoys it and finds athletes at this age to be very fun. She thinks high school athletics are much more engaging than the college setting. She likes the
smaller school size and atmosphere of working in the high school.

Emily very much enjoys the high school environment, not just the athletics but also activities such as homecoming and prom. Friday-night football games are particularly fun for Emily. She also enjoys teaching her sports-medicine classes. Being able to give her high school students an introduction to athletic training and sports medicine is very rewarding.

The aspect of her job that Emily least enjoys is, as the only ATC on staff, having sole responsibility for all of her school’s sports and athletes. The overlapping of scheduled athletic events causes her a lot of stress. In addition, Emily acknowledges that she is not well compensated for her skills and the long hours she works.

There are challenges that Emily associates with her job. Having a very small budget, which allows for purchase of only a minimal amount of supplies, is one of these. In addition, she has only a small athletic training room (≈800 sq ft) to care for 600 athletes. Being in a rural community also presents challenges, most notably in acquiring a designated team physician for the athletic program. Another challenge that Emily noted is that at times the “old school” coaches create conflicts by being set in their ways and not fully accepting the new, young ATC.

For Emily, the benefit she identifies with working in the high school setting is getting the summers off. She also mentioned the opportunity to get to know her athletes very well and interacting with them as part of the student body, as well as athletes. The relationships she has been able to build with her athletes are important to her.

The personal qualities Emily feels are most beneficial for ATCs in the high school setting include having a positive attitude and being friendly. She also mentioned being a hard worker, a willingness to work long hours, and being organized as being important. Finally, Emily identified a desire to be in the high school setting and getting to know and work with kids during “this fun time of their lives” as important for her as a high school athletic trainer.

**Andy Hopkins,**
**Clinic and High School Athletic Trainer**

Andy Hopkins (Figure 2), MS, ATC, is employed at The Orthopedic Specialty Hospital (TOSH) in Salt Lake City, UT. TOSH treats general orthopedic patients and has a sports-medicine emphasis. They also provide health care for several Olympic teams and Winter Olympic athletes. In addition to his time in the clinic, Andy provides athletic training services to a local high school through the clinic’s outreach program. Andy has been employed at TOSH for 18 months. For the preceding 2 years, he had been a sales representative for a national brace company, and for the 2 years before that, he had been the head ATC at Utah Valley State College. Andy also has the unique position of being employed as an athletic training program manager for professional rodeo by Justin Sports Medicine.