

Meet Our NEACSM Past President



NEACSM's 24th President: Robert S. Axtell

Education (please list all degrees and institutions): B.S., Physical Education, Springfield College, 1975; M.S., Physical Education, Indiana University, 1976; Ph.D., Exercise Physiology, The Ohio State University, 1984.

Current or most recent affiliation: Professor and Graduate Coordinator, Exercise Science Department, Southern Connecticut State University, 1984-Present.

Honors & Awards: Fellow of American College of Sports Medicine, 2000; NEACSM Honor Award, 2002

Professional Interests: determinants of VO_{2max} , physical activity and aging

NEACSM Service

1. 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?

I attended a one-day sports medicine conference at Emerson Hospital in 1978. I heard Dr. Lyle Micheli and Dr. Robert Burns Arnot speak and their combined talks prompted me to speak with Dr. Arnot and seek advice on where to go to graduate school to study Exercise Physiology. After an unsuccessful first try for acceptance into Ph.D. programs, I sought further advice from one of the schools I was rejected from (Pennsylvania State University—Dr. Karl Stoedefalke). Dr. Stoedefalke recommended I retake A&P I&II and to apply to some different schools where the focus was on both teaching and research not research only. The Ohio State University was one of the schools on his list to study under Dr. Edward Fox.

2. 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?

Dr. Edward Fox (encouraged everyone in the program to be successful by developing a rigorous, diverse, integrative exercise physiology program. Dr. Robert Bartels (dissertation advisor), Dr. Tim Kirby (encouraged ACSM certification), and Dr. William Beam (learned my laboratory and research skills).

Richard Maghery (Berkshire Community College, Pittsfield, MA) was my department chair when I first entered the College teaching profession. He encouraged me to attend professional conferences and that I needed to strive to a higher

level. He insisted I leave the community college and go back for my Ph.D.

Dr. Joan Finn—professional colleague for some 29 years. She encouraged me to be actively engaged in the University and to demand professionalism among our students.

Dr. David Martens and Dr. Karl Rinehardt for collaboration in research while at Southern Connecticut State University.

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

I enjoy the challenge of teaching exercise physiology and related courses to new students. I enjoy learning about the new science and the constant updating of various physiological mechanisms. Furthermore, with four new junior faculty I am enjoying the mentoring process.

4. Why and how did you decide to get involved with NEACSM? How did your service help you grow as a professional?

First I looked into becoming a certified ACSM Exercise Test Technologist as I would be teaching both graduate and undergraduate classes where we would be conducting graded exercise testing. I think I received a flyer to attend a Fall meeting—not sure when I attended my first NEACSM meeting (I am thinking 1985). The decision to become involved in NEACSM came through the encouragement of Dr. David Camaione. Dr. Camaione and I had an instant connection due to our doctoral degrees both coming from The Ohio State University—we were both BUCKEYES! Dr. Carol Garber gave me my first opportunity to serve by appointing me as the Connecticut State Representative to NEACSM.

5. What are your most memorable moments from your service to NEACSM?

Not in any particular order:

Being recognized with undergraduate scholarship name

Receiving the honor award

Being elected President of the Chapter

Having the opportunity to meet so many outstanding professionals in New England and across the U.S. (so many guest speakers)

Back when we had the banquet lunches—sitting next to Dr. Jack Wilmore—and seeing whether he was going to eat this large piece of chocolate cake? His response to my question: absolutely, one of the many reasons why I run four-five miles every morning!

Receiving approval from the EC to begin investment accounts with UBS

Moving the meeting from Boxborough, Massachusetts to Providence, Rhode Island Convention Center

6. What were some of the main issues confronting NEACSM at the time of your presidency?

Meeting venue was too small. During my meeting, I remember one session where Dr. Bertram Zarins was giving an invited talk on some new research where cartilage stem cells were being implanted in human knees to regenerate new cartilage. The room was full including the floor and people were gathered in the hallway outside the door. Heinrich Doll, a clinician from URI came up to me and suggested we look into the RICC. The second issue that I recall is the chapter office. May have to check with Dr. Camaione as to when he retired—close to that time is when we had to look elsewhere for the chapter office.

7. What do you think are your most meaningful contributions to NEACSM?

SCSU was one of the first institutions to begin bringing significant undergraduate students to the meeting. Finance committee chair responsibilities. Hopefully to foster the interest in becoming involved in chapter in our students who continued their careers in academe and research.

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

#1 – Providing a solid exercise science education to students at both the undergraduate and graduate levels.

Being a co-PI on the Lifestyle Intervention for Independence for Elders Trial (2010-2015)

9. What advice would you have for future leaders of NEACSM?

Continue the current mix of presenting basic science along with clinical and applied applications.

Be sure to have a plan in place for office succession when Dino Costanzo decides to step down.

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

The importance of having a strong background in the sciences (chemistry through biochemistry, physics, biology, statistics, and genetics)

Become involved in research—all aspects of the research process

Obtain relevant certification

Become involved in both national and regional professional organizations