

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Friday, Oct. 1, 2004

Contact: Michael Cooper
(507) 389-6838; michael.cooper@mnsu.edu

**Nation's Oldest Athletic Training Education Program
Celebrating 35th Anniversary at MSU, Mankato**

Mankato, MN — The nation's oldest, continually accredited athletic training education program celebrates its 35th anniversary next weekend at Minnesota State University, Mankato.

MSU created one of the first four athletic training education programs in the country, thanks to the vision and persistence of the University's first athletic trainer, Gordon L. Graham, and the enthusiastic help and support of surgeon-partners from Mankato's Orthopaedic & Fracture Clinic, P.A.

Now, more than three decades after the program's first students graduated, MSU-educated athletic trainers are advising and assisting professional and amateur athletes throughout the country: in the NFL, the NHL and the NBA, in colleges and universities, in high schools, and in clinics, health clubs and business and industry.

MSU's program has grown from a 26-credit undergraduate minor in 1969 to a 65-credit major that requires 1,100 hours of supervised clinical experience. Training facilities for Maverick athletes have grown, too – from 836 square feet when “Gordy” Graham came to MSU in 1964, to nearly 9,000 square feet today.

In 1969 it was a program whose time had come, because, as Graham says, “the medical care was needed,” especially at the 25,000 U.S. high schools that offered athletics. “In those days only 32 high schools across the country had athletic trainers. Some coaches didn't even have first aid training.”

In 1969 the president of the American Medical Association learned that Graham was developing an athletic training curriculum. The AMA told MSU that it should implement the program. “It was approved in six weeks by the internal committees and the president,” Graham said. The proposal also was quickly okayed by the board of trustees and the National Athletic Trainers Association.

From the first four programs in 1969 (MSU, Eastern Illinois, Indiana State and New Mexico), the number of accredited athletic training education institutions has grown to 134. Many of them used Graham's outline as a model.

Graham retired in 1994, and was inducted into the National Athletic Trainer's Association Hall of Fame for his pioneering role. Dr. Kent Kalm became director of MSU's athletic training program, and was succeeded by current director Dr. Patrick Sexton. Both are MSU graduates.

Drs. John Eustermann and John Heimark of the Mankato Clinic, as well as Dr. Jack Butzer, MSU's student health services physician, made valuable teaching and diagnostic contributions in the early years, as do current student health physicians Todd Kanzenbach and Randy Hurd.

Much of the credit for the program's success goes to the founders of the Orthopaedic & Fracture Clinic, Drs. Paul Gislason and Donald Meredith, and to current senior partner Dr. Wynn Kearney Jr. and his OFC colleagues, for their support. Not only have OFC physicians given their time as team doctors, but they've taught, advised and supervised hundreds of students.

"Our program wouldn't be possible without the OFC," says Sexton. "The partners donate hundreds of hours of time each year, teaching classes, supervising students at their clinics and at games, and providing medical services for athletes at all men's hockey and football games, and at many tournaments."

"Over the years, they've given close to 6,000 hours of time. In addition, they provide free athletic training to the high schools in Mankato. If they get a stipend for their work, they donate it back to the institution."

Every week during the school year an OFC surgeon drives to the University to see MSU student athletes who are injured, says Head Athletic Trainer Jeff Chambers. During breaks at hockey or football games, OFC doctors consult with athletes from other MSU sports. During the school year the clinic schedules vacancies on its state-of-the-art, open-sided MRI machine for injured MSU athletes. Surgeons and staff members make time at night and on weekends to conduct MRI exams for student-athletes.

Currently the OFC's Drs. Steven Curtis and Scott Stevens serve as MSU team doctors.

"The OFC physicians and staff are great fans and supporters," adds Lisa Dahman, intercollegiate athletics development officer for MSU. "In addition to helping on the sidelines, they come to watch many games."

In 2002, because of its years of service to MSU, the OFC received the Sports Medicine Enhancement Award from the Minnesota Athletic Trainers Association.

A booklet about the history of the OFC and MSU's athletic training education program, "Reflections on a Healthy Relationship," by area author Dan Vance, was published recently. It is being distributed by the MSU Athletic Training Department, and is available to anyone who contributes \$25 or more to the program.

The 35th anniversary, and the program's long relationship with the OFC, are being celebrated Saturday, Oct. 9, with tours of the MSU training facilities, a "Taste of Mankato" luncheon at 11 a.m. under the MSU Bell Tower, the 1 p.m. Homecoming game, and a 5:30 p.m. reception in downtown Mankato.

