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## AKA Keynote

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AKA Keynote (#1 Title slide)

Knowing our Brand

John M. Dunn

Jan. 21, 2012

**Welcome/Set up**

- Thank AKA for the opportunity to address the meeting
  - Surprise at the invitation--haven't been active in the discipline in recent years
  - I bring a new perspective because of my role as the president of a Carnegie-designated high research university
- (#2 Dunn Pathway slide) I'd like to tell you about my personal pathway that took me from being an undergraduate PE major to the role I play today. I share this with you not because you didn't hear enough about me in the speaker introduction. I share this instead as a way to explore where I was in our profession at different points over the past 40 years of change.
- About myself--PE teacher as a young graduate, "found" an interest in PE for people with disabilities, graduate school, academic career in universities where PE departments were struggling with focus and "brand." My career in kinesiology has dovetailed with the development of the discipline. I can remember and still occasionally encounter academic attitudes about physical education and kinesiology not being a "real" academic discipline.
- Today, I lead a research University and am a faculty member in a fine department that has been working through many of the issues we'll discuss at this conference. That unit, by the way, is called the Department of Human Performance and Health Education.
- Asked to talk about Branding.

So I've been asked to bring this long and varied experience to the task of talking about better branding for who and what we are as a discipline. Let's be sure we're all on the same page when we are talking about branding. Let's define what branding is and isn't before we talk about how it might meet our needs.

**(#3 Branding defined slide)** What is a brand? Quite simply, it's the sum total of your audience's interactions with your organization--and the way that makes your audience feel on a conscious and unconscious level. And as much as 85 percent of a brand may be an unconscious response to those interactions. A brand and a consumer reaction to it is what drives the marketplace for good or ill. A brand might explain why someone is or isn't a Chevy person or why someone is a Mac zealot or a devotee of Coke or Pepsi.

Branding experts will tell you the most important step in the process is understanding who you are, where you've come from and where you want to be in the future--and most important, how you can authentically live up to that brand. Branding has internal value for how we perceive ourselves, and it has external value for how our audience, our customers, our students and the general public perceive us.

Once you've thought through your identity and perhaps done your research, you should be able to sum up your brand in a few words or a simple statement. It may be a few words or a simple statement your audience never hears, but it's important to be able to succinctly say who you are. Here are some examples of companies that have done this successfully **(#4 Some Common Brands slide.**

- Fun and Inexpensive meals for families=McDonald's;
- safe, solid vehicles=Volvo;
- clothes for serious athletes=Nike.

This is the point at which I issue the standard caution. Do not confuse a brand with its mark or its tagline. They are not the same. Nike has a brand--clothes for the serious athlete. It has spent years building a graphic identity so that its that its mark--the swoosh--instantly evokes that brand. Nike also expends considerable resources developing taglines for its brand--"Just do it" was in place for many years and is regarded as one of the most successful advertising slogans of all times. More recently "Never stop running" has moved into place to capture and evoke the Nike brands.

The brand statement may never be seen by the general public, but it guides every piece of communication and every interaction with the customer.

#### *#5 (Evoking the brand slide)*

Here are some more tagline and logo examples. But remember, they only evoke the brands they represent. They trigger that visceral feeling.

-Got milk?

-Can you hear me now?

-Like a rock.

*(#6 How branding works slide)* Think about branding in terms of the brands you love--or hate. Apple, AT&T, Audi, IBM, Microsoft, Sprint, Budweiser, Delta, etc. You have a visceral reaction that is based on your total experience with those "brands" What marketers do is try to leverage those subconscious relationships with a brand you already have. And some marketers maintain that as much as 85 percent of your decisions are based on non-conscious reactions to a brand.

Branding is a buzzword. A more sensible way to look at the process is to substitute the word "reputation" for branding. Every product or profession has a brand/reputation. Successful products or professions have people who carefully

guard and nurture that reputation. That reputation or public perception is always a starting point and one we need to understand before we can even think about ways to change it.

## **WMU Example**

*(#7 WMU example slide)*

Brands can and perhaps should closely match your organization's mission and goals. I'd like to give you an example from my own university. We began a branding effort five years ago. Market research identified our strengths (and our weaknesses) as both our internal and external markets perceived us. More recently, we went through an internal strategic planning process through which we worked very hard to adjust our core mission and goals in a way that authentically defines who we are and what our students can expect.

An intense period of strategic planning, agreement of goals and strengths and careful writing and rewriting led us to three phrases:

- Learner centered
- Discovery driven
- Globally engaged

Because we were thoughtful with both initiatives, our planning and our branding work dovetail nicely. That's as it should be. We use a consistent set of messages that reflect, again, who we are and what students can expect if they choose to become part of the WMU community. Our advertising and recruitment materials don't necessarily use the words of our brand promise, but they reflect those pillars of our identity.

**So how do we "brand" our discipline? We need to understand who and what we are.**

## **Historical lessons--our legacy**

*(#8 History Lessons slide)* Our profession dates back to the late 1880s and the pioneering work of Delphine Hanna and some of her students-- Thomas Wood and Luther Gulick. But for today's purposes, I'm going to focus on our profession over the past 50 years, a period in which the explosive growth and change we're talking about today took place.

Fifty years ago when some of us were entering the field, we were looking at a tradition of the discipline as training platform for teachers of physical education. There was little public or student awareness of special applications, eg. PE for people with disabilities. Our profession was almost exclusively focused on traditional school PE. But we were already questioning whether we were focused on education "of" or education "through" physical activity.

Through the seminal work of Henry Franklin, scholars both within and outside the field came to recognize physical education as a field of study, a discipline, if you will. Henry set us on a course that called us to be proud of our training and to challenge all of us who followed him to be rigorous with our graduate programs and to expect nothing but the highest standards in our future research.

Henry's seminal 1964 paper "Physical Education—An Academic Discipline," had the greatest influence in moving physical education much closer to a scientific/scholarly field. When describing what he believed was the proper structure of the bachelor's degree program, Henry pointed out that it should include courses in anatomy, physiology, physics, and appropriate behavioral and social sciences. Those courses, he felt, provided the foundations students majoring in physical education needed so they could pursue specialized studies in the physiology of exercise,

kinesiology and biomechanics, neuromuscular coordination, motor activity as well as examine the role of sports, dance, and physical activities in various cultures.

Henry's work began a revolution. Slowly, beginning on the 1970s those other outcomes/careers for PE majors became accepted and the discipline was broadened into exercise science/kinesiology, sports management, athletic training etc.

-Departments struggled with the integration of traditional PE and new niche areas. Name battles were common. We were losing our way by not coalescing around a common understanding of our discipline or the professions linked to it.

-Graduate education increased and research tracks in such areas as ergonomics

-We went from play to sport to movement analysis. From primarily undergraduate to a blend that prepares both undergrads and grads for careers or further study in disciplines/professions that range from K-12 PE to athletic training and cardio rehabilitation.

### **Where we are today? What is our discipline?**

In recent years, we have struggled with various terms to describe the discipline. We have turned, with increasing preference, to the term kinesiology. As a profession and discipline, we have continued to develop various professional organizations and academies to capture and promote the interest of scholars in our various areas of specialization--biomechanics, exercise physiology, sociology, psychology and pedagogy, just to name a few.

There has also been an explosion of scholarly journals and publications with much of the success in this area directly attributed to the creativity and commitment of Rainer Marten and his publishing company Human Kinetics.

Equally important has been the expansion and quality of research conducted by scholars in the field of kinesiology. Our colleagues are publishing in a wide range of journals and their work is highly respected, frequently cited, and acknowledged as cutting edge.

Verification of the evolution of the field and the respect with which it is held is found in the recent decision by the National Research Council to “rank” doctoral programs in kinesiology. The latter effort was spurred by the American Academy of Kinesiology.

In addition, there has been an expansion of professional organizations that have been created to respond to the needs of our professionals and scholars. These organizations are designed to respond to the needs of our researchers and scholars in sport studies, exercise psychology, and history and philosophy of movement.

What is our discipline today? We're still deciding. (#9 *What is discipline slide*)

- Vanderzwagg and Sheehan would argue that it is all about sport.
- Play is the primary focus, says Siedentop
- Others argue for fitness and health and physical activity
- Our European colleagues want to more broadly look at human movement in its entirety

What are the professional opportunities today? (#10 *Professional opportunities slide*)

The opportunities for our students are expanding. That's a good thing, because the core job opportunity--being a physical education teacher--that once brought students to our departments has declined. We need to work to reverse that disturbing trend by



taking advantage of new research that shows physical activity may be the critical-- and too often missing--piece for boosting children's development and overall health.

- Teaching and coaching
- Athletic Training and Sports Medicine
- Sport Management, Marketing
- Adapted Physical Activity
- Fitness Leader/Consultant/Personal Trainer
- Applied fields

### **Where are we today in the academy?**

*(#11 Growing recognition slide)*

Research and graduate programs have evolved. We now have graduate programs that are nationally ranked. We have significant research supported by the NSF and the NIH. We have even seen one of our own Kevin Guskiewicz, the Kenan Distinguished Professor and chair of the Department of Exercise and Sport Science at the University of North Carolina, was named a 2011 MacArthur Fellow. I never thought I would see that happen in my lifetime.

Those of us in the field for many years must agree that we have a much stronger academic foundation than we once had.

### **Emerging opportunities/challenges**

We have made significant strides as a discipline and there is ample evidence to suggest that our discipline, kinesiology, and our profession, physical education, are gaining in recognition and respect. But there is yet much that remains, if we are going to thrive in a new century. There are central challenges that impact all of us who are advocates for the physical and mental health benefits of movement. Let me point to three that are critical and linked in important ways.

*(#12 Three critical challenges slide)*

-**First**, there's a troubling disparity in health/exercise availability for minorities. The demographics of our country are changing dramatically with a significant shift in the racial and ethnic mix. This creates enormous opportunities for all of society, including the field of kinesiology, to be far more inclusive in its curricular and research approaches. Our history, however, as a field is one that has not been responsive to the preparation of teachers, faculty, and scholars who represent and are cognizant of the needs of our minority community.

Our need to examine ourselves on this front extends to the who broad definition of diversity--abilities, gender and ethnicity, sexual orientation and global background

-**Second**, we must inculcate into everything we do our advocacy for the acceptance of all body types and a healthy self-image for everyone. We cannot and must not be part of cultural stereotype that plays such a role in turning so many people away from healthy activity simply because the body types they were born with or have arrived at do not fit the classical physical education model.

-And **third**, what we do in the classroom, in the laboratory and in our communities, play an important role in stemming our nation's crippling rise in health and long-term care costs. We are perfectly positioned to be on the cutting edge of health-care change.

### **How do we take advantage of today, determine our brand and move forward?**

So with all of this information before us, and the topic of the day how to "brand" our departments lets look at our next steps. Before we move forward with a plan to

"brand" and advertise our product in a way that is more appealing to our students, we need to define for ourselves who and what we are.

I've just laid out how far we've come, what kind of recognition we have achieved and the challenges of the future as well as the job opportunities that continue to emerge for those who enter our discipline. I'd like to humbly suggest that we have all the makings of a "brand" here. (#13 *Our brand? slide*)

We can authentically claim to be **"a science-based, cutting edge discipline that leads to a growing number of professional opportunities which enhance the quality of life through the medium of human movement."**

Remember, this is not a tagline or an advertising campaign slogan. This is a statement about who and what we are. Is it the right one? Maybe. It could stand a lot of discussion, some market research and thoughtful analysis. But this is the kind of "brand" statement we need to develop before we can seriously move forward.

(#14 *Future tasks slide*) Now, I'm going to step on some toes here, and propose that we wrestle with a tough question. As we're deciding what our brand is, we need to make an important decision and decide what we call ourselves. We need to think carefully about whether the tradition name "Physical Education" serves us well. Even though I come from this tradition, I am convinced that it is too narrowly focused, that in the public mind it limits us to only being about producing coaches and PE teachers and in the end, that name will prevent us from building a strong and realistic brand.

Our name needs to reflect the reality of what our discipline is today. The chances that public perception about physical education will change simply because we say it must, is slim. Our discipline has grown and change and we must recognize it, get

over it and move forward. We should select a name for our discipline that will resonate with the general public and convey all that we do. Is that name Kinesiology or Exercise Science. They both have strengths. I have a personal favorite, as I'm sure you all do.

Whatever our choice, we can accept and celebrate our history and continue to embrace the K-12 part of our heritage. We can continue to be strong advocates for the importance of PE in the school setting. But we have to look at the outcomes we can offer our students and recognize the breadth of opportunities that study in our discipline can lead to.

As we're moving forward and deciding on our identity and name, we need to be careful not to overstate what our capabilities are or the experiences our faculties bring to the classroom. What we call ourselves and how we talk about ourselves must be authentic. We must be able to deliver on our promises.

*(#15 Conclusions slide)* But we should not be shy about identifying and embracing the new outcomes and opportunities our student will enjoy. Personal training was once a novel idea. Strength and conditioning roles have more recently emerged. Increasingly, our students are just as likely to be physiologists who are the experts in administering and assessing cardiac tests.

How do we move forward with these ideas? I suggest that the American Kinesiology Association is the perfect entity to guide the process. We'll all leave this conference and go back to campuses with departments that have different names and capabilities. AKA can help by developing those common messages that reflect the reality of our discipline today and tomorrow. If we have a cohesive set of messages, we can use them in our recruitment materials, on our departmental websites and in

our conversations with current and prospective students. That's how we will change and build our brand.

I know we have a distinguished panel of professionals ready to jump right in now, so let the conversation begin.