



**COLLEGIATE STRENGTH & CONDITIONING COACHES ASSOCIATION**

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The Collegiate Strength and Conditioning Coaches association (CSCCa)—A Brief Overview of the Organization and the *Strength and Conditioning Coach Certified (SCCC)* Certification Program

By Dr. Chuck Stiggins, CSCCa Executive Director

Organized strength and conditioning programs developed and implemented by full-time strength and conditioning coaches were a novelty in the 1970s. Today, however, strength and conditioning programs are an integral part of athletic programs on all levels of competition around the country. Like any new profession, the strength and conditioning coaching profession has experienced significant growing pains over the years. At first, many athletic administrators and head sport coaches believed that anyone with experience in lifting weights could perform the duties and responsibilities of handling the strength and conditioning of their athletes. Over the years, however, the education, training, expertise, and contribution of the collegiate strength and conditioning coach to the success of the athletic program have become increasingly evident and are finally being recognized and acknowledged.

Nowhere is this more evident than the recent passing of legislation by the NCAA requiring all Division I strength and conditioning coaches to be certified by an accredited organization. **There are currently only two certifications being offered that will fulfill this requirement by the NCAA, which goes into effect on August 1, 2015.** One of these certifications, the SCCC certification (Strength & Conditioning Coach Certified), is offered through the Collegiate Strength and Conditioning Coaches association (CSCCa), a non-profit, professional, educational organization solely designed for collegiate and professional-level strength and conditioning coaches and for students and interns preparing for a career in this profession. **The deadline for applying for the 2015 SCCC certification exam which will be offered on Wednesday, May 6, 2015, at the Gaylord Opryland Hotel and Convention Center in Nashville, Tennessee, is Monday, March 2, 2015.**

Historical Background of the CSCCa and the SCCC Certification

The CSCCa was organized in 2000 and began with a meeting of a small number of collegiate strength and conditioning coaches from around the country who believed that they needed their own organization, dedicated and focused on meeting the unique needs of a growing profession. During the past 15 years, the CSCCa has experienced tremendous growth, now with well over 1600 members, as collegiate-level strength and conditioning coaches have recognized the value in being part of an organization specifically committed to understanding and servicing their distinct needs.

Another goal of this founding group of collegiate strength and conditioning coaches was to develop a certification that truly evaluated, and subsequently identified, individuals with the necessary

knowledge and skill set to be an effective strength and conditioning coach. Their goal was to develop a certification exam that required practical application and more than just reading a textbook. The resulting certification that was developed and which is now offered by the CSCCa is the SCCC (Strength and Conditioning Coach Certified). It is a comprehensive, three-part certification program designed to ensure that individuals holding this prestigious certification possess the necessary knowledge, skills, techniques, and expertise to be a competent and effective strength and conditioning coach. In addition, **the SCCC certification is accredited by the National Commission for Certifying Agencies (NCCA), the accrediting body of ICE, the Institute of Credentialing Excellence. This qualifies the SCCC to be recognized by the NCAA as a certification which meets the upcoming legislative requirement that all Division I strength and conditioning coaches hold an accredited certification.**

#### SCCC Certification Process:

The first step in the SCCC certification process is completion of a 640-hour practicum under the guidance and supervision of a CSCCa-approved mentor. The primary goal of the practicum experience is to prepare the candidate to enter the field of strength and conditioning coaching well prepared and equipped to effectively meet the demands of the profession. The practicum provides each candidate with hands-on, practical experience in safe and effective exercise prescription, including the demonstration and teaching of proper exercise technique.

Additionally, the SCCC candidate must submit proof of CPR, First Aid, and AED certification that is current on the day of the SCCC certification exam, as well as verification of attainment of a bachelor's degree. (Candidates in the last half of their senior year are eligible to sit for the exam as long as they will have obtained their degree within the following 12 months; they are not SCCC certified, however, until the bachelor's degree has been obtained.) It is important to note that a significant number of collegiate strength and conditioning coaches hold advanced educational degrees.

At this point, the candidate is eligible to sit for the SCCC certification examination, which includes both a written and practical portion. The written portion is a comprehensive, multiple-choice exam that includes questions of both a scientific and applied nature dealing with the five following domains: Assessment of Performance Needs; Program Design and Development; Athlete Education and Training; Athlete Testing and Evaluation, and Organizational and Administrative Responsibilities. The practical portion is a hands-on demonstration of a variety of strength and conditioning skills and techniques, as well as an oral examination, including questions relevant to the strength and conditioning field, conducted by a panel of Master Strength and Conditioning Coaches. Each candidate is required to create and provide reasonable rationale for a strength and conditioning program he/she has designed for a designated sport based upon solid periodization concepts and other scientific principles.

In addition to the SCCC certification, the CSCCa offers a second level of certification, the Master Strength and Conditioning Coach (MSCC). In order to receive this title of distinction, an individual must be SCCC certified and have been a full-time collegiate and/or professional-level strength and conditioning coach for a minimum of 12 years. With all the coaching changes that take place each year, only the best and most dedicated strength and conditioning coaches are able to reach this important milestone. The title of Master Strength and Conditioning Coach (MSCC) is the highest honor that can be achieved as a Strength and Conditioning Coach, representing professionalism, knowledge, experience, expertise, as well as longevity in the field. The coaches who achieve this rank are truly in a league of their own.

### Continuing Education Program:

The CSCCa also has a comprehensive Continuing Education (CEU) Program to ensure that its certified members continue to be updated and informed about recent research, developments, and advances made in the field of strength and conditioning. This program ensures that SCCC certified coaches stay current on the latest exercise science research and its practical application in the field. Many aspects of the SCCC certification and CEU program deal with health and safety issues. The primary concern of the CSCCa and its member coaches continues to be the protection of the health and safety of the athlete through providing appropriate exercise prescription that will **maximize athletic performance safely and effectively while reducing the risk of injury**. Another CEU requirement is maintaining current CPR, First Aid, and AED certification.

The CSCCa is committed to bridging the gap between exercise science research and its practical application in the field of strength and conditioning coaching. It is also committed to providing opportunities for professional development in educational settings, as well as through the sharing of knowledge, experience, and expertise among the strength and conditioning coaches themselves. By providing a mentored internship program and by providing such an extensive and comprehensive certification examination, the CSCCa stands alone in providing the most valid and beneficial certification program for individuals preparing specifically to become full-time strength and conditioning coaches on the collegiate level. While other organizations offer similar certification programs, they are not as comprehensive and are not specifically designed for individuals preparing to become full-time strength and conditioning coaches.

Athletic administrators and sport head coaches are encouraged to promote and support the SCCC certification at their institutions as the preferred certification. With the deaths and injuries that have occurred among NCAA athletes over the past decade, it is **more important than ever that all strength and conditioning coaches on staff are properly trained and certified to design and implement safe and effective strength and conditioning programs**. Liability is a major concern for athletic administrators who are responsible for protecting the health, safety, and welfare of the student athletes at their institutions. Ensuring that all strength and conditioning coaches are properly educated and trained regarding appropriate exercise prescription and the identification of potential health and safety concerns is vital. This includes injury prevention; identification of signs of physical distress during training sessions, including heat illness, cardiac, asthmatic, concussive, or sickle trait symptoms, etc.; training of the proper energy system, including adequate recovery periods; proper strength training techniques; and numerous other areas directly related to the strength and conditioning of athletes. The health and safety of the athlete must be the primary concern for everyone in the athletic department, and the athletes' training must not be entrusted to individuals who lack the proper knowledge, expertise, training, and credentials.

### 2015 CSCCa Annual National Conference

Each year the CSCCa holds its annual national conference featuring outstanding speakers and activities with direct relevance to strength and conditioning coaching. The 2015 CSCCa National Conference will be held in Nashville, Tennessee, May 6-8. All full-time strength and conditioning coaches of collegiate and professional-level athletic teams are encouraged to attend. Over 1,400 strength and conditioning coaches are expected to be in attendance with over 200 exhibitor booths on display.

For more information regarding the CSCCa, the SCCC certification program, or the 2015 CSCCa National Conference, please visit the organization's website at [www.csc.ca.org](http://www.csc.ca.org), or call the CSCCa National Office at 801-375-9400.