

THE PROFESSION OF THE FENCING MASTER:  
A CONCEPTUAL MODEL AND ITS APPLICATION  
IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

By

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A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mike Bunke' in a cursive style.

Mike Bunke, Maitre d'Armes

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## ABSTRACT

This study examined the characteristics and status of the occupation of teaching fencing as a professional fencing master to determine if the occupation is a profession in the United States. Based on commonly accepted criteria that determine a profession, the study established an evaluation model through the application of grounded theory and applied that model in a qualitative case study to the occupation of fencing master. This model has potential application to the sport in other nations. Assessment of the results provides a possible roadmap for action by fencing masters to improve the status of the occupation from paraprofessional to being a true profession.

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I. INTRODUCTION

The Research Question

The term “professional” in sports has a generally accepted connotation of being one who is paid to participate in a sport (see, for example, AVP 2005, Ferguson 2005, Professional Sports 2005, Simmons 2005). In almost all other uses, a professional is one who practices or follows a profession (Professions 2005). Is then the paid teaching of fencing a true profession, or merely a tradesman’s exchange of services for money? If teaching fencing for money is something other than just not being an amateur, how do we assess whether the practice of a fencing master is a profession? And, if not, how do we develop a model for the development of the form of work we do into a true profession?

Genesis of the Question

In the first week of August 2005, a series of postings on the Academie d’Armes Internationale’s e-forum (at [fencingmasters@yahoo.com](mailto:fencingmasters@yahoo.com)), questioned the value of the United States Fencing Coaches Association, the professional fencing coaches organization and academy of arms for the United States (Murray 2005a and 2005b, Ling 2005). The argument some advanced in the ensuing debate suggested that the training and certification of all fencing coaches should be undertaken by the United States Fencing Association, an amateur sports organization. As a student of organizations and professions (see Green 1999), it became obvious to me that many who coach under the title of professional do not understand what a profession is and what functions it performs. If amateur clients establish the criteria, train their teachers, and then evaluate those teachers’ expertise, how can the teachers claim to be anything other than



amateur also? That members of a corporate body that advertised itself as professional would make such suggestions led me to examine whether the organization and the form of work are in fact professional.

### The Historical Background

The first use of the sword in combat has not been documented, but swords as weapons have been common to many cultures since prior to the Bronze Age (Evangelista 1995). Some military cultures, most notably the Roman Empire, built their basic military tactics around the ability of formations of soldiers to wield the sword effectively in a mass against less well trained and equipped opponents (Amberger 1998). As late as the early 1900s, training in the combat use of the sword in war remained a requirement for officers and men of the cavalry regiments of the United States Army (United States 1914).

In the 1500s changes in military technology and the gradual disappearance of defensive armor made the sword a more effective weapon. As a result, the sword adopted a new role as an essential accessory for the gentleman in civilian dress. The result of having large numbers of the upper (and at this time warrior) class, sensitive to issues of social position and personal honor, armed with deadly weapons as part of their normal clothing was predictable. The use of the sword to fatally settle affairs of honor was endemic in Europe from the 1500s through the 1930s (Holland 2003, Amberger 1998). Duels with swords in the United States as a regular occurrence certainly survived into the late 1830s in New Orleans (Landry 1950), and the last serious duel with swords is reported to have occurred in Chile in 1967 (Tonks 1976).

Competition by common people with weapons originally intended for combat appeared in an organized way as early as the 1500s with the public display of skill in playing at prizes by candidates for promotion in the ranks of the British Masters of the Noble Science of Defense (Hutton 1901) and by prize fighters in the German fechtschule (Amberger 1998). By the middle 1600s sufficient activity existed for rules for bouts to be formalized (the famous Rules of Toulouse, see Aylward 1956). During the following years swordplay took two divergent paths. Among the common folk, prize fighting with sharp weapons (Hutton 1901) eventually was replaced by boxing in the middle 1700s, with its only survival being village singlestick competitions (Cohen 2002) which continued into the mid 1900s (Ray 2005).

However, for the moneyed, propertied, and noble classes, fencing actually grew as a sport in the more modern sense, and famous bouts involving amateur and professional figures of note were significant enough to be recorded both in print and in picture form. In the late 1800s the development of amateur sports in Europe as an activity of social accomplishment for gentlemen beyond activity in single clubs led to the development of fencing matches on a broader geographical basis (de Beaumont 1949), culminating in the inclusion of fencing in the first games of the modern Olympiad in 1896 (Wallechinsky 2004). This completed the transition of swordplay from an essential military skill into a skill required for social survival in an age of deadly quarrels among the elite and finally into a sporting activity with no true hostile intent.

At first the practice of fencing professionals was primarily to prepare individuals to use the sword in war, although some clearly performed as paid champions in judicial combat (Aylward 1956). However, the transition to the sword as a routine tool for settling disputes created a growing demand for skilled instructors to train the social elites in duels and chance encounters. By 1487 in Germany, 1540 in Britain, and 1567 in France, teachers of fencing had established themselves as guilds with established ranks, including scholars, free scholars, provosts, and masters (this is the British model, but similar stratification occurred in other nations, see Aylward 1956), and had succeeded in obtaining royal recognition of that guild status (Schulke 2004, British Academy of Fencing 2005a, Academie d'Armes de France 2005). The sole focus remained on the use of the sword in personal combat through at least the middle 1700s, with a gradual development of technique for swordplay that was more oriented toward the use of fencing weapons for both sport and combat preparation in the 1800s. By the late 1800s fencing masters had started to focus on the use of the sword in sport, and manuals describing fencing, as opposed to dueling technique, became widely available (see, for example, Cucala 1854, Cordelois 1872, Rondelle 1892, Senac and Senac 1904, Grandiere 1906, Kufahl n.d., Cany and Gosset 1898). This evolution toward sport was significant enough to result in a backlash, with the development of epee clubs to focus on the realistic use of the dueling sword starting in the 1880s (Aylward 1957). Preparation for the duel remained an important part of the fencing master's role into the 1930s (see, for example, Grave 1934).

With the gradual demise of the fencing guilds, in England in the reign of King James I (Hutton 1901) and in France in 1789 with the guillotining of Maitre Augustin Rousseau, the last president of the French Academy (Cohen 2002), the preparation of fencing masters devolved into

an individual apprenticeship system in most countries. The late 1800s saw the development of national schools in France and Italy (Amberger 2002, Gaugler 2001, Rondelle 1892) for the preparation of fencing masters, originally primarily for the military, although many followed second careers as civilian instructors (Terrone 1959). Starting in the early 1900s national societies of fencing masters were first formed to reestablish the professional guild structure – the first initial expression of the concept for the Academie d’Armes Internationale in 1930 in Antwerp (Academie d’Armes Internationale, n.d.), and the organization of the National College Fencing Coaches Association of America in 1941 (United States Fencing Coaches Association 2005b) being examples.

### Scope

In this study I examined the status of the occupation of fencing master as a profession in the United States. For the purposes of the study, I included within the occupation the three ranks of certification recognized by both the Academie d’Armes Internationale (Piraino 2000) and the United States Fencing Coaches Association (United States Fencing Coaches Association 2004., Shipman and Masters 2005) as being professional – Moniteur, Prevot, and Maitre d’Armes. The United States Fencing Coaches Association currently does not award certifications in the initial rank of Animateur, provided for in the Academie d’Armes Internationale’s guidelines (although there have been proposals for the inclusion of Animateur in the current scheme, the realization of which represents a resource allocation problem) (Mercado 2005b, Bradford 2005).

The study does not address the characteristics of coaches from other nations who are not recognized as certified by the United States Fencing Coaches Association. Also not included are amateur coaches credentialed by the United States Fencing Association’s Coaches College, university or high school or community coaches who have no formal credentials, individuals claiming fencing master status by virtue of apprenticeship (Martinez Academy of Arms 2004), or through organizations such as the International Master of Arms Federation (International Master of Arms Federation 2005) or the United States Traditional Fencing Association (United States Traditional Fencing Association 2004). These exclusions are based on the difficulty of characterizing the practice of individuals not affiliated with recognized professional organizations and on the difficulty of defining the relationship of amateur coaches to professionals.

### Method

To conduct this study I used two qualitative research methods appropriate for the examination of research topics when relatively little is known about the subject. Grounded theory was used to develop a list of characteristics of professions that could be applied to the teaching of fencing as a profession. A qualitative case study was then conducted to identify the status of each of these characteristics among those who teach fencing for pay in the United States. Supporting demographic data was gathered by a quantitative convenience survey of fencing teachers.

### Limitations

First, to the best of the author's knowledge, this is the first attempt to define the professional characteristics that define the work of modern fencing masters as a profession. As a result source materials describing the full range of professional practice are very limited. For example, of the publications in English (Szabo 1977, Lukovich 1998, Wojciechowski n.d., Czajkowski 2005) used as the basis for the Prevot written examination of the United States Fencing Coaches Association (2005d) (the highest rank for which there is a written examination), all cover current techniques, instructional methods, and training design. None address the broader issues of a successful professional practice.

Second, defining the characteristics of a profession, and assessing progress in an occupation toward the status of a profession, does not necessarily result in actions by practitioners to resolve issues that are identified. Although this study suggests direction for further development, there is no certainty that fencing masters will work in a coordinated way to achieve changes that may appear useful and necessary. Current self-interest or sports politics may preclude forward movement.

Finally, identifying an occupation as a profession or paraprofession does not ensure that individual practitioners will conduct themselves in a way consistent with the character and standards of the profession. Absent strong incentives for behavioral change, it seems unlikely that many sole practitioners will modify their behavior when such a change requires investment of time and money.

### Significance of the Study

I believe that any form of work that aspires to be a profession must understand, as a corporate body of practitioners and teachers of the discipline, the accepted requirements for being a profession. Fencing as a community only understands what defines a profession in the very limited sense of not paid equals amateur, therefore paid must equal professional. However, for the occupation of fencer master to advance, fencing masters individually and corporately must develop solutions to both near and far term problems identified in this study. The ability to develop such solutions requires an organizational and values structure for practitioners that allows progress. The model of a profession provides such a structure – hence the need for the occupation of fencing master to be a profession, rather than simply a paid form of work.

In the United States, the United States Fencing Association has recognized the need for an increased number of fencing coaches to meet the demand for instructors, especially at the local club level (Anderson 2005, Rosenberg 2005). This recognition, even if the professional coaches' organization is only mentioned in passing as a possible source (Rosenberg 2005), creates the expectation that professional fencing masters will help meet part of the demand. In a period of growth in the sport, the fencing master, to remain relevant, must seize this opportunity for the growth of the profession, both in numbers and in professional characteristics. To the degree that this study contributes to such development, it will be significant.

### The Researcher's Perspective

In qualitative analysis, the researcher's background is important to the interpretation of the results of any study. Every researcher brings perspectives, intellectual and political positions, and biases to any research project. Therefore, I have an obligation to disclose my background as it relates to this project.

I learned to fence at Duke University in 1965, and earned a Varsity letter as a member of the Fencing Team's sabre squad in intercollegiate competition. I continued to fence as an amateur through the 1970s in Virginia and in England, where I earned county colors representing Cambridgeshire in sabre and epee competition. I earned the Amateur Fencing Association's (Great Britain) Bronze Award in foil, Silver in epee, and Gold in sabre, and held an Amateur Fencers League of America C rating in sabre and E ratings in foil and epee. As a referee I

qualified to officiate at the national championships in epee and at the sectional level in sabre and foil in the 1970s.

My background as a coach started with the imprint of lessons taught by Giorgio Santelli and Neil Lazar at Salle Santelli. My technique was shaped by lessons from a series of French Maitre d'Armes at Raoul Sudre's 1973 clinic at Cornell University and by the continuing mentorship of Vincent Bradford at the Pan American Fencing Academy in San Antonio, Texas. I qualified in all three weapons as a Moniteur of the United States Fencing Coaches Association in 2004, and as Prevot in 2005. My practice as a fencing instructor is based in my own salle in Glen Allen, on the north side of the Richmond, Virginia metropolitan area. My students include a range of ages from 8 to 61 years old, and are evenly distributed between competition, recreational, and classical fencers.

Although the teaching of fencing is both a vocation and passion, I have a parallel life as a disaster scientist, studying in particular the organizational and operational aspects of major bad events. I chair the undergraduate Emergency Services Management and graduate Disaster Science degree programs at the University of Richmond. My academic background includes Master's degrees in Public Administration and Business Administration and a Doctor of Philosophy degree in Organization and Management with dissertation work in the area of characteristics of professions (Green 1999).

### Definitions

The following terms are used in this study as indicated below. These definitions may vary from common usages.

Academie d'Armes Internationale: the international federation of national academies of arms which serves as the international society for those who follow the occupation of fencing master.

Academy of arms: a national society of those who profess the occupation of teaching fencing. The unique activity of academies of arms is the training and certification of their members to teach.

Occupation or profession of fencing master: the work and characteristic behavior of individuals who teach fencing and who are credentialed as Animateur, Moniteur, Prevot, or Maitre d'Armes.

Paraprofession: a form of work that has many of the characteristics of a profession, but lacks one or more key elements (such as autonomy of practice, unique knowledge, or higher education requirements).

Profession: a form of work distinguished by characteristics that demand excellence of performance, a higher purpose, and ethical conduct and which is recognized by government or the public by the granting of privileges not commonly granted to other occupations.

United States Fencing Association (formerly the Amateur Fencers League of America): the amateur sports governing body for fencing in the United States.

United States Fencing Coaches Association: the national academy of arms of the United States.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Definitions of a profession fall broadly into three distinct views, one oriented toward an objective structure, a second which focuses on the unique relationship of professions to the knowledge with which they work, and finally a model based on historical evolution. There are departures from these models. For example, Drabek (1987) characterizes professionals by their attributes, providing an insight as to how professions are viewed as professional based on

Table 1. Elements of a Profession

Author:	Factors:
Robert Barger	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expert knowledge</li> <li>• Autonomy in conducting professional practice</li> <li>• Governance over the professional field</li> <li>• Service to society</li> </ul>
John McKay	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Higher education</li> <li>• Professional training</li> <li>• Professional certification</li> </ul>
Encyclopedia of Sociology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Esoteric knowledge</li> <li>• Autonomy of practice</li> <li>• Authority over clients</li> <li>• Altruistic service</li> <li>• Public recognition that the form of work is a profession</li> </ul>
Concise Oxford Dictionary of Sociology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Central regulatory body</li> <li>• Code of conduct</li> <li>• Management of knowledge</li> <li>• Control of the numbers engaged in the profession</li> </ul>
Encyclopedia of Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Performs essential social function</li> <li>• Lengthy training and experience for entry</li> <li>• Altruistic service</li> <li>• Clients are incapable of assessing the service provided</li> <li>• Standards of competence exist</li> <li>• Governmental recognition of status</li> </ul>

*Sources:* McKay, John, Remarks at the 1998 Federal Emergency Management Agency Higher Education Conference, 22 July 1998, Emmitsburg, Maryland. "Characteristic of a Profession," Shippensburg University, Ezra Lehman Memorial Library, available at <http://www.ship.edu/~library/info/faqs/professions.htm>, 25 January 1999. Barger, Robert N., "Characteristics of a Profession," available at <http://www.nd.edu/~rbarger/profession.html>, accessed 12 October 2005.



reference to the behavior of their members. However, the three dominant models can be effectively merged to create one common approach to the identification of what is a profession.

### Professions as Structures

In the structural model of the definition of a profession, if given requirements are met, the form of work meeting them is a profession. This approach has the advantage of making assessment of what is a profession open to quantification, and thus apparently objective. The tendency of some advocates is to reduce the number of elements to a minimum, and as a result the number of such elements varies widely based on the source consulted. Table 1 provides a summary of a sample of such lists.

The disadvantage of such rule based criteria is the situation may not be as clear cut as the relatively rigid assessment approach would seem to make it. The following factors have been described by one or more authors as being key elements of a profession, and thus provide a broad selection of potential structural elements, and of varying emphasis within each element.

#### Expertise

Professions are distinguished by a body of expert knowledge that is intellectual in nature, broad in scope, and capable of being written down and transmitted to the following generations of practitioners. The profession's knowledge is taught in a university setting in a prolonged educational process to which members of the general public do not have easy access. In the medieval period this knowledge was even protected by the choice of language, Latin, as the language of these professions (Barger 2002). Some professions have long required advanced degrees (medicine, law, and academia are all examples), but increasingly the required level of expertise for all is advanced study beyond the baccalaureate level. Expert knowledge typically has an intellectual history that guides members of the profession and serves as the basis for further expansion of the core of expertise (Brint 1994, Trice 1992, Huntington 1976).

#### Social Responsibility

Professionals perform their expert work in the context of society as a whole. Traditionally, professions have embraced a relative degree of social responsibility and ethical performance as a distinguishing characteristic in the work they perform. Social responsibility implies that they work for the benefit of society at large (Barger 2002, Brint 1994, Huntington 1976), altruistically subordinating their self-interest to the interests of the community and

valuing symbolic rewards over purely monetary ones (Trice 1993). In the case of governmental professions, this is manifested also by continual efforts to extend or improve activities to provide a wider range of services to the public (Marlatt and Walz 1988). The development of a norm of altruism has thus long served as a basis for professional life.

### Self-regulation

The norm of autonomy holds that members of professions should be free of outside control in order to ensure that they can perform their services at the highest levels of quality (Trice 1993). The development of organizational autonomy, with some authority to govern the affairs of the profession, including determining entrance requirements and disciplining practitioners (Barger 2002), is a key evolutionary step in the development of many professions (Brint 1994). First seen in the Medieval Guilds, with their rigid mechanisms controlling the development of the individual from Apprentice to Master (Krause 1996), self-regulation reached its peak in the first half of the twentieth century (Abbott 1998).

Self-regulation continues to be an important issue. Originally a mechanism to preserve the monopoly of the guild (Rempell 2005), today professions have bartered a level of government control, in the form of regulation, to ensure that their monopolistic privileges are preserved. Although it might appear that the profession has lost autonomy, the symbiotic relationship between government regulator and regulated constituency ensures that each meets its objectives.

### Authority Over Clients

Traditional professions have long argued that, in order to preserve the quality of professional service, members of the professions should have uncontested authority over clients who lack the knowledge and understanding to judge their own needs (Trice 1993). The presumptions of expert knowledge, self-regulation, and effective credentialing merge with the norm of altruism to justify such authority.

### Defined Form of Practice

Schon (1987) points out that professional practice is based on shared traditions among members of the discipline. These include conventions on how the professional work is carried out, the operation of a practice within a particular type of institutional setting, and a specific pattern of activity that can be divided into units of action. Developing professions typically define their professions in terms of how they can be distinguished from other forms of work (see,

for example, The Conservator-Restorer 2005). There is an expectation that this form of practice will result in subsistence for the individual (Profession 2005).

### Objective Standards of Professional Competence

Expertise imparted by education and long experience serves as the basis for universal professional standards of competence that can be applied regardless of place and time (Huntington 1976). These standards have typically developed through a process of self-examination over time (The Conservator-Restorer 2005). A system of professional licensing or certification helps define these objective standards to ensure that practitioners can perform these duties expertly (Barnhart 1997).

### Education and Research Institutions

Traditionally, the professional is prepared by a liberal education – which imparts the broad cultural background of society – and a professional education – which teaches the technical knowledge required for practice (Huntington 1976). This model requires at least part of the educational process to focus on the specific knowledge unique to the profession. McGuire (1993) noted increasing pressure on educational institutions to provide graduates who are not educated, but also technically proficient. This means that educational and research institutions are required to develop and transmit this technical, professional knowledge to neophyte members of the profession (Huntington 1976).

### Membership in Professional Associations

Corporateness is reinforced through voluntary or enforced membership in professional associations. Such organizations were originally developed to protect their membership from competition by restricting access to the profession (Huntington 1976). Associations also serve educational and social roles for their members, hosting annual conferences that allow the society to conduct its business, members to renew acquaintances and network, and continuing education to be presented (Brint 1994).

### The Role of a Unique Body of Knowledge

A unifying theme appears throughout the structural descriptions of the elements of a profession – the primacy of expert knowledge as its distinguishing characteristic. Common to the assertion that professions have expert knowledge is that, in return for such knowledge, the body politic gives to the professions certain privileges. For example, Trice (1993) asserts that

professionalism is an ideology based on the claim that members of professions have special knowledge that they use to the benefit of the public. The identifiable elements of altruism, authority, autonomy, and organizational culture that he discusses become characteristics with which professions are imbued in order to be able to carry out their service in the best interests of the public. Similarly, Schon (1987, page 32), in his discussion of professional practice, cites, as a model, Everett Hughes's definition of a professional as "one who makes a claim to extraordinary knowledge in matters of great human importance." In return for allowing the public access to this knowledge, the professional gains social control over matters in his or her area of expertise, the ability to regulate entry into the profession, and autonomy in carrying out its practice.

How do we discriminate between the various users of knowledge? A model description of the relationship between technical trades, professions, and researchers may provide the answer. Trades based on vocational or technical training focus on knowledge and skills required to perform specific work. Professions depend on an educational process that teaches theory combined with an emphasis on application of that theory to professional work. Graduate study and faculty contributions to knowledge are research based to create new theory and knowledge, rather than using these to achieve specific physical outcomes (McGuire 1993).

### The Impact of History

History plays a significant role in the definition and development of professions; in fact it may be possible to identify what is a profession by a characteristic evolution (McGuire 1993, Abbott 1988). To some degree, we understand that a profession is a profession because it has been accepted as such for a long time. When we examine the traditional learned professions thought to require advanced learning (medicine, the law, and divinity) (Learned Profession 2005), we are studying forms of work that have evolved in knowledge, the standard of practice, and the quality of outcome over 700 or more years. As universities started to develop as learning communities, service as a member of academia became a recognized profession, probably in the 1500s. And the military professional officer evolved, as standing armies emerged in the late 1600s, as a professional manager of violence for the achievement of national aims. This means that possible professions should be examined for their antiquity and for the distinctive and

continuous development of knowledge, practice, and improved outcomes characteristic of other professions.

### The Proliferation of Professions

Notwithstanding accepted traditional definitions of a profession and the role of unique knowledge, can a form of work become a profession by simply asserting that it is one? Is adding the term “professional” to an organization’s name sufficient to make members of the organization professionals? Work activities that never would have been considered professional, or even especially skilled, at the start of the 1900s are now accorded the full status of professions. For example, graphology was elevated from an amusement to a serious profession (in the same category as taxidermists and dianetic counselors) by the United States Department of Labor in 1992 (McGuire 1993). By 2005 the New York State Office of the Professions was licensing 47 specific professions (New York State 2005).

As a result, the status of being a profession is being eroded at a time when an increasing number of occupations wish to be accorded the prestige and respect that traditionally have been reserved for professions. Because of the general lack of understanding of the traditional meaning of a profession, we now face an operational definition that accepts virtually any type of work as a profession if it involves work by a group of people that wish to be called professional in order to benefit from the associated status.

### Defined As Not Amateur

As noted above, the definition of professional in sports is shaped by whether or not the individual has accepted money to conduct the sporting activity. In this world view, one is an amateur until one commits a disqualifying act, in this case accepting money. For example, the 1991 Operations Manual of the United States Fencing Association (page 48) restates the Federation Internationale d’Escrime rule:

Any fencer is an amateur who does not practice fencing except for his own pleasure, for relaxation or for his health and without ever gaining any profit from it.

This rule contains essentially the same provisions found in Amateur Fencers League of America rules from as early as 1940 – that an amateur participates in sport for the love of sport, not for

any direct or indirect financial interest. Logically, then, a professional is any fencer who has gained a profit from fencing.

The stringent nature of these rules originates in part from Victorian social practices. The amateur athletic movement strongly embraced the philosophy of amateurism, the concept that activities undertaken without self-interest were inherently superior to activities done for pay (Amateurism 2005). Victorian elites actively sought to prevent the lower classes from participating in the same sports as the socially elite – by removing any financial incentive for sports participation, the poor were effectively excluded (Learntoquestion.com 2005). In addition, there were real concerns about fairness – writers as early as 1910 suggested that athletes who were paid to participate in sports had an unfair advantage in being able to train full time over amateurs who only participated on a part time basis. Exclusions based on this argument extended even to those who assisted instructors, whether paid or not, or who were regular attendees of a salle (Shaw 2004). However, even these concerns were linked to fears that participation by paid athletes might cause amateurs to abandon the true principles of amateurism (The Possible Unification of the Amateur Definition 1910).

### III. METHOD

I adopted a qualitative approach, supported by limited quantitative data development, to the research question because qualitative methods are well suited to the initial exploration of topics not previously studied. In general, my concept of research is based on the work of Lincoln and Guba (1985). They advance the concept that research methods evolve as the researcher gathers data and gains understanding. Although a qualitative researcher may have initial questions to guide the inquiry, the first stages of study do not depend on a prior definition of hypotheses. This flexibility makes qualitative approaches particularly useful in examining organizational and management issues.

#### Design of the Study

Because the qualitative methods selected use disciplined approaches to the development of data, I identified three components for the study:

- (1) Development, through the use of grounded theory, of criteria suitable for use in constructing a model of a profession.
- (2) Gathering basic quantitative demographic data about paid fencing instructors in the United States.
- (3) Conducting a qualitative case study of the occupation of fencing master in the United States.

These components were not employed as specific sequential research phases. The nature of qualitative and mixed methods (including both qualitative and quantitative methods) research suggests that phases of a research project are more useful as a guide to activity, rather than as a precise guide as to the order of research work. This study was more circular than linear in nature with components and results being continually revised as additional data was gathered.

#### Population

This study examined two populations: (1) those individuals who pursue the occupation of fencing master in a corporate sense as the United States Coaches Association (a population of a single organization), and (2) this same population as individuals.

## Criteria Development

I used grounded theory in an examination of the literature to identify common elements that define a profession, resulting in a list of 14 elements that appeared to be able to be tested with some level of objectivity. These common elements were then examined to confirm they were within the ability of the occupation to influence and their commonality with the practice of the occupation in other countries – all elements met that criteria. For the purposes of the study the model of a profession was thus defined as including the following characteristics for evaluation:

- History – does the occupation have a defined and documented history of some antiquity?
- Unique body of knowledge – does the occupation have a body of knowledge which it develops and refines, and which is unique to the form of work?
- Status as learned – does the form of work require an education and is that education supported by a published literature of both antiquity and sufficient volume?
- Altruistic service – does the occupation work to achieve a social good?
- Autonomy of practice – do practitioners work under their own direction without intrusive supervision by others?
- Higher education – is a university baccalaureate or graduate education required to perform the work?
- Professional training – is specific technical training required to perform the work with a high degree of proficiency and is such training available?
- Certification – are the skills of practitioners independently evaluated by their peers as a prerequisite to full professional status?
- Continuing education – does the occupation require its practitioners to complete regular educational and technical training programs to ensure currency of practice?
- Ethics – does the occupation have a code of ethics that defines how practitioners will interact with each other and with clients?
- Professional self-regulation – does the profession control who is allowed to practice and does it have the ability to sanction members who fail to perform appropriately?
- Professional association – is there an organization for practitioners that provides services to the members that are valuable for their practices?



- Expectation of a main form of work – does a practitioner have a reasonable expectation of being able to make a middle class income from following this form of work?
- Government recognition – is the profession recognized by government as a profession?

### Demographic Data

In the initial investigation of the topic it became evident that a basic understanding of the demographics of the population would be useful to this study. Published data on fencing master demographics is extremely limited. Therefore, I developed a limited survey with 13 questions, all of which could be answered quantitatively (see Table 2). This survey was administered in a pilot test to 7 fencing instructors, ranging from non-credentialed Associate member of the United States Fencing Coaches Association to Maitre d'Armes, on 15 October 2005 at a coaching development workshop conducted by the Pan American Fencing Academy in San Antonio, Texas. Minor revisions were made as a result of respondent feedback, and the final survey was distributed electronically to a voluntarily self-selected, convenience population of all members of the USFCA e-forum on the website Yahoo at <http://sports.groups.yahoo.com/group/usfca/>.

Results of the survey were analyzed using descriptive statistical tests of central tendency – mean (the sum of all values divided by the number of respondents), median (the middle value when all responses were ranked from highest to lowest in value), and range (the highest value minus the lowest value). In those cases where the survey requested nominal data, totals were reported along with percentages of the total responses. In some cases, notably the questions addressing how the instructor was trained, roles, and types of facilities, the numbers reported may be higher than the number of respondents due to individuals having more than one appropriate response. Because individuals had to choose to respond with no real incentives for participation in the survey, the respondents may not be representative of the entire population.

### The Qualitative Case Study

A wide variety of extant printed and electronic materials were examined and interviews conducted to understand the practice and environment of the occupation of fencing master in the United States. The emerging understanding was then tested against each professional characteristic to determine if the characteristic was met. For those that were not met, a determination was made as to whether it might be within the capability of the members of the

occupation to implement changes that would enhance the status of the occupation. This determination served as the basis for specific recommendations for action.

Table 2. Demographic Data Questionnaire Questions for Paid Fencing Coaches

- (1) What is your gender? (male or female)
- (2) What is your age? (in years)
- (3) For how long have you been a fencer? (in years)
- (4) What is your current level of professional coaching credential recognized by the USFCA/AAI? (none, Animateur from another national academy, Moniteur, Prevot, Maitre d'Armes)
- (5) For how long have you held that rank? (in years)
- (6) How were you trained as a coach? (no formal coaching training, Pan American Fencing Academy, other USFCA regional seminars, other coaching clinics, USFA Coaches College, a college coaching program, apprenticeship - indicate all that apply)
- (7) Do you teach other forms of swordsmanship? (escrime artistique, historical fencing, classical fencing, fantasy swordsmanship, singlestick, etc.)
- (8) Are you part-time (less than 30 hours a week) or full time (30 or more hours a week)? (part-time or full time)
- (9) What is your role? (sole proprietor, assistant coach to a sole proprietor, employed by a club or program, college coach or instructor)
- (10) Type of facility? (own the space, lease or rent space that is open for your use at any time, or share space in a club or community facility at minimal charge)
- (11) What percentage of your total annual income comes from fencing? (percentage)
- (12) What is your highest degree? (high school, technical school diploma, college certificate, Associate's degree, Bachelor's degree, Master's degree, Doctoral degree)
- (13) For coaches with a college education, what was your academic field? (name of your major)

## IV. RESULTS

### Current Demographics

The United States Fencing Coaches Association has approximately 185 credentialed members (this measurement is approximate due to normal changes in membership and ongoing examinations): 51 Maitre d'Armes (along with 13 retired Emeritus Maitre d'Armes), 25 Prevots, and 96 Moniteurs (United States Fencing Coaches Association 2005e).

A total of 20 members of the United States Fencing Coaches Association responded to the pilot test of the questionnaire (n=7) and the e-mail distribution to the Association's e-forum on Yahoo.com (n=13). The results of those responses are shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Current Demographic Information for Fencing Coaches

Characteristics:	Mean:	Median:	Range:	Number:	Percentage:
Gender of individual: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Male</li> <li>• Female</li> </ul>				18 2	90% 10%
Age: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 20-30</li> <li>• 31-40</li> <li>• 41-50</li> <li>• 51-60</li> <li>• 61+</li> </ul>	50 years	50 years	50 years	3 3 2 7 5	15% 15% 10% 35% 25%
Number of years of fencing experience: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1-10</li> <li>• 11-20</li> <li>• 21-30</li> <li>• 31+</li> </ul>	29 years	31 years	56 years	3 5 2 10	15% 25% 10% 50%
Current rank: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Associate</li> <li>• Moniteur</li> <li>• Prevot</li> <li>• Maitre d'Armes</li> </ul>				2 5 9 4	10% 25% 45% 20%
Years in rank:	7 years	3 years	26 years		
How trained: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Apprenticeship, mentorship</li> <li>• PAFA seminars</li> <li>• Other seminars</li> <li>• USFA Coaches College</li> </ul>				14 8 11 12	70% 40% 55% 60%

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Formal education</li> <li>• Training in other countries</li> <li>• Self-taught</li> </ul>				2	10%
				3	15%
				2	10%
Teaching other forms of fencing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stage fighting</li> <li>• Historical swordsmanship</li> <li>• Classical fencing</li> <li>• Singlestick</li> <li>• Japanese swordsmanship</li> <li>• No</li> </ul>				2	10%
				1	5%
				2	10%
				1	5%
				1	5%
				16	80%
Teaching fencing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not active</li> <li>• Part time</li> <li>• Full time (30 hours a week)</li> </ul>				1	5%
				12	60%
				7	35%
Role: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sole proprietor</li> <li>• Assistant to sole proprietor</li> <li>• Employed by club or program</li> <li>• College coach or instructor</li> <li>• Organization member</li> </ul>				7	35%
				2	10%
				3	15%
				7	35%
				2	10%
Type of facility: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Owned by employer</li> <li>• Rent or lease facility</li> <li>• Shared use facility</li> <li>• Donated facility</li> </ul>				7	35%
				8	40%
				5	25%
				1	5%
Percentage of income from fencing:	23%	10%	100%		
Highest degree: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ph.D.</li> <li>• Master's</li> <li>• Bachelor's</li> <li>• Technical school</li> <li>• High school diploma</li> </ul>				5	25%
				6	30%
				7	35%
				1	5%
				1	5%
Academic field: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Physical education or sports science</li> <li>• Arts and social sciences</li> <li>• Physical sciences and mathematics</li> <li>• Engineering</li> <li>• Education</li> <li>• Business and management</li> <li>• Technical vocational</li> </ul>				3	15%
				5	25%
				4	20%
				2	10%
				1	5%
				4	20%
				1	5%

## History

The sword arrived early in the English colonization of North America. All three of the first English colonies in the period 1586-1607 included a military officer (Captain John Smith in the Virginia Colony, Captain Miles Standish in Massachusetts, and Captain Stafford at Roanoke Island) whose duties included training of the militia in the use of the arms of the period. Although none are known to have been fencing masters, they undoubtedly had the average officer's knowledge of edged weapons and the ability to train their men in their use in battle.

In addition dueling was an early passion in what was to become the United States. The first reported duel occurred in 1621 in the Plymouth Colony (Cohen 2002); subsequently Massachusetts passed a law against dueling in 1719, and the first recorded fatal duel was fought in 1729 (Holland 2003).

The first recorded fencing school in the English colonies appears in 1675. In 1754 a fencing and dancing school operated in New York, and George Washington paid for fencing lessons from three different instructors. Washington also founded what may have been the first fencing club in North America, the Virginian Fencibles; this may have also been the first club to employ a fencing master (Cohen 2002). Early fencing masters in the United States, like their modern counterparts, did not always make a living from the sword. For example, Robert Hewes (1751-1830) practiced as both a fencing master and a surgeon bone setter, with other employment at various times as a soap boiler, glue maker, and proprietor of a glass making business (Amberger 2001a). However, fencing masters prospered in New Orleans, with its constant demand for dueling instruction, from before the Louisiana Purchase of 1803 until at least 1840, operating a number of salles along Exchange Alley (Cohen 2002, Landry 1950).

The successful, long term fencing programs prior to 1900 were located at the military academies of the army and navy. The ability to handle a sword remained a potentially useful military skill until World War I, and after that was retained for its value as a form of physical training for future military officers. The United States Military Academy included swordsmanship instruction from its establishment in 1802, with a sword master being appointed in 1814, the first physical education instructor in a full time position in any university in the United States (Cohen 2002). The United States Naval Academy included fencing in the curriculum from at least 1853 forward, and one of its masters of the sword, Antoine Joseph

Corbesier, was so well respected that a naval combatant vessel was posthumously named for him during World War II, 29 years after his death (Amberger 2001b).

Modern fencing may have arrived in the United States in the 1840s with the Turnverein movement (Cohen 2002). In the 1880s the emergence of a large enough social class of wealthy people combined with the emergence of the Victorian amateur ideal fueled the development of organized amateur sport (as opposed to community level games pursued by working people). People of money who no longer had to work for a living were swept along by a series of fitness fads – one of which was fencing. This growth was facilitated by the presence of a number of European fencing masters, both French and Italian, who had settled in the major population centers. By 1888 fencing had become popular enough and organized enough to become one of the sports included in the organization of the Amateur Athletic Union, and for the first national championships to be held. However, frictions quickly developed, possibly related to a desire to keep the sport more exclusive, and by 1891 the fencers split with the Amateur Athletic Union to form the Amateur Fencers League of America (later renamed the United States Fencing Association) (Shaw 2004, Burdett 1890, Gaugler 2001).

For many years there was no separate organization for fencing masters in the United States, even though there were regular calls for the improvement of coaching. The first step toward creation of a professional organization was the creation in 1941 of the National College Fencing Coaches Association of America (United States Fencing Coaches Association 2005).

#### Unique Body of Knowledge

As a sport, fencing benefits from the wide range of knowledge developed by physical education and sports science researchers. However, the character of the sport as an individual combative sport, with equipment and movement patterns different from the other combative sports, along with the 500 year history of the development of the sport's techniques, makes the body of knowledge related to the use of the sword unique.

A variety of sources indicate the range of knowledge considered essential to fencing masters. Table 4 reports the result of a topic analysis of the content of three publications intended for college fencing coaches and fencing masters. Tables 5 through 11 report the content of various training programs for fencing masters.

Table 4. Subject Matter of Major Articles in Fencing Coaching Publications

	AAHPER Fencing Guide: (n=43)	The Swordmaster: (n=84)	The Fencing Master: (n=78)
Fencing master practice	0	4	2
Professional certification	0	10	0
Program development	4	2	6
Technique and tactics	7	5	7
Teaching technique	18	22	15
Classical and historical fencing	0	2	0
Stage fencing	0	0	1
Officiating	5	0	1
Testing – evaluation	5	0	1
Equipment and maintenance	1	0	2
Sports science	0	1	2
Conditioning and training	3	9	4
Sports medicine	0	2	0
Sports psychology	0	6	1
Accidents and safety	0	0	1
History	0	3	14
Competition Reports	0	1	13
Conference Reports	0	7	6
Facilities	0	1	0
Business management	0	7	0
Legal and risk management	0	2	1
Ethics	0	0	1

*Sources for data:* American Association of Health, Physical Education, and Recreation and National Association for Girls and Women in Sport guides that included Fencing published between 1962 and 1979 (n=4 issues). United States Fencing Coaches Association, The Swordmaster, published between Fall 1993 and Summer 2005 (n=25 issues). British Academy of Fencing, The Fencing Master and Fencing, published between May 1970 and August 1979 (n=21 issues).

Based on the contents of these lists I identified the following as key knowledges and skills required for the practice of the occupation of fencing master. Those that appear to be unique to fencing are so indicated. The following physical skills are all unique to teaching fencing and must be learned:

- Physical Skill with the foil at the level of being able to fence at a competition level.
- Physical Skill with the sabre at the level of being able to fence at a competition level.

- Physical Skill with the epee at the level of being able to fence at a competition level.
- Physical Skill of teaching the individual lesson in foil.
- Physical Skill of teaching the individual lesson in sabre.
- Physical Skill of teaching the individual lesson in epee.
- Physical Skill of teaching the group lesson in foil.
- Physical Skill of teaching the group lesson in sabre.
- Physical Skill of teaching the group lesson in epee.
- Physical Skill of refereeing a competition in any of the three weapons.

The following physical skill is not unique:

- Physical Skill of performing first aid and cardiopulmonary resuscitation.

A review of the literature describing the unique physical skills and how to teach them (see, for example, Szabo 1977, Bradford and Williams 1994, Lukovich 1998, Wojciechowski n.d., Czajkowski 2005, Garret, Kaidanov and Pezza 1994, Smith 2003, Rogers 2003) reveals that fencing skills have significant knowledge components. Successful fencers must understand the purpose of the skill, its mechanical execution, and its tactical execution. Some of this is learned by application in the individual and group lesson (Czajkowski 2005, Bradford and Williams 1994, Wojciechowski n.d., Szabo 1977), some is learned through explanation and discussion, and some is learned in competition (although the design of modern lessons seeks to maximize learning in a lesson that replicates competition conditions to improve competitive results).

The following knowledge is generally applicable to the teaching of any sport, but requires that the fencing master understand its application to fencing. As an example, the master must understand the principles of conditioning and be able to select conditioning activities that will be sport specific based on his or her understanding of the physiological and neurological demands of the sport.

- Pedagogy and andragogy (the teaching of adults).
- Fitness, conditioning, and training, including the design of training cycles.
- Sports medicine.
- Sports psychology.
- Sports law.
- Risk management.



- Design of instructional and sports development programs.
- Management of a small business.
- Facility management.
- Ethical behavior in coaching and business.

And the following knowledge is unique to fencing:

- History of swordsmanship and the sport.
- The professional practice of the fencing master.
- Professional certification standards.
- The rules of fencing and the modern pentathlon rules applicable to fencing.
- The design of individual and group lessons.
- Individual and team preparation for competitions.
- Competition tactics and strategy for individuals and teams.
- Classical and historical fencing, including *escrime artistique*.
- Skills development award programs (see, for example British Academy of Fencing 2005b)
- The components and maintenance and repair of foils, epees, and sabers.
- Safety and accident prevention.

This topic list represents an extensive set of knowledges and skills that are accumulated through fencing as a competitive fencer (Czajkowski 2005), training as a coach in schools or seminars, and extensive practice in giving lessons to fencers at all levels. From personal experience, the list is not complete, representing only what has been reported in the literature or included in the syllabi of courses. Not only is the body of skill and knowledge unique to the sport large, but even general knowledge requires knowledge of the sport and how to apply general information in the sport specific context. Although amateurs have written extensively about the sport, the higher level texts reflective of professional knowledge of the integration of training, technique, and tactics are all the work of professional teachers of the sport.

The contribution of fencing masters in the United States to this body of knowledge has not been as great as might be expected in a nation that has possibly as many as 100,000 active fencers (Anderson 2005). From 1994 to date, a review of the literature suggests that six volumes have been published by authors in the United States that contribute significantly to understanding the body of knowledge of the sport (Kogler 2005, Gaugler 2004, Gaugler 1997, Bradford and

Williams 1994, Garret, Kaidanov and Pezza 1994, Gillet n.d.). Of these, only two represent research based approaches to developing modern fencing skills.

### Status as Learned

When the original books of such masters as Camillo Agrippa (in Italy 1553), Joachim Meyer (in Germany 1570), Henri de Saint Didier (in France 1573), or Girard Thibault (in the Netherlands 1630) are examined in the context of their times, the learned and theoretical writings of swordsmanship matched those of medicine and law of the time in quality, if not in quantity (Anglo 2000, Gaugler 1998, Turner and Soper 1990, Castle 1969). During this period in England the system of playing prizes (bouts fought with two or more types of weapons against as many other free scholars, provosts, or masters as might present themselves to test the candidate) offers credible evidence that the knowledge required to survive in combat with a sword was truly specialized and only acquired after thorough study (Aylward 1956, Hutton 1901). In Germany the Captains of the Marxbruder encouraged guild membership by visiting teachers of swordsmanship who were not members of the fighting fraternities to offer the choice of fighting several master swordsmen or joining. Although the result of such persuasion has not generally been reported on a case by case basis, the survival of the practice again attests to both the actual and the perceived importance of unique knowledge, skill, and experience (Amberger 1998).

There was a clear relationship between those who wrote the early treatises on fencing and the practical use of the sword. An examination of texts from the 16th through the 20th centuries shows a clear progression of technique, with the evolution of such basic movements of modern fencing as the thrust, lunge, and parry. The authors of these texts were generally experienced fencing masters, often writing toward the end of their careers to capture a lifetime of knowledge.

Why then was swordsmanship not recognized as a learned profession? The answer is most probably one of numbers and timing. As the other learned professions started to reach a significant level of recognition, the teaching of swordsmanship, never really numerous in its adherents, was beginning to decline – in England its professional guild withered away with the loss of its royal monopoly with the passage of the Monopolies Act in 1623 and the wider impact of the Civil War and the ascension of Oliver Cromwell (Aylward 1956). Scientific discovery and the growing requirement for the law in a developing commercial world ensured the survival of medicine and the law as professions. The decline of dueling with the sword as an accepted

means of settling disputes and the questionable nature of swordsmanship as a general social good (with a limited appeal outside of prize fights and the niche of concerns of honor among the upper class) combined with the social upheaval of revolutions in England and France in the 17th and 18th centuries doomed the fencing master as a professional.

#### Altruistic Service

As Mark Howson commented in his presentation at the 2004 United States Fencing Coaches Association Conference, what fencing coaches do changes lives. Howson argued that the fencing experience provides exercise and encourages fitness, teaches values and skills of worth in other sectors of individual's lives, and opens the world of sport to many. For young people, fencing offers many of the same developmental opportunities for life skills such as self-discipline, courtesy, self-assurance, respect for rules, and good sportsmanship that are commonly promoted as advantages of the Asian martial arts (Graden 1996). And in an age where there is increasing concern about a worldwide problem of obesity (United Nations 2003), sports offer an opportunity to control weight, improve fitness, and potentially increase both longevity and the quality of life. This is clearly a social good.

#### Autonomy of Practice

In the United States the practice of teachers of fencing is only constrained by the availability of space for instruction, contractual arrangements with employers of instructors, and the willingness of individuals to learn the sport. Teaching fencing is generally unregulated, although some school districts impose strict limits on such activity for fear of any type of weapon in schools or due to perceptions that the sport is uniquely dangerous. Related constraints may exist in school systems based on the system's standard hiring practices and requirements, the level of competition available (Rosenberg 2002), requirements for advisors, and funding limitations (Bent 2002). Additionally, youth programs may be regulated by laws or local ordinances that mandate screening of coaches for prior records as sexual offenders. No state has passed either a practice act (requires licensure before a form of work can be done) or a title act (restricts the use of a specific job title to individuals recognized by the state) that regulates fencing instruction. Nothing prevents anyone from representing themselves as a professional fencing instructor, regardless of experience or qualification.

### Higher Education

Centralized higher education for fencing masters started in France in 1826 with the establishment of the national school at Grenelle. This establishment moved in 1872 to Joinville-le-Pont (Rondelle 1892), providing training for the first wave of French fencing masters who emigrated to the United States. Italian masters trained at the Scoula Magistrale Militare di Scherma at Rome had a similar impact on American fencing at the start of the 20th Century (Gaugler 2001).

In the late 1800s fencing masters, many of them unqualified self-appointed masters, proliferated in the United States, leading to significant concerns about the quality of training available to fencers. Louis Rondelle called for the establishment of a “normal school of fencing” in 1892 (p. 197) to produce qualified coaches as one way to help remedy the quality issue (along with his call for professional examinations). In 1943 Aldo Nadi repeated this call as a way to address the same problem, but noted that attempts to create such a course at a New York university had been unsuccessful.

Table 5. San Jose State University Fencing Masters Program

	Instructor at Arms:	Provost at Arms:	Master at Arms:
Cumulative semester hours	6	12	18
Examinations	Written Oral Practical	Written Oral Practical	Written Oral Practical
Thesis			Yes
Requirements			Bachelor’s degree

*Note:* In United States academic practice, one semester hour equals 15 contact hours of instruction.

*Source:* Gaugler, William M., “The 25th Year of the Fencing Masters Program at San Jose State University,” *Fencers Quarterly Magazine*, Volume 9, Number 1, Summer 2004, pages 12-113.

In 1979 a three year Fencing Masters Program (also often termed the Military Fencing Masters Program) was established at San Jose State University in California under the leadership of Maestro di Scherma William Gaugler. This program continues to teach classical fencing in the Italian School in a university setting; this is not a complete degree program, and academically straddles undergraduate and graduate course work. As of 2004, the program had graduated 37

Instructors at Arms, 28 Provosts at Arms, and 14 Masters at Arms. However, graduates are certified only by the program and do not take examinations that conform to the standards of the United States Fencing Coaches Association certifications. Although the program cites participation by United States Olympic and World Championship team members as students, the technique taught appears to be thoroughly dated. The framework of the program is shown in Table 5.

In January 2005 the University of Richmond started teaching a four level instructor program for Classical Fencing Instructors (Classical Fencing Demonstrator, Classical Fencing Instructor, Classical Fencing Provost, Classical Fencing Master). The knowledge component of this program is delivered by Internet delivery with one hour session each week over a year, using a standard teaching platform, Blackboard, practical content delivered in a combination of in person and web broadcast workshops, and detailed portfolio assessment. The Classical Fencing Instructor Program does not represent that it trains modern fencing masters to develop competitive fencers. The program is based in the continuing education unit programs of the School of Continuing Studies.

Table 6. Sonoma State University Fencing Master’s Certificate Program

	Instructor:	Provost at Arms:	Master at Arms:
Cumulative units	6	9	12
Weapons required	1 weapon	All traditional fencing weapons	All traditional fencing weapons
Examination	Yes	Yes	Yes

*Note:* Each unit appears to represent one two day weekend workshop of approximately 16 contact hours.

*Source:* Sullins, John P., “SSU Fencing Masters Certificate Program,” electronic posting to [classicalfencing@yahoo.com](mailto:classicalfencing@yahoo.com). 7 April 2005.

In April 2005 Sonoma State University announced a Fencing Master’s Certificate Program under the direction of John P. Sullins, a Military Master at Arms graduate of San Jose State University’s program (Sullins 2005). Although described as only one of two fencing teacher training programs offered by an institution of higher learning, the course catalog entry does not indicate this is a university academic credit program, and is offered by the School of Extended Education. Based on catalog descriptions (Sonoma State University 2005) it appears

that each level will be delivered in a series of two day weekend workshops, each credited as one unit. Organization of this program is shown in Table 6.

When the three current college based programs are considered along with the Pan American Fencing Academy in San Antonio, Texas (addressed under Professional Training below), there is no complete degree program to train fencing masters in the United States in conjunction with the award of a Bachelor’s degree. The three classical programs described in this section do not train modern fencing masters. This leaves the fencing master candidate who wishes to obtain an academic credential related to the sport with only the option of completing a physical education or sports science degree.

### Professional Training

In 2000 the Academie d’Armes Internationale adopted standard guidelines for the training of Animateurs, Moniteurs, Prevots, and Maitres d’Armes (Piraino 2000) (see Table 7). These guidelines were not intended to replace national practices, but rather to assist new national academies in establishing their training programs and to provide a standard understanding of the capabilities of each professional rank (Bunke 2005). A subsequently published set of teaching standards (see Table 8) provides a more detailed (and slightly different) allocation of training time.

Table 7. Academie d’Armes Internationale Technical Training Levels

Topic:	Animateur:	Moniteur:	Prevot:	Maitre:	Totals:
Fencing theory	20 hours	30 hours	60 hours	60 hours	170 hours
Fencing practical	40 hours	60 hours	90 hours	60 hours	250 hours
Other content	30 hours	30 hours	60 hours	60 hours	180 hours
Continuing education		60 hours	90 hours	120 hours	270 hours
<i>Total hours</i>	<i>90 hours</i>	<i>180 hours</i>	<i>300 hours</i>	<i>300 hours</i>	<i>870 hours</i>
Apprenticeship	30 hours	6 months	12 months	24 months	42.2 months

*Source:* Piraino, Roberto, “Criteria for the Organization of Technical Training in World Fencing Academies,” adopted at the Congress of the Academie d’Armes Internationale, Vichy, France, 24-26 August 2000.

Table 8. Academie d'Armes Internationale Teaching Standards In Hours

Topic:	Animateur:	Moniteur:	Prevot:	Maitre:	Totals:
Foil practice/theory	20	30	50	40	140
Epee practice/theory	20	30	50	40	140
Sabre practice/theory	20	30	50	40	140
Fencing rules	5	5	10	10	30
Training theory	5	5	10	10	30
Sports medicine	5	5	10	10	30
Sport pedagogy	5	5	10	10	30
Sport psychology	5	5	10	10	30
Sport organization	5	5	10	10	30
<i>Total Hours</i>	<i>90</i>	<i>120</i>	<i>210</i>	<i>180</i>	<i>600</i>

*Source:* Academie d'Armes Internationale. "AAI teaching standards." Course materials for International Course, 4-10 October 2005, Bad Karlshafen, Germany.

In November 2001 the Academy of Physical Education in Katowice, Poland, conducted a two week Advanced Course for Fencing Masters under the direction of Zbigniew Czajkowski (Program for an Advanced Course for Fencing Masters 2001). This program (see Table 9) emphasized many of the same themes seen in the Academie d'Armes Internationale's standards and in the subsequent International Course conducted by the Academie.

Table 9. Academy of Physical Education Advanced Course for Fencing Masters In Hours

Topic:	Length:	Method:
Fencing with the foil	8	Practical
Fencing with the epee	10	Practical
Fencing with the sabre	8	Practical
Practice in methodology	26	Practical
Sports training	4	Lecture/seminar
Theory of fencing	2	Lecture/seminar
Fencing training, organization and methods	2	Lecture/seminar
Technique, sensory-motor skills, and choice reaction	4	Lecture/seminar
Psychological processes	2	Lecture/seminar
Tactics and tactical preparation	8	Lecture/seminar
History	2	Lecture/seminar
Work, qualifications and personality of the master	2	Lecture/seminar

*Source:* "Program for an Advanced Course for Fencing Masters," *The Swordmaster*, Spring 2001, page 16.

In October 2005 the Academie d'Armes Internationale hosted its first International Course at Bad Karlshafen in Germany, with a curriculum specifically designed to allow experienced fencing instructors in nations that lacked national academies of arms to further develop their skills and credentials. The contents of that course are shown in Table 10.

Table 10. Academie d'Armes Internationale International Training Course Content

Category:	Topic:	Length:	Method:
Training and preparation	Training theory	3.75 hours	Lecture and performance
	Pedagogy	3.75 hours	Lecture and performance
	Sports psychology	4.5 hours	Lecture
	Sports medicine	4.5 hours	Lecture
Fencing theory	Terminology	1.5 hours	Lecture
	Rules	1.5 hours	Lecture
Weapon specific	Foil methods	1.5 hours	Lecture
	Foil lessons	6.0 hours	Performance
	Epee lessons	7.5 hours	Performance
	Sabre lessons	7.5 hours	Performance
Examination		3.0 hours	Performance

*Source:* Academie d'Armes Internationale. "International Course: Animateur-Moniteur-Prevot-Maitre." Course schedule for International Course, 4-10 October 2005, Bad Karlshafen, Germany.

These standards suggest that there is some level of consensus as to the content and method of training fencing instructors at the International level, along with a willingness to work with developing national academies of arms to provide a baseline for the qualification of professionals. However, similar training standards have not developed in the United States.

From 1973 to 1984 the French trained Maitre d'Armes Jean-Jacques Gillet operated the American Academy of Arms as a residential fencing master training program in Ithaca, New York, graduating 15 students as Maitre d'Armes (Jean-Jacques Gillet 1999). This was the first attempt I have been able to locate to establish a formal school for fencing masters in the United States. Its closure left a 17 year gap before there was another such effort.

In 2001 Maitre d'Armes Vincent Bradford opened the Pan American Fencing Academy at Palo Alto College in San Antonio, Texas. This program used a mix of weekend seminars,



apprenticeship, and college level courses to develop students prepared to take the standard United States Fencing Coaches Association examinations (see Table 11) (Schmid 2002). The Academy continues in operation as the only program in the United States designed to produce professional coaches for amateur competitive fencing, although limited attendance has reduced the seminar frequency from four to two times a year.

Table 11. Pan American Fencing Academy Requirements and Content in Hours

	Moniteur 1st weapon:	Moniteur 2d weapon:	Moniteur 3d weapon:	Prevot:	Maitre:	Totals:
Fencing skills	48	48	48			144
Apprenticeship	12	12	12	48	96	120
Coaching seminar	12	12	12	36	48	120
Conditioning and fitness			48			48
Kinesiology				48		48
Advanced topics					48	48
First aid and CPR qualification	Yes					Yes
Referee qualification				Yes		Yes
Examination – written	Yes			Yes	Yes	
Examination – oral					Yes	
Examination – practical	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	
<i>Total hours</i>	<i>72</i>	<i>72</i>	<i>120</i>	<i>132</i>	<i>192</i>	<i>528</i>

*Note:* The reference to first through third weapon reflects the United States practice of qualifying Moniteurs in one, two, or three weapons.

*Source:* Schmid, Jeremy, “Bradford Unveils Pan American Fencing Academy,” *The Swordmaster*, Winter 2002, pages 1, 10-12, 18.

### Certification

As early as 1892 Louis Rondelle decried the ability of unqualified instructors in the United States to represent themselves as fencing masters and as professional champions. He is

probably the first individual to call, at least in print, for the establishment of examining boards and regular examinations for Maitre d'Armes and Prevot d'Armes. His model included checking references, examining the character and reputation of the candidate, and a four part examination before three fencing masters: (1) demonstration of a lesson, (2) questioning on theory, (3) demonstration of the ability to fence in an assault, and (4) evaluation of the candidate's style, attitude, and general excellence.

In 1965 the United States Fencing Coaches Association started to certify fencing masters, originally only bestowing the certificate of Fencing Master. That system has evolved into a three level certification that mirrors the highest three grades of the Academie d'Armes Internationale model suggested by Piraino (2000). The first grade, Moniteur, was awarded based on the ability to teach a single weapon to an acceptable standard – thus a Moniteur could be certified to teach a single weapon, two weapons, or all three weapons. The author's experience in 2004 was that the Moniteur examination was based on an individual lesson for a beginner with little attention to

Table 12. United States Fencing Coaches Association Certifications in 2004

Rank:	Objective:	Prerequisites:	Examiners:	Format:
Moniteur	Teach a beginner sound basic technique	- First aid and cardiopulmonary resuscitation - Referee (rated 10)	2 Prevots or Fencing Masters	- Written examination - Practical examination in each weapon certified
Prevot d'Armes	Complex lesson with progression of technical and/or tactical technique	- Moniteur in all 3 weapons - Moniteur for 1 year - Referee (rated 6)	3 Fencing Masters	- Written examination - Practical examination in all 3 weapons - Oral examination
Maitre d'Armes	Complex lesson at a very high level	Prevot for 1 year	3 Fencing Masters	- Thesis - Practical examination in all 3 weapons - Oral examination

*Source:* United States Fencing Coaches Association, Certification Guide, Pasadena, Maryland, United States of America, no date, distributed 2004.

group lessons. The published standard called for the ability to teach direct and indirect attacks, simple parries, attacks prepared by feints, and second intention actions (United States Fencing Coaches Association 2004). Table 12 provides a summary of the requirements for the three levels as of 2004.

The Certification and Accreditation Board of the United States Fencing Coaches Association initiated a major rewrite of these requirements to redirect the emphasis at each level of the examination after the election of a new Board in 2004. As a result examinations were in flux in 2005 – the author participated as a student in a Moniteur examination that was focused on teaching a group lesson in May 2005 and observed a Moniteur examination in June that used the earlier model of an individual lesson. My Prevot d’Armes examination in June 2005 was based on the concept of a more advanced selection of technique and the demonstration of progression in teaching techniques that the examiners called for during the lesson (United States Fencing Coaches Association 2005). Table 13 provides a summary of the philosophy of the new Board.

Table 13. Revised Performance Objectives for United States Fencing Coaches Association Certifications

Rank:	Objective:	Practical Examination Focus:
Moniteur	Entry level coach capable of teaching good technique and basic knowledge in clubs, schools, and community organizations	Group lessons with emphasis on skills, teaching technique, and correction
Prevot	Professional position managing or owning a fencing salle or coaching a university team	Individual lessons with complex tactical actions – proficiency in blade cues, distance control, corrections and tactics and strategy required
Fencing Master	Highest level of competency in all aspects of teaching and coaching.	Individual lesson demonstrating strategic development, highly proficient tactical cueing, and logical progression.

*Source:* Shipman, Bill and Mark Masters, “New Board Continues Certification Update,” *The Swordmaster*, Winter/Spring 2005, pages 4-6.

In October 2005 the Certification and Accreditation Board released new requirements for the Moniteur examinations. The written examination is now available online as a multiple choice test, allowing easier access, rapid grading (one of several sources of dissatisfaction as recently as 2004), and a higher degree of objectivity. Moniteur knowledge requirements have been significantly broadened to include (United States Fencing Coaches Association 2005):

- Risk management.
- Basic fencing rules.
- Terminology.
- Principles of teaching groups, including types of drills, distances, bladework, footwork, and tactics and theory.
- Basic fitness and conditioning principles.

A specific reading list is now provided to assist candidates in their preparation.

The practical examination has been completely restructured to evaluate the techniques a candidate should be able to use in teaching a group lesson, including a five part process (United States Fencing Coaches Association 2005):

- Group warmup using traditional sport exercises or games.
- Group footwork at the level through advance lunge and retreat lunge.
- Main lesson – one of five themes selected by the examiners is taught using paired drills.
- Conclusion with a review to check for understanding.
- Examiner's questions.

The new Moniteur examination can be administered by two Prevots or by one Maitre d'Armes, with the potential to significantly increase access to the examination.

### Ethics

In the formative years of the establishment of swordsmanship instruction as a form of work, a clear code of conduct for professionals in training was established by the British Masters of the Noble Science of Defense. This code was essentially protective of guild privileges, in much the same way as members of other guilds regulated their members. For example, it required that the Scholar, Free Scholar, or Provost (Aylward 1956):

- Not establish himself in the business of teaching swordsmanship in the city of London for at least a year after successfully playing his prize to become a master.

- Not establish a teaching facility within 7 miles of another member of the guild.
- Not entice students from other masters.
- Not compare any master with another master, especially not his own master.
- Not take up arms against his master in any dispute and not to challenge any English master.

In the same period we see the development of standards for fighting in the German *fechtschule* (public displays of combat among the members of the fighting brotherhoods). In one oft-quoted example, fencers were prohibited from (Amberger 1998):

- Thrusting with the point.
- Using a technique to close and wrestle with their opponent using dishonorable tricks.
- Breaking the opponent's arm.
- Gouging the opponent's eyes.
- Stone throwing.
- Striking the genitals.
- And other dishonorable tactics that were numerous and that the holder of the *fechtschule* did not know or use.

It seems reasonable to suggest that the idea of these restrictions may have evolved from accepted procedures for tournaments. It is at least equally likely that the specifics were intended to preserve the professional's ability to continue to ply his trade after even an unsuccessful contest.

Similar standards appear to have applied to the British Masters' credentialing examination, the *Playing of a Prize*. Bouts for examinations were played with rebated weapons, although certainly enough lusty blows occurred to satisfy the audience and produce a reasonable purse for the participants (Alyward 1956, Turner and Soper 1990). By 1696 we see the first surviving rules, the *Rules of Toulouse*, for bouts not fought with sharp weapons (Alyward 1956). Parallel developments of the concept of ethical conduct in serious affairs of honor with sharps appear in the form of the *Code Duello*, generally formalized by the late 1700s, and persisting well into the 1930s (Holland 2003). The first modern rules for sport fencing competition the author has been able to locate appear in the United States in 1892 (Rondelle) and in England in 1896 (de Beaumont 1949). These survive in multiple iterations to the modern competition rules of the *Federation Internationale d'Escrime* (United States Fencing Association 2005). The standards of conduct for the sharp *schlaeger mensur* of German academic fencing survive largely

intact and are more stringent, with more punitive social consequences for bad behavior (Seeger 2005 , Amberger 1998).

The development of rules for conduct in competition are not paralleled by the development of standards of conduct by fencing masters. Ethical behavior does not appear to be commonly addressed in the training of fencing masters. Pirano's 2000 standard for national academy training programs does not specifically require ethics instruction (although the topic is not prohibited and could be embedded in those topics that deal with salle management).

In reality, most coaching development courses and seminars focus on the technical and tactical aspects of fencing and on the technical issues of preparation of athletes. For example, the curriculum for the first Academie d'Armes Internationale International Animateur-Monitor-Prevot-Maitre Course did not address ethics (Academie d'Armes International 2005), although a number of after-hours discussion among participants did address ethical issues. If we examine the content of other seminars as varied as the Pennsylvania State University Fencing Workshop in 1974 (Garret 1974), the Pan American Fencing Academy's seminars in May 2005 (Pan American Fencing Academy 2005) and October 2005 (San Antonio Sports Foundation 2005), and the Oregon Fencing Alliance's advanced sabre coaching clinic (Green 2005) we see the same absence of ethical content.

A review of a convenience sample of English language fencing periodicals devoted to coaching shows a similar failure to address ethical issues (see Table 4). Although this is by no means an exhaustive coverage, the absence of articles is suggestive.

In 2005 the Club Committee of the United States Fencing Coaches Association started to address the issue of a code of ethics in the context of its efforts to develop a Guild Academy program to identify professionally coached clubs (Howson 2005b). One of the proposed requirements was that the coaching staff would be required to adhere to the United States Olympic Committee's Coaching Ethics Code (United States Olympic Committee n.d.). It should be noted that this is a proposed code for fencing and has not been adopted as a standard by the United States Fencing Coaches Association.

The importance of clear standards for ethical conduct, both as a coach and as a business person, should not be underestimated. In the classical fencing community there is a clear record of small groups that approach the level of cults in terms of treatment of students, and especially female students, by the instructor (Leckie 2005).

### Self-Regulation

Today when one becomes a fencing master, that status is for life. The individual can join the United States Fencing Coaches Association, obtain a credential, quit the Association, and still advertise themselves as being a professional. If the fencing master operates unethically, misrepresents his or her capabilities to the public, or teaches inappropriately there is no effective mechanism in the United States to control such behavior (Mercado 2005a).

As early as 1892 Rondelle complained of unqualified persons teaching unsuspecting students poor technique; Nadi complained of the same condition in 1943. Both recommended nationally mandated training and certification for fencing masters. The problem continues to this day – anyone can establish a salle, print a certificate that says they are a fencing master or purchase one on the online auction house E-Bay, and take money from students. In fact, one of the leaders in the classical fencing community did just that, creating himself as a Provost, and changing his name to a more classical and martial sounding one (Leckie 2005). Absent government regulation, which is highly unlikely in the United States given the limited political power of the small community of certified professionals, this situation will continue as a given.

A separate issue of self-regulation is the influx of coaches born outside the United States. The first wave of French masters arrived before 1900 (Burdett 1890), and probably the largest and most influential was the influx of refugees after the Hungarian revolution of 1956 (McDougal 2002). More recently, the United States has seen the immigration of coaches from Eastern Europe, the Middle East, and even South America in the last decade. These individuals in general have little incentive to join the United States Fencing Coaches Association, participate in conferences and continuing education, or to have their credentials evaluated and accepted by the Association as the national academy of arms. Because they are foreign, and thus more attractive to clubs simply because of the cachet of having a foreign born fencing master, and to some degree are willing to work for lower wages, this undercuts the native born coach who is attempting to find employment and develop a career (Mercado 2005a). Similar immigration issues have been noted in Germany (Bunke 2005b) and in Great Britain.

### Professional Associations

Because of the relatively small numbers of paid fencing instructors, organization of local and state level associations found in other sports is generally impractical. For example, in the

Commonwealth of Virginia there are a total of no Maitres d'Armes, 3 Prevot, and no Moniteurs certified by the United States Fencing Coaches Association. When the number of certified individuals nationwide is divided by the number of states of the United States, there is a mean of 3.44 certified instructors per state. The professional coach therefore is dependent on national associations, or academies of arms, of which there are currently 18 (see Table 14). In turn these national associations are members of the Academie d'Armes Internationale, the international federation for national professional academies.

Table 14. National Academies of Arms

<p style="text-align: center;">           Australian Academy of Fencing (AAF)            Austrian Academy of Fencing Masters - Akademie der Fechtkunst Österreichs (ADFÖ)            Royal Academy of Arms of Belgium - Académie Royale d'Armes de Belgique (ARAB)            British Academy of Fencing (BAF)            Fencing Academy of Canada (FAC)            Dutch Academy of Arms            Academy of Arms of France - Académie d'Armes de France (AAF)            German Academy of Fencing Art - Akademie der Fechtkunst Deutschlands (ADFÖ)            Hungarian Academy of Arms            Indian Academy of Arms            Association of Italian Fencing Masters - Associazione Italiana Maestri di Scherma (AIMS)            Irish Academy of Arms (IAA)            Malaysian Academy of Arms            Portugese Academy of Arms            Spanish Academy of Arms            Swedish Academy of Arms            Swiss Academy of Arms            United States Fencing Coaches Association (USFCA)         </p>
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*Note:* Correct translations in the academy's national language and common acronyms for the academy names are given where known.

*Sources:* Academie d'Armes Internationale, "Links," available at <http://www.escrime.org/links.htm>, accessed 11 October 2005. Academie d'Armes Internationale, "Academies d'Armes Nationales," available at <http://www.escrime.org/aan.htm>, accessed 11 October 2005.

The relationships between national professional organizations and their national governing bodies for the amateur sport of fencing would seem logically to be a strong one. The best interests of individual fencers are served by close relationships between the fencing master



and amateur athlete, and this relationship between fencer and master is attested to by many fencers (see, for example, Cragg 2002 or Harris 2002). However, this relationship by individuals does not translate into equivalent relationships between organizations.

As early as 1889, there was a clear separation between amateurs and the paid fencing master. Amateur fencers strongly objected to fencing masters serving as jury presidents for competitions (Shaw 2004). This may reflect an apprehension that masters would not be impartial when the interests of their students were involved. Equally as likely, however, is that members of the propertied, moneyed, and socially elite class involved in fencing did not want to be judged by people who were, in their eyes, their economic and social inferiors, and whom they viewed as tainting sport. As a result, the developing amateur fencing organizations had little interest in addressing the needs of paid fencing instructors.

The development of professional associations was therefore almost simultaneous with that of amateur fencing organizations, with foundation of the London Academy of Arms in 1903 (British Academy of Fencing 2005a), Akademie der Fechtkunst Österreichs in 1904 (Akademie der Fechtkunst Österreichs 2005), and the Académie Royale d'Armes de Belgique in 1910 (Académie Royale d'Armes de Belgique 2005).

In the United States, the national coaching organization was established in 1941 as the National College Fencing Coaches Association of America, later renamed the National Fencing Coaches Association of America. Paralleling the change of the Amateur Fencers League of America to the United States Fencing Association, the coaches' organization changed its name in 1982 to United States Fencing Coaches Association (United States Fencing Coaches Association 2005b). The initial name was reflective of the organization for many years, with a primary focus on the collegiate fencing environment. In the last two years significant changes in leadership have moved the organization to a more balanced focus, and have resulted in significant improvements in both the requirements and fairness of the certification process, more opportunities for continuing education, and increased focus on the coach who operates a club or salle.

However, the influence of the United States Fencing Coaches Association as a force in fencing in the United States is minimal. This is not a unique situation – experience in Britain and in Germany (Bunke 2005a) shows that there is a continuing tendency of fencing master's organizations to be marginalized by the amateur sports federation. In one clear example, the

United States Fencing Association provides the major consistent continuing effort to train new coaches through its Coaches College. This program provides courses at five levels in all three weapons (United States Fencing Association 2005d) at the Olympic Training Center in Colorado Springs, Colorado, along with a Black Star program of advanced coaching workshops for coaches with fencers in the top 32 of any national ranking list (United States Fencing Association 2005b) and a Becoming a Fencing Instructor program for activity instructors (United States Fencing Association 2005a). This parallels the development of an amateur fencing coaches training program in the United Kingdom (Skipp 1990) and the training of amateur coaches by the Deutches Fechterbund (Bunke 2005a).

#### Expectation of Main Form of Work

Among respondents to the survey, those who reported fencing contributed 90 percent of their income or more (n=3) all were employed full time as coaches by colleges or universities. Among those who responded as part time coaches, incomes from fencing represented a small portion of their overall income, with 7 responding that fencing contributed nothing to their overall income.

Recent advertisements by employers for fencing coaches have not been reassuring as to the financial benefits of the job. A full time university coaching job was recently advertised at a salary of \$17,900 a year, with no benefits (university benefit packages typically include health insurance for the employee and spouse, retirement contribution, paid vacation days, life insurance, and some level of disability coverage). At this same institution, the average salary for an Instructor (the lowest rank of non-doctoral faculty member) is \$42,900 a year, plus benefits (The Chronicle of Higher Education 2005). And a high school position was recently advertised with a salary of \$1,600 a year (Seeking Coach 2005).

Mark Howson (2004) developed a detailed analysis of the economic potential of various models of full time teaching by fencing masters as a thesis project for the United States Fencing Coaches Association. His work suggests that the traditional individual lesson offers the lowest profitability, with a net income of approximately \$25,000 for 30 hours of teaching a week. The most profitable model with predominantly group lessons (22 hours of 30 teaching hours a week) resulted in an approximate income of \$50,000 a year. Such figures are subject to a number of assumptions – for example, is it possible to actually fill 30 hours a week with students?

However, they are useful in suggesting what may be a best case for the fencing master who is well resourced during initial business development, who is located in a large enough metropolitan area, and who has relatively favorable cost conditions. Howson (2005a) also examined the income levels of sports instructors (ranging from \$25,000 a year for 1 to 4 years of experience to \$50,000 a year for 10 to 19 years experience) and fitness trainers (ranging from \$30,000 a year to \$34,000 in the same experience range) as income models that may apply to fencing masters. It is safe to say that the number of current paid fencing instructors in the United States who are realizing these levels of income appears to be very low.

## V. ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSIONS

### Assessment

The occupation of fencing master in the United States today is most probably at the status of a paraprofession. Although many accepted professions would have difficulty satisfying every requirement in the assessment model this study used, fencing masters face a number of challenges (see Table 15).

Table 15. Factors of a Profession Evaluated

Distinguishing Factor:	World Experience: (1)	United States:
History (2)	Yes	No
Unique body of knowledge (2)	Yes	Some contribution
Status as learned (2)	Not acknowledged	No
Altruistic service	Yes	Yes
Autonomy of practice	Yes	Yes
Higher education	Some cases	No
Professional training (2)	Some cases	Not required – some available
Certification (2)	Yes	Yes – revision in progress
Continuing education (2)	Not required – some available	Not required – some available
Ethics (2)	No	Not unique
Professional self-regulation (2)	No	No
Professional associations	Yes	Yes
Expectation of main form of work (2)	Some cases	Rarely
Government recognition	Some cases	No

*Notes:* (1) The intent of this paper is not to assess the professional status of fencing masters throughout the world, and insufficient data has been gathered to do this. This assessment represents the author's impression as a point of comparison and should not be considered authoritative.

(2) These factors appear to be ones that could be altered positively with a reasonable level of organizational effort.

Although the data developed by survey on the demographics of the occupation may be skewed as a result of the survey method, some of the results bear noting. First, the occupation is overwhelmingly male, and largely older males. Second, the population is older, with 50% of respondents being over age 50 (n=10) – in a sport in which coaching is still very much a physical

performance activity, this is a surprising outcome. It may indicate a smaller pool of candidates willing to shift from amateur competition to coaching while still in the 20 or 30 year old age groups. It may also be reflective of the part time status of most coaches and the relatively low percentages of total income generated by fencing. Third, this is a well educated population with almost all respondents having a Bachelor's degree or higher (90%, n=18); however, a low percentage of these degrees were in the sports science of physical education fields. Fourth, there was relatively little involvement in teaching other forms of swordsmanship – this is an interesting departure from the growth of *escrime artistique* as an additional area of practice for fencing masters. Finally, the income contribution of fencing to respondents was generally small - although 3 full time individuals realized 92% or 100% of their income from fencing, the median value was 10%, and 9 individuals reported from 0% to 5% income contribution. This suggests that the average paid fencing instructor teaches for reasons other than money.

When we examine specific elements of a profession, the history of swordsmanship in general and in the United States is significant. Linked to this is the status of the profession as a learned one. The temptation is to regard these as unimportant – after all, knowing that fencing was a sport at the first games of the modern Olympic era or that a significant body of fencing textbooks were written in the 1500s and 1600s will not result in a student scoring one more touch. However, the heritage of the sword attracts people to fencing and more pride in that heritage and more attention to the historical elements of the sport may be of practical marketing value in an era when historical swordplay attracts significant numbers of clients (see, for example, the wide range of teachers of historical swordplay and the emergence of *escrime artistique* at the international level, Moser 2005, *Academie d'Armes Internationale* 2004).

The development of higher education programs for fencing masters is a difficult proposition. The reality is that universities create academic programs if there is sufficient interest to sustain them with students over many years, there is a qualified pool of faculty available with doctoral degrees and at least 18 semester hours of graduate credit in the field, possible external sources of grant funding, and significant research issues that can contribute to knowledge and the university's reputation. Of these criteria, only the possibility of significant research issues exists when the education of fencing masters is examined. At the best, selected course offerings in a strong physical education department might be possible (a model that has been used as noted above).

Professional training is at best sporadic, with no unified approach to developing trained professionals. The United States Fencing Coaches Association has taken the position that as an organization it will independently certify coaches, regardless of how they obtain their training. As the demographic data indicates, this means that coaches are largely trained by either apprenticeships under a fencing master or are trained as amateur coaches by the United States Fencing Association's Coaches College. However, the variety of the responses to the questionnaire indicates that individual coaches have largely created their own training programs, rather than working from any established plan that defines a fencing master's training.

The current revisions to the certification program of the United States Fencing Coaches Association have the potential to result in professionals who are better prepared to teach at their appropriate levels. The increase in objectivity in the examination process and the increased ability of candidates to understand what is expected of them is clearly a strong positive move. Of concern, however, is the distribution of the current body of certificate holders. There appears to be increasing interest in the Moniteur credential, but there is a smaller corps of Prevots and more Maitre d'Armes that one would normally expect in what should be a pyramid shaped hierarchy. Given the age of many of respondents to the survey, there may well be a number of older Maitres whose eventual retirement will leave large gaps in the overall body of professionals.

The lack of any requirement for certified individuals to carry out a program of continuing education is a significant deficiency. Changes in accepted methods of technical, tactical, physical, and psychological preparation of athletes are frequent, and if a coach does not engage in regular continuing education there is little chance of becoming familiar with this new material. As a result, there will be a gradual erosion of the currency of a coach's knowledge with a related decrease in the ability to prepare his or her fencers to compete at the top level.

The adoption of the United States Olympic Committee's coaches code of ethics (United States Olympic Committee n.d.) does not offer a good solution to the problem of the lack of an ethical code for fencing masters. As a code developed by the members of the national Olympic Committee absent the participation of fencing masters, it is not a product of the profession. Much of the content is phrased negatively, communicating what is inappropriate, rather than what is appropriate, conduct. On a practical level, an 11 page document is simply not a useful way to communicate an ethical code. It is simply too long to be converted into a brochure or a

poster for the salle wall that can be used to communicate with prospective and current fencers and parents; the length makes it unlikely that even fencing coaches will read it.

Given the current regulatory environment, it is unlikely that a professional organization of fencing masters will ever be able to truly regulate the profession. The form of work is poorly understood by its clients, it is in the short term interest of clubs to hire teachers at the lowest cost, and the United States Fencing Association has a number of incentives to continue the training of amateur coaches who compete with paid professionals. The best that can be hoped for is that the United States Fencing Coaches Association can provide positive incentives for membership and participation within the norms of the profession.

At the bottom line, the expectation that training, education, experience, and certification will qualify the fencer for a job that can be expected to be the primary source of income is unrealistic. When college coaches were excluded from the computations of questionnaire data, the mean income from fencing was at or below 35% percent of the majority of individuals' income. Even with a solid understanding of the business, data suggests that most fencing masters will have an income decidedly on the lower side of middle class. This limits the attractiveness of the profession as a calling.

### Recommendations for Action

There are clear professional requirements fencing masters within the United States can implement as a corporate body if they chose to do so, and that will bring the occupation of fencing master closer to the status of a profession. I would suggest the following actions as being appropriate, ranked in my assessment of their approximate order of importance.

#### (1) Expectations of a Reasonable Income

This is clearly a long term problem that requires a national strategy and continued effort. If fencers are to turn to teaching fencing as a form of work, they should have some reasonable expectation of being able to make a substantial secondary income or a reasonable primary income from their effort. Failure to do so will always impede further development of the profession and of the sport. In the short term, the United States Fencing Coaches Association should make every practical effort to help the individual professional instructor in the development of his or her business and in the differentiation of that business as a professional endeavor from amateur coaching or uncoached clubs.

## (2) Ethics

Although ethics may seem relatively unimportant in the context of other problems facing the profession, the development of a clear, simple, positively stated, and easy to understand and communicate ethical code can and should drive all of the subsequent steps of the development of this form of work.

## (3) Continuing Education

Institute requirements for continuing education as a condition of retention of certification at any level. Sizing such requirements is difficult because of the lack of data on coaching skill and knowledge decay in fencing, and on the rate of development of new knowledge and technique. However, some level is clearly necessary, and I suggest a requirement of an average of 8 hours a year as both a reasonable and achievable minimum.

## (4) Development of a Continuing Education System

With a requirement for continuing education comes the need for continuing education to be readily available. Today, only the twice yearly offerings of the Pan American Fencing Academy and the United States Fencing Coaches Association annual conference provide continuous, scheduled opportunities for continuing education. The variety of other clinics available is impressive, but each is different and there is no unifying educational theme. The United States Fencing Coaches Association should consider the development of a regular schedule of both regional clinics and of common subject matter for delivery in those clinics.

## (5) Completion of the Development of Modern Certification Standards

The work of the United States Fencing Coaches Association's Certification and Accreditation Board in revising the credentialing process is commendable, and the 2005 edition of the Moniteur standard is excellent. This process must continue for Prevot and Maitre d'Armes. In my opinion, the inclusion of the Animateur as an entry level assistant instructional position is important as a final step.

## (6) Professional Training

If individuals are to be certified at a high standard there must be a common approach to coaching education at the professional level. The United States Fencing Association's Coaches College is an excellent program, but professional coaching is different from amateur coaching and requires a different level and range of knowledge and expertise. The United States Fencing Coaches Association needs to develop a standard educational program to prepare individuals for



each level and make that program widely available. Educational programs should include an introduction to the history of the sport.

#### (7) Self-Regulation

At the simplest level, credentials should be based on continued membership in the professional association. However, beyond this a disciplinary process should be established to allow the profession to sanction its members who fail to behave in a professional manner. In addition, the United States Fencing Coaches Association should develop materials that educate the public and the fencing community as to the differences between the credentialed professional and other approaches to teaching fencing.

#### (8) Unique Body of Knowledge

Research and publication of the results of that research must be encouraged. As a minimum, the theses of fencing master candidates should be made available online. However, this represents only a start – the profession should develop linkages with sports research programs and make every effort to facilitate research that advances our sport.

### Recommendations for Fencing Masters in Other Nations

This study provides a method and a set of criteria that can be used to evaluate the status of the profession of the fencing master in any country. Definitions of what constitutes a profession may vary, and may be constrained by law or custom – for example, Brazil now requires that all new instructors of fencing hold a baccalaureate degree in physical education along with practitioners of a variety of other sports (Portes 2005). However, absent a radically different interpretation, this approach should be of value in assessing progress.

### Suggestions for Further Research

An examination of this study suggests broad needs for additional research on all of the organizational and practice characteristics of the emerging profession of fencing master. The basic demographics of the profession (age, gender, education, training, income, role, etc.) have not been documented, either in the United States or worldwide. In some nations, the United States providing a good example, there is no definitive record of who has been credentialed at each level of paid instructor (Mercado 2004), although an individual effort, the Fencing Master Project, is attempting to collect as much of this data as possible (Green 2005). We lack a solid

description of what the actual practice of paid instructors consists – or the complete set of required skills, knowledges, and abilities. Absent such data, constructing programs to support instructors in their endeavors is difficult.

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STATEMENT OF ORIGINALITY

I hereby attest that this paper is my original work prepared without the assistance of others to meet the requirements of the Diploma of Maitre d'Armes.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Walter G. Green III". The signature is written in a cursive style with a prominent flourish at the end.

Walter G. Green III  
Prevot  
United States Fencing Coaches Association