

Sherman College: The Challenges Ahead

Jerry Hardee, EdD, President

My inauguration as the third president of Sherman College of Straight Chiropractic this May was a magnificent occasion - the memories of which I will cherish for the rest my life. But, as I stated when I assumed the presidency of Sherman College in July 2001, the focus is not on me, but on Sherman and its future. Thus, the inauguration was not for my edification, but for the many students, alumni, faculty, staff and supporters who, over the years, have made Sherman College what it is, and now challenge me to lead it to even greater heights in this new millennium.

As a nonchiropractor, I have been asked on numerous occasions my views on chiropractic education and the significant steps necessary to foster a level of understanding and support that is vital to the future of the profession. And, more importantly, I have been asked what steps I will take as president to position the institution to continue to provide an excellent doctor of chiropractic degree program accredited by the Council on Chiropractic Education (CCE) and Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS); to uphold performance on national and state board exams; and to ensure the financial stability of the institution now and in the future.

These are great challenges, and I accept them wholeheartedly because they are the goals that will guide the future of Sherman College. The board of trustees and all others associated with the institution should expect nothing less when entrusting the college to a new president.

By now, most of our constituents know that Sherman College was recently awarded SACS accreditation for a five-year period, retroactive to January 2002. This was a campus-wide effort, and we are proud of this achievement. As an educator, I have learned that whether the subject is general education, chiropractic education or any other discipline, the teaching and learning process requires a curriculum capable of accomplishing the expected outcomes taught by highly qualified and capable faculty. When accreditation is the end result, it means that your institution has succeeded in meeting these standards, and it legitimizes the accreditation process and the institution's standing in the academic arena.

During my first year at Sherman College, I have instituted a process to assess and align the curriculum as an assurance that our graduates are prepared in a manner befitting the Sherman model, and are competent doctors of chiropractic who possess the knowledge, skills and attitudes one should have to be identified as "a Sherman College chiropractor." No matter how one evaluates an educational program, the desired results must meet expectations. There are several approaches to accomplishing these expectations.

I feel the most crucial approach is to integrate competencies throughout the curriculum. After only three months as president, it was apparent to me that we needed to take a more integrated, student-centered approach to evaluating and improving the Sherman College curriculum. When challenged to address this issue, Sherman College's faculty immediately embraced the idea. We have recently completed a thorough curriculum review to make the curriculum more student-friendly while improving quality and better equipping students to apply their classroom experiences when sitting for national board exams.

In an effort to raise the bar to the highest possible standard, Sherman College's clinical sciences faculty, administrators and leaders in the Chiropractic Health Center have designed a comprehensive approach to chiropractic technique and Health Center application. Unique in its unified approach, this package incorporates the finest aspects gleaned from the various methodologies, analyses, instrumentation and x-ray procedures, and represents the state of the chiropractic art. This comprehensive approach reflects the continuing commitment to excellence that has always been the hallmark of a Sherman College vertebral subluxation-centered education.

Academic excellence is not exclusive of core chiropractic values, and the Sherman College experience proves it. The board of trustees has honored me with the responsibility of continuously improving the curriculum and the whole institution, and preserving the college's commitment to its stated mission. It has recognized and stated the necessity to utilize the expertise of a professional educator to achieve professional results.

With these thoughts in mind, and with a clear understanding of how the curriculum should be structured, it does not matter whether or not I am a chiropractor - it matters that I am an educator.

In addition to meeting all of the academic and clinical competencies required for recognition by both CCE and our regional accrediting agency, SACS, Sherman College holds itself to an additional set of standards in straight chiropractic education. As a premiere program in teaching the core values of straight chiropractic, Sherman College symbolizes the quintessence of chiropractic philosophy and art blended with the best the profession has to offer in the clinical sciences.

At Sherman College, the cornerstone of teaching chiropractic's philosophy, art and science is to impart the knowledge and skills necessary to competently locate, analyze and correct vertebral subluxations, with the greatest precision and least amount of intervention.

What concerns me most about the state of the chiropractic profession are the competitive, debilitating views of philosophy within the profession. Differing views and healthy dialogue ought to be welcomed in the academy of chiropractic education, but when these debates lessen our effectiveness as chiropractic educators, it diminishes the stature of the profession.

No profession can reach its potential if it constantly weakens itself from internal strife. Unfortunately, over the years, there have been instances where the chiropractic profession has struggled because of internal turmoil and disagreements over philosophy and approaches relative to patient care. I have pledged to work diligently to foster collegiality and respect for the right of any individual or group to express their opinions as we work together and continue our efforts to position chiropractic into the mainstream of health care approaches around the world.

In accordance with this pledge of collegiality, and as an acknowledged leader in straight chiropractic education, Sherman College takes very seriously its commitment to advance the body of scientific knowledge through relevant research. Sherman College's research will continue to focus on the study of the vertebral subluxation itself; on methods to detect the presence of, and adjust, vertebral subluxations; on methods to determine an increased quality of life as a result of subluxation correction; and on means to further elevate the quality of care delivered by the chiropractic profession.

The future of Sherman College and of the chiropractic profession is bright. Sherman College is garnering not only the support of doctors of chiropractic and chiropractic patrons, but it is also gaining an increased level of support from individuals and organizations outside the profession. These outside supporters recognize the great value of chiropractic care and its contribution to health, and they are joining forces with those in the profession to promote chiropractic as a

primary health care approach to maintaining health.

I am honored to have been chosen as Sherman College's third president and I look forward to continuing the college's commitment to excellence that has always been the hallmark of the Sherman College vertebral subluxation-centered approach to chiropractic care.

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