

The Plight of Professional Expansion -- A Lesson to be Learned

Kenneth W. Padgett

Expansion of our profession or of a college is good for all of chiropractic, particularly when it increases visibility and introduces chiropractic to new people and places. Expansion, however, cannot occur without change, a phenomenon which is usually met with no small amount of skepticism, hesitancy, and initial concerns (some of which may be more justifiable than others).

As most of you are well aware, New York Chiropractic College has, in the past year, undergone both expansion and change of a most significant nature: The move from our 50-acre commuter campus in Old Brookville, Long Island, to a newly renovated 286-acre residential campus in Seneca Falls, New York. This massive move included relocating the main campus over 350 miles from its former location, and accepting athletics, dining, and residential responsibilities for the first time in NYCC's history. It also included expansion of our public health centers with the opening of a Syracuse, New York clinic, a campus clinic, and the building of the Ernest G. Napolitano Postgraduate Center adjacent to our existing Levittown, Long Island facilities.

As far as we know, this is the most extensive relocation and expansion of any chiropractic college in the United States. Perhaps that is why our changes met with some initial doubt and even some resistance. However, in the future, we expect to see other colleges face the same need for expansion that we did. More importantly, we hope that when that happens, we'll be able to share our experiences so that they can benefit from our bouts with change as they deal with their own. We hope our expansion serves not to stimulate competition but to ease the future transitions of others who can learn from the positives and negatives of our move.

The situation NYCC faced was this: We had an urgent need to expand our library and laboratory facilities, especially since much of what we offered our students was shared with New York Institute of Technology, including library privileges. In fact, we tried to expand right where we were by investing \$400,000 in our previous site, but we were unable to overcome town board zoning variances in Old Brookville. We looked at a number of places in Long Island and New York city areas but none completely met our needs. New Jersey and Connecticut had several appropriate facilities readily available, but our charter requires us to remain in New York state. By the time the former Eisenhower College campus in upstate New York's Finger Lakes region was identified, it was clear that we had no choice but to commit to a major relocation.

Many of you who are now reading this were concerned (even skeptical) of our move from a major metropolitan area to a small, rural, upstate community. We were concerned ourselves. But the results which we still discover daily have far surpassed anything even I had imagined.

Naturally, there are drawbacks to a rural location, especially when compared to the metropolitan arena of New York city, but every place we looked at had its own set of negatives. Though now settled in a small rural community (population: 9,886 as of 1990), we are within an hour's drive of the cities of Rochester, Syracuse, and Ithaca. Along with the diverse cultural opportunities these cities offer, they are also homes to the University of Rochester, Syracuse University, and Cornell

University. Even a day trip to Niagara Falls and Toronto is fast becoming commonplace to our community.

The area offers us a low crime rate, low cost of living, and neighborly warmth, yet keeps our students, faculty, and staff within convenient reach of urban and suburban lifestyles, as well as near the glacier-sculpted lakes, gorges, and state parks which comprise the "Grand Canyon of the East." Our NYCC community now enjoys a tourist region offering a rich native American heritage and a strong connection to the underground railroad amid the birthplaces of Memorial Day and womens' rights.

Our 15-building facilities include a bilevel library and anatomy center, and an athletic center complete with gymnasium, tennis, and racketball courts, and a 25-meter swimming pool. Our administration building houses a dining hall, a post office, a chiropractic museum, and a 351-seat theater. The academic building includes classrooms, lecture halls, the campus clinic, and spacious labs and x-ray rooms. These three main buildings are linked by underground tunnels which house our campus bookstore. The residence halls (we now provide individual, married, and family housing) include lounges with fireplaces and basement recreation areas. The campus embraces lake front property and a boat launch on Cayuga Lake, numerous ponds, and a not yet renovated golf course (though NYCC students have special memberships at a country club less than one mile down the road).

Our facilities have, in fact, been so popular with our campus family, neighboring communities, and visitors, that we are making plans to add buildings. We anticipate one new building with six large classrooms and a large clinic, since we seem to have already outgrown our initial campus clinic location. Another public health center is being planned to join the Levittown, Long Island and Syracuse, New York clinics in bringing chiropractic to the public, though the location of this new facility remains under discussion.

Most importantly, our bricks and mortar house our faculty and students, and state-of-the-art equipment and technology for them to learn on, work with, and use for their research. Buildings, after all, are inconsequential; it's what we make of them and how we live in them that matters. No matter how pretty the walls, they will be no match for the construction of knowledge that occurs within them. In addition to a beautiful campus and geographical region, we've been able to attract outstanding faculty from a variety of professions: Ph.Ds, DCs, MDs, anatomists, physicists, and more because of our new location. The result, based on trends we've observed since relocating, is that we now seem to attract the same outstanding qualities in students. Admission to our Fall 1992 class closed in early March, and applications for our fall 1993 class are already showing great promise.

As large as we've become in physical size and in numbers of applicants, we intend to retain our 11:1 student/faculty ratio. Quality will remain more important than quantity, to ensure individualized educational opportunities and high selectivity, and to maintain the NYCC philosophy. We prepare our students to continue their lifelong educational commitment long after they obtain their degree. We introduce them to multiple techniques, philosophies, and methods, and give them the freedom and opportunity to choose how they will practice, and in which direction they will take chiropractic.

All in all, the end result is far superior than what we had anticipated. This relocation, with its great magnitude and impact, has allowed us to experience a kind of change that many people never face in their lifetime. Facing the challenges of such a move has been exhilarating and humbling. We became caretakers of past traditions and pioneers of new ones. We found that some things were left behind and some things could never be forgotten. We faced the anticipated and the

unanticipated. Without a doubt we -- the administrators, faculty, staff, students, and alumni that are NYCC -- faced tremendous development when we sought to undertake this move. As I write this ten months after our campus dedication, we still do.

Interestingly, somewhere along the way, something has happened. We've rediscovered pride in our heritage and our traditions. We've set new goals, striving higher and harder toward better education and professional progress. We've found a new sense of dedication to help improve the profession.

You've heard my testimony: We now have a beautiful campus, extraordinary faculty, and an abundance of fine students as three results of this move. Other testimonials are perhaps more important: We have alumni, away from us for years, contacting us to share their accomplishments and visit our campus (and we're as proud of them as they are of us). We have students enjoying their home, and working with us to make it even better. We have chiropractors visiting and contacting us for assistance from around the world and across the United States (and they're not just NYCC graduates).

What we hope most to have is other friends in the profession learning from our successes and mistakes when the time comes for them to face similar experiences of change. As Rousseau said: "There is nothing more difficult to take in hand, more perilous to conduct, or more uncertain in its success than to take the lead in the introduction of a new order of things."

Kenneth W. Padgett, D.C.
President, New York Chiropractic College
Seneca Falls, New York

JULY 1992