

Education and Research: A Tour of Chiropractic Colleges

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After 35 years of development, my company, Activator Methods, International, has matured to the point that I can spend less time on day-to-day operations, and more time to address larger and longer-term issues. One of my special interests is the evolution of our schools, and as a former college trustee (Logan, 1981-1991), I'd like to think I bring some experience to the task of reviewing their progress. This autumn, instead of my customary participation in most of our busy, end-of-the-year seminar schedule, I chose to visit several U.S. chiropractic colleges.

Logan

Since I wear Logan shorts to bed (and am a bit biased), I started the tour at my old *alma mater*, Logan College of Chiropractic. Logan's campus is truly beautiful. Situated on 105 pristine acres, it fulfills the stereotyped image of an Ivy League institution. Driving up that long, winding roadway from Schoettler Road still sends chills up my spine. (Remember: At Logan, we start at the sacrum.) I had the pleasure of dining with Logan's president and his wife, Drs. George and Elizabeth Goodman.

I spoke to four classes that morning (approximately 400 students), and was impressed with the students and the questions they asked after the lecture. The college is getting ready for its 75th anniversary (in 2010), and a capital campaign is already underway. Long known for turning out the "reasonable chiropractor," Logan alumni fill a goodly number of leadership positions in the profession. Its research department is under the direction of a new administrator, Doug Dean, PhD, from Washington University, who brings a great track record of grantsmanship with the National Institutes of Health. Logan's scientists are collaborating with Washington University in a program to look at chiropractic care for pregnant women, a long-overdue field of inquiry. I had a great time at the school, and I know the future of chiropractic will be well-represented by Logan.

New York

My next stop was New York Chiropractic College (NYCC), located in rural and historic Seneca Falls. I had dinner with President Frank Nicchi, DC, and Academic Dean Clay McDonald, JD, DC. The next day, I spoke to about 300 students during their Student Appreciation Day festivities. I had never been to NYCC, and I must say that the campus is spectacularly beautiful. It was mid-October, and the color changes in the foliage were breathtaking!

I noticed two important things that are taking place on the campus. The research department is very solid, and it has developed quite an impressive neurophysiology laboratory. The research administrator, Dr. Jeanmarie Burke, is studying motor control and motor activities with different forces applied to the spine. Dr. Don Dishman and company are investigating the neurophysiological effects of adjusting using "trans-cranial magnetic stimulation." Dr. Dishman is looking at stimulating the brain using magnetic energy. Kim Brown, a student with a research background, has initiated a study of post-stroke geriatric patients.

Dr. McDonald made sure I was shown the new multidisciplinary clinic, which is his dream come true. It has been open only a few months, but it is already nearing capacity. I was very impressed that the students have a "full-service" health facility right on campus. The community of Seneca Falls is reportedly delighted with the new facilities and services offered. This translates to more patients for the interns, and better-qualified chiropractic graduates.

Life West

From upstate New York, I headed to "SPA" day at Life Chiropractic College West (LCCW), in Hayward, Calif. "SPA" is an acronym for "Science, Philosophy and Art." The event brought out about 700 people, and I was warmly greeted by my good friend, LCCW President Gerald Clum, DC. The crowd was enthusiastic, and the students, even more so. I spoke twice that day - once in the afternoon to students, and again that night to students and field doctors.

The evening class was the most enjoyable. A field doctor walked in and sat off to the side. I encouraged him to take a seat closer to the front so he could see better. He promptly informed me that he was only there to get continuing-education credit and was planning to sleep through my lecture. Well, we had a full house in the main room and two more overflow rooms with video piped to them. As I began, I pointed to the field doctor and informed the crowd of his plan. I suggested they keep an eye on the gentleman, and if he nodded, they should yell and I would go directly to his chair and wake him up. The energy in the room was so good that our sleepy field doctor never did manage to nod off.

Life West turns out a great clinician steeped in chiropractic. It was unfortunate that, owing to time constraints, I was unable to observe the college's research department.

Palmer

My last stop was in Davenport, Iowa, home of the Palmer College of Chiropractic (PCC). I spoke at an all-school assembly, and as one of a very few non-Palmer alumni to have been granted the D.D. Palmer Scientific award, I felt right at home. The assembly was held in the old Masonic Lodge building, and when filled with more than a thousand high-energy students, the place really came alive. President Guy Reikeman, DC, introduced me, and we were off to the races. It was a blast to see the students' faces when they were presented hard data to accompany the lecture. At PCC, as elsewhere, the culture of the students is changing rapidly, and we will have a whole new generation who ask, "Where's the beef?"

The highlight of my visit to PCC followed the presentation, when I was given a tour of the new Palmer Research Center. The physical facility is outstanding, but what goes on inside is the gem. William C. Meeker, DC, MPH, a friend for many years and the research administrator at Palmer, proudly showed me through the facility. I had the privilege to observe the scientists at work. I visited the laboratory of Chuck Henderson, DC, PhD, and observed his work on an animal model for producing fixation of joints in the spine. His goal is to validate an operational definition of subluxation. In this effort, he collaborates with Ram Gudivalli, a biomechanist experienced in flexion-distraction of the spine. They seek to understand what happens when a spine is put into flexion, and what follows after the flexion is completed.

Next, I visited the lab of Joel Pickar, DC, PhD. Dr. Pickar is a neurophysiologist of great renown, and Palmer is fortunate to have him. His efforts are dedicated to looking at subluxation from a rather different vantage point; he is investigating what spinal nerve is affected by what stimulation. His goal is to determine what type of adjustment works best for particular patients. Drs. Jim DeVoght and Wally Schaffer have just had a paper published in *JMPT* on the temperomandibular

joint and its dysfunction; they will continue in this area of investigation.

I was impressed not only by the various investigations underway at PCC, but also by the long-term funding. The Palmer folks have been awarded some \$3 million of NIH money, and are engaged in projects that will span as long as five years. One of my concerns is that before we "Save Our Subluxation," we should establish a valid, operational definition for it, perhaps within the next few years. When Dr. Meeker noted that this was putting him "under the gun" with such a short time frame, I pointed out that we put a man on the moon in 10 years. He quickly reminded me that we had less than NASA-size funding.

I must say I have had a ball this autumn, and believe that chiropractic education and research are showing signs of maturity. As I look back at my days at Logan College in the late 1950s, and compare them to what goes on today, the contrast is striking. I'm not satisfied with where we are now, but the progress these past 40 years is unmistakable. Chiropractic is growing up. So, when you see these dedicated researchers on campus, give them a "Well done!"

This tour of colleges has been a delight - so much so that I've appointed myself ambassador from the research community to the students and the field. This spring, I'll begin an international tour, and will sing the praises of those dedicated investigators who give us so much for so little. I hope to visit every college campus this year.

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