

25 Years of Leadership in Chiropractic Education

DC INTERVIEWS DRS. GERRY CLUM AND CARL CLEVELAND III

Editorial Staff

There is nothing like experience to provide us with understanding. In January 2005, two chiropractic college presidents began their 25th years of service - Dr. Gerry Clum with Life Chiropractic College West, and Dr. Carl Cleveland III with Cleveland Chiropractic College. What they have seen, the lessons they have learned, and their unique perspectives provide direction and reflection as chiropractic enters its 110th year.

Dynamic Chiropractic (DC): How long have you been president of your college?

Dr. Clum: I have just begun my 25th year as president of Life Chiropractic College West! I will complete 25 years as president in January 2006.

Dr. Cleveland: Since January 1981 [24 years last month].

DC: What is your greatest accomplishment as president?

Dr. Cleveland: What I am proudest of, and what I enjoy most about coming to the office or into the classroom each week at the Cleveland Kansas City and Los Angeles campuses, is continuing to be part of a movement that prepares competent graduates to enter successful practices. It's all about helping people enjoy healthier lives through chiropractic. That's the best part of leadership in chiropractic education.

Dr. Clum: My greatest accomplishment over the last 25 years has been consistent and continued employment! The days of Palmer, Logan, Cleveland, Janse and Napolitano, where a person served as president of a chiropractic institution for decades, are fading, and perhaps rightfully so. Dr. Carl Cleveland III and I might be the last of the breed.

On a personal level, my greatest accomplishment has been to watch, and hopefully to have been a party to, a young student developing their skills as a chiropractor and giving that first life-changing adjustment - the outcome of which was beyond their explanation and imagination. It is a privilege to witness a student deliver an adjustment that is healing for the patient and the provider alike - it doesn't happen at the level I am writing about very often, but when it does, it is something to behold.

On an institutional level, there are two high points that come to mind. The first was while president of the Association of Chiropractic Colleges, to guide the development and implementation of the Chiro-Loan program. It was this program that relieved the colleges of dependency on the HEAL program and that subsequently brought tremendous benefits to students, institutions and the profession at large, while minimizing the overall long-term cost of a chiropractic education. The second would be the acquisition, funding, design, building and occupancy of the campus currently enjoyed by Life Chiropractic College West in Hayward, California.

DC: What are the most important changes in chiropractic education you have seen since you became president?

Dr. Clum: The movement to the level and quality of education offered to today's chiropractic student is the most important change I have seen in the last quarter century.

There have also been a great number of changes in the structure of chiropractic educational institutions along the way. Life University led the way in transitioning from single-degree chiropractic programs to broader-based educational offerings. Where Life University expanded into liberal arts and science education, other institutions expanded into other areas of health care, such as acupuncture, homeopathy, naturopathy and massage.

Regional accreditation has been sought and achieved by the great majority of educational institutions offering chiropractic degree programs. The availability of technology on the campuses of those institutions offering chiropractic degree programs has grown exponentially over the past 25 years, and in particular in the last 10 years. The facilities available to chiropractic programs and institutions have seen a dramatic enhancement in the last two decades.

The cost of chiropractic education has increased dramatically over the past 25 years. In the scheme of things, it remains a cost-effective educational choice for the student-consumer, but over the last two and a half decades, the costs have certainly outpaced inflation.

Dr. Cleveland: The most significant advancement for chiropractic education in the past 30 years has been the recognition by the U.S. Department of Education of the Council on Chiropractic Education, in 1974. Though this change pre-dates my tenure as president, I cite the example because of the immense change the CCE has fostered, and the influence it continues to maintain today.

CCE's recognition by the U.S. Department of Education represented chiropractic education's arrival as part of mainstream higher education. It has resulted in uniformity in chiropractic educational standards and chiropractic student eligibility for financial aid, without which it would have been impossible for many students to achieve the dream of becoming a doctor of chiropractic. Whereas CCE has not been without its growing pains, challenges, and controversies, the Council, through the end of the last decade,* served as a unifying factor for the leaders of all chiropractic colleges, along with representation from the Federation of Chiropractic Licensing Boards, the ACA and the ICA. These groups met in annual and semi-annual convocations to discuss and deliberate about issues affecting chiropractic education and research. In addition, this collegiality fostered the incorporation of the Association of Chiropractic Colleges (ACC) in 1988 and the more recently formed Council on Chiropractic Education - International. From 1974 up until 1999, this opportunity for direct interfacing with such broad representation from within the profession, and the spirit of collegiality was invaluable in enhancing communication within the profession.

*With the reorganization of the CCE in 1999, representation of the ACA, ICA and full council participation with all accredited member colleges was discontinued. Presently, seven chiropractic institutional representatives sit on the council, including two college presidents.

DC: What do you see as the biggest issue in chiropractic education?

Dr. Cleveland: The greatest issue in chiropractic education is to continue to educate competent and confident doctors of chiropractic, and prepare them to enter the profession of chiropractic and the business of health care. The resources for the conduct of research continue to remain key to the advancement of this profession.

Dr. Clum: The biggest issue in chiropractic education today is a loss of focus as to the intent and purpose of chiropractic education. In our headlong rush for acceptance and greater access to the health care market, we are morphing into whatever is in vogue, and along the way, we are losing the essence of what it is to be a chiropractor. Our pursuit of recognition by various parties has caused us to forget, or at least overlook, what sustained us for over a century as we scramble for a piece of today's health care delivery pie. The power and significance of the chiropractic adjustment to assist in the restoration of health, well-being and vitality are being lost by degrees every day. Once this loss exceeds a certain point, recovery will not be possible.

DC: What do you see as the biggest challenge facing chiropractic education, both now and in the future?

Dr. Clum: Maintaining and increasing respect for the capacities of the chiropractic adjustment. If we don't better appreciate and value the power of an adjustment, others will focus on the skill and displace us as the preeminent persons in the healing arts providing this type of care.

Our lack of appreciation for our own contribution to the healing arts is staggering. If we continue to devalue the adjustment, it will create an environment for others to value it more highly than we do, and in so doing, minimize the contribution we can make.

In addition, at this time of transition in health care concepts, health care delivery and health care funding, [the challenge is] to keep, in the midst of all the change, the awareness before the profession that many of the changes in perspective and application are exactly what we have called for, battled for, argued for, and campaigned for. We won't get the credit for being a part of the sea-change underway, but we must take pride in the fact the movement is in our direction and seeks to advance the ideas and concepts our forefathers articulated decades ago.

Dr. Cleveland: Outside of the ever-increasing costs of higher education, the greatest challenge affecting chiropractic education and the profession is the problem of identity. Chiropractic lacks a clear presence and role in the health care marketplace, and this has an impact on consumer awareness of the benefits of chiropractic and its role in health and wellness. The leadership of the national and state associations and the chiropractic educational community must step forward and cooperatively support a nationwide public information campaign focused on bringing the image of this profession in line with the reality of contemporary chiropractic practice.

DC: Thank you, Dr. Clum and Dr. Cleveland III. We appreciate your ongoing efforts to educate the chiropractors of tomorrow. In doing so, you are helping educate today's chiropractors and build a brighter future for the entire profession.

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