

How Will CCE Accreditation Affect Sherman College?

AN EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW WITH PRESIDENT THOMAS GELARDI, DC

Editorial Staff

Sherman College of Straight Chiropractic is the first of the colleges formally accredited by SCASA (Straight Chiropractic Academic Standards Association) to be accredited by the Council on Chiropractic Education (CCE). This has been a long road for Sherman College. Sherman College President Thomas Gelardi, DC, tells us about that journey and what it means:

"DC": For background information, please provide a chronology of Sherman's accreditation experiences since its inception.

Dr. Gelardi: Sherman College was founded in 1973. At that time there were two accrediting agencies: the Association of Chiropractic Colleges (ACC), directed by the International Chiropractors Association (ICA), and the Council on Chiropractic Education (CCE), directed by the American Chiropractic Association (ACA). Neither of the agencies were federally recognized, and only four of the twelve colleges in existence at that time were accredited by the CCE. Sherman College applied to the ACC because, at that time, its educational standards more closely reflected Sherman's mission and objectives.

Following the CCE's recognition by the U.S. Commissioner of Education in 1974 (today, the Secretary of Education), the presidents of the ACC member colleges met to consider their future. It was the consensus of those in attendance that economically it would be best that their colleges seek CCE accreditation. The ACC then went out of business. Sherman applied for CCE accreditation. Its application was denied, in part, for a lack of commitment to the CCE's concept of a chiropractor. Sherman decided not to reapply to the CCE but to seek accreditation through the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools. During this period another specialized chiropractic accrediting agency was formed, the Straight chiropractic Academic Standards Association (SCASA). Sherman also applied to this agency. Sherman was successful in gaining accreditation through SACS and SCASA and still retains membership with both. In about 1992, at the encouragement of the U.S. Department of Education, SCASA member colleges entered into negotiations with the CCE in an effort to modify its standards so as to accommodate the missions of all chiropractic colleges. The hope was that one agency could represent the full community of interest in the profession. The CCE made revisions to its standards and Sherman College applied for accreditation in April 1993. Sherman was granted accreditation in January, 1995.

"DC": How has completing the rigors of CCE accreditation changed Sherman?

Dr. Gelardi: Sherman feels that it has always maintained rigorous standards. It has been meeting the rigorous standards of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools and the Straight Chiropractic Academic Standards Association since 1981. The CCE process, as all previous accreditation

experiences, has certainly helped the college refine and improve its program. Every agency has a few unique requirements. Sherman modified its patient examination and referral procedures and its outcome assessment program to comply with the CCE standards. Changes to the CCE standards in recent years allowed Sherman, while complying with these standards, to retain the concept of a chiropractor as one who contributes to patient health through the correction of subluxation.

"DC": Is Sherman planning to change its name as did Pennsylvania?

Dr. Gelardi: No. The board of trustees believes the name appropriately describes the college and its mission.

"DC": Some may suggest that Sherman has compromised over the "diagnosis" issue, how would you respond?

Dr. Gelardi: Sherman changed its procedures with regard to diagnosis and referral. While I believe Sherman already had a very sound position, the CCE did not modify that part of its standards. We have sincerely committed to training students to assess the patient, form a clinical impression, and refer certain patients to other health care providers for further assessment and necessary care. The improvements in the CCE standards, from our perspective, lie in the CCE's more inclusive concept of a chiropractor. Sherman's concept of a chiropractor, as one who contributes to health through the correction of subluxations rather than through the treatment of symptoms and disease, now appears to be acceptable under the CCE umbrella. This diversity is good for the entire profession.

"DC": How will CCE accreditation affect Sherman's unique identity?

Dr. Gelardi: Here, I could write a book. It will help preserve it. Our enrollment will grow almost as rapidly as Sherman will allow. Our faculty and board of trustees decided to limit enrollment to 60 entering students per quarter. This will limit the total enrollment to 750 students. Accreditation means being able to commit more of our resources to advancing our unique educational program, accessing and sharing data in the greater chiropractic community and sharing ideas in a collegial, rather than an adversarial setting. It means having greater opportunity to influence chiropractic education. Most states are expected to open to Sherman graduates. I believe each CCE member institution is unique and CCE membership positively affects that uniqueness.

"DC": Overall, how do you feel about the CCE accreditation process?

Dr. Gelardi: Great! It is quite a professional process. The attitudes of the staff, visiting teams and commission members were positive, helpful and encouraging. The CCE definitely has high academic standards. The process is necessarily detailed and labor intensive, but quite fair. It was very similar to the process we had been through many times with the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools and the Straight Chiropractic Academic Standards Association.

"DC": Is there anything else you would like to say?

Dr. Gelardi: Yes. During the process we received many calls and offers of help. President John Allenberg of Northwestern offered to fly to Sherman at his own expense to help us. President Carl Cleveland III invited us to his campus and completely opened his college to us. Our administrators spoke with many of the Cleveland College administrators and carried away many of their documents for study. President Sid Williams of Life College answered our call for help in the area of research and

intern procedures. President Jim Winterstein of National College and many others were most encouraging. Our special thanks go to Drs. William Fuller and Neil Stern for their sage guidance.

The greatest help, by far, came from those students who attended Sherman College through the years. They went through hell in support of what they believed. Without them Sherman would not be here today. Of course Sherman owes a lot to its faculty, staff and administration for their loyalty and hard work. We will always remember the Sherman supporters who gave so generously. Few realize what a supportive family Shermanites are. We are united in pursuing Sherman's mission, while always respecting those who see things differently. The profession should be proud of its diversity and recognize it as a source of strength. The significance of this event goes beyond the accreditation of Sherman, it reflects the growth and maturity of the profession.

"DC": Thank you Dr. Gelardi. Good luck to you, your students, and the college.

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