

The Most Important Issue Facing the Osteopathic Profession, and How I Would Lead Change in This Area

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Presently, the osteopathic profession has found itself in a very promising and able position; our profession has grown extensively in past decades, and many would say that we are now situated at a frontier. We are expanding rapidly, opening our existing doors to more students, and creating brand new doors in the form of new schools. Many will say we have achieved "Greatness," some may say that we have exceeded our pioneer's greatest expectations; however, it is difficult to dispute that many challenges lie before us. As a future physician, I feel it will be our job to meet the challenge of achieving responsible growth while maintaining our identity as a profession.

The past year has been a commonplace for debate in the osteopathic profession: What is the future of our degree designation? How will we establish OGME spots? These questions, amongst many others, highlight the need for the future leaders of the profession to maintain a sense of our roots and teachings. It would serve our best interests to rely on our relationships with our colleagues and our sense of pride in the osteopathic profession when dealing with the complexities that accompany great professional growth and change. An organization being called on to grow and provide service inevitably faces challenges: the question of quality vs. quantity and the sense of preserving our founding identity. It is my hope that as future leaders of our profession, we will attack the undertaking of professional expansion with the values and principles that the osteopathic profession was founded on: interpersonal relationships, care for others, communication, and pride in one's profession.

Throughout my involvements as a medical student, I have gained a unique perspective on the osteopathic profession. I have met students from every osteopathic school, I have heard their delights and their problems, and I have engaged in discussion regarding many important issues that we are presently facing. Amidst many insights that I have gained, I have learned that there are few things more valuable than your relationships with your colleagues and other osteopathic physicians. It is through camaraderie and collective discussion made possible by these relationships that the true issues facing our profession can be identified.

I have learned that in order to expand our reach, we must first have a strong foundation; our leaders will need to remember that, while we have made great strides, we are still a small profession in need of unity. We must remain mindful of all members of our profession and not allow our successes to overshadow our shortcomings. While OGME opportunities, political clout, and community visibility may be available to some members of the profession, we must work diligently to make these aspects a reality to all osteopathic students and physicians, from A.T. Still University in Kirksville to Touro University in Harlem and Rocky Vista University in Colorado. If we are to expand, we must not dilute our product, but rather remain cohesive, resolute, and proud as a profession; we must expand while maintaining osteopathic character. It is through this

unison of purpose that we can further expand and establish an osteopathic product with a sense of our original and true identity.

As a member of the Council of Osteopathic Student Government Presidents and as a Student Government Association president of MSUCOM, I have been able to learn the value of communication and collaboration with my peers. I have learned that while we all occupy an osteopathic niche of the medical profession, the issues facing each one of us are wide ranging and complex. We will not be able to aptly recognize and address concerns of our peers if we do not establish and maintain relationships with members of our profession. Through these bonds, we can then collectively gain information and bring issues to the forefront, as being united and knowledgeable will best enable us to tackle concerns facing the profession.

I believe that through interpersonal relationships with one's colleagues, a sense of professional consciousness can be obtained; for until you have heard the plights of your peers, you cannot have a true sense of the challenges facing osteopathic physicians, and cannot foster a united profession. To accomplish this goal of togetherness, I would continue to emphasize professional camaraderie, intercollegiate relationships, and collective dialogue; it would be my goal to participate in and encourage events like the AOA House of Delegates, the AOA Convention, D.O. Day on the Hill, and other osteopathic displays of unity that promote our sense of identity. I would encourage student involvement in events of the profession, physician-to-student mentoring, and dialogue between osteopathic colleges. And in the future, while convention meeting rooms will eventually be too small to accommodate convention-goers, while Student Government Associations may double in size, and while U.S. senators' offices may eventually not have enough chairs to fit all D.O Day on the Hill participants, it seems that these would be trivial obstacles of a flourishing profession.

The successes of our profession are truly remarkable; many still remember the days when osteopathic physicians could not serve in the military or obtain licenses in certain states. While we should take pride in our success, we should also make the effort to preserve the fundamental beliefs of what it means to be an osteopathic physician. I believe that amidst growth, we can still remain unique, proud, and true to the roots of our profession if we continue to emphasize the value and importance of collectivity. Let us not fade into the blurry pool of healthcare providers that occupy today's medical profession, but rather, maintain a sense of identity and collaboration that our pioneers would be truly proud of. May we recognize that with growth and greatness comes great responsibility: responsibility to our patients, but no less important, responsibility to our profession.