

**National University of Health Sciences**  
**President Joseph P. D. Stiefel**  
**Inauguration Address**  
**June 22, 2013**

Thank you Mr. Schonauer, members of the board of trustees, President Emeritus Winterstein, the administration, distinguished delegates, my Florida colleagues, my colleagues here in Lombard, and, of course, my family and friends.

I want to first give thanks for the tremendous amount of support that so many of you have extended to me for so many years. A special debt of gratitude goes to Dr. Winterstein and the board of trustees for the huge amount of time and effort that went into ensuring the successful transition of the university before, during and after Dr. Winterstein's 27-year tenure as president.

Today is a celebration: a commencement. Ceremonies with such circumstance and pomp are meant to celebrate this occasion, and also to celebrate those who have served with distinction before us. Academic ceremonies like the one we are having here today, are meant to function as much as a window to the future as they are a mirror of reflection on our rich institutional history. Thank you all for participating in this great day for National.

Over the past several years, as we have gone through the succession process, I have been asked two questions with almost weekly regularity: When are you moving? And, are you ready? These two questions were asked by my colleagues and the many groups that I have had the opportunity to meet, alongside Dr. Winterstein, during the transition. All groups save one.

A few months back I attended a special meeting of the Council on Chiropractic Education for the presidents of their accredited institutions. None of the presidents asked if I was ready. I suspect they already knew my answer, the answer I had resolved long ago, my answer to "when will I be ready?" Not until two minutes ago!

Having come to an understanding of what is entailed for this position, I have wanted nothing more than to take all of the time possible to prepare for this successful transition. The time for preparation is over. Now we move onward and upward.

Nicholas Kristof, a columnist for *The New York Times*, said at a recent graduation speech he gave at Syracuse University: “Talent is universal, opportunity is not.”

I am a firm believer that education provides opportunity. It is what this institution has been providing for 107 years. Opportunity is what we do. So I want to talk about all the types of opportunity we provide.

For students, the opportunities are numerous. However, the responsibility for that opportunity lies with them. Historically, the purpose for the university system was to provide a safe haven in which students could explore various disciplines without the worry of outside persecution and distraction: a place where the “sage on stage” would fill the students’ minds with data and information. At first students were not even allowed to own textbooks. They could only take notes. In the present day, all of that information is a “Google-second” away.

At National we have the opportunity to expect a lot from our students. We expect that they come here thirsty for that knowledge, but more importantly, willing to ask their professors for more so that they are better prepared for their chosen field of health care delivery upon graduation.

Certainly we as a university must still provide a strong foundation of knowledge; a guiding hand through the huge amount of current and up-to-date information that is our expertise. But our opportunity extends far beyond that. We ensure opportunities of the “yet-to-be” students of tomorrow by successfully educating the graduates of today.

While I was a dean at our Florida campus, I would often be at a meeting with our partners from several different campuses at SPC, and someone would say to me: “Your interns are great. They changed my life.” Colleagues, it is you who have provided that opportunity, because that person goes on to tell another and another. Success breeds success.

We can make videos, produce new viewbooks, travel to the state capitol or Washington, DC. However the greatest opportunity we have as an institution, and as health care providers, is to demonstrate what we can do and could do through the physicians and health care providers who we graduate across this stage.

We must continue this opportunity. We have bright students at this university. We must continue to ask them to challenge themselves. *We* must provide the example for what they chose to become.

I am certain we all agree that the graduates of this academy must possess a comprehensive knowledge of the human condition, the willingness to overcome a “sick-care” mindset, and a patient-centered practice ethic. But equally important are character and professionalism. While our incoming students have been well prepared before matriculation, an understanding of what it means to enter into a profession is a new endeavor to most of our students. We are all responsible for advancing the character and understanding of professionalism in these students.

I’ve always said that at National we do not give grades: students earn them. Consumerism has no place in higher education. Again, we provide opportunity. A wise educator once told me, “There is a difference between customer service and student service. The difference is that that customer is always right.”

I liken higher education to going to the movies. You should figure out what kind of movie you want to see, whether it’s science fiction or a true story. You should read the reviews, and then buy your ticket. And just like watching a movie, the more you are engaged, the more you’ll get out of it. Buying the ticket does not insure that you’ll enjoy every moment of the movie. It doesn’t even insure that you’ll stay awake. But when it’s over, you may feel like a hero or perhaps simply more human than when you went in.

A week or so ago when I left our Florida campus for the last time as its dean, I looked back down the sidewalk that I had traveled so many times into work, and at the buildings on campus. In 2008, I did the same thing here at this campus when I left for Florida. But I didn’t really see the buildings, more so I thought of the people inside of them: those that I’d worked with, some who are still here, some who have come and gone. We have beautiful facilities are our disposal at both locations, to be sure, but what makes colleges and universities interesting places are the people.

As a side note, Stephen Joel Trachtenberg, President Emeritus of George Washington University, wrote that “every campus must have a crazy professor.” I’ll let the faculty among us decide quietly to themselves if they satisfy that requirement.

Nonetheless, it is the people at this university, and in our wider university community, that I hold dear. People are the driving force and the key element of success — and, thereby, opportunity. I have watched so many pour so much into what they do here, and that's why we continue to have opportunity. Our faculty, many of whom have taught generations of physicians, still work passionately for class time to do what they do.

When traveling to various conventions and meetings, I often have the opportunity to sit with alumni. I ask them all the same question: "What do you remember most about National?" Almost everyone answers this question the same way. They recount how difficult the program was and how thankful they were for this, even though they may have not fully appreciated it at the time. Secondly, they remember a teacher. The names change from alumnus to alumna, but they have some great stories.

That is why I take this opportunity to remind you that you do make a difference! With every lecture, you are investing in the treatment of patients you most likely will never meet. That's opportunity!

We must remember the resources that we have within each other. The dossiers that your colleagues have would amaze you. We must continue to respect the years of service from those who can remind us of where we came from and, just as importantly, make way for, support and believe in the enthusiasm of the new faces in the halls of this university. Because we all come from an "opportunity," and our success lies in the achievements of those we are fortunate to have helped along the way.

This is especially important when directed towards our students. Each of us has the responsibility of doing all we can to ensure a successful graduate. Let me be clear: the responsibility lies with both the faculty and staff. Everyone's job description should read, "supports student success and achievement as a member of the university." You are each that important.

While you as members of the staff may not be lecturing, or demonstrating in a lab, your influence is far greater than you think. As an example, students may leave a mid-term examination and not be so thrilled about question 37. But they'll forget about that soon enough. However, if you make a scheduling error, or miscalculate their financial aid package, it's "pitchforks and torches" for the next week!

Kindness and attention to detail go a long way, and we have that in spades here at National, and I appreciate that very much. It is important to remember that the responsibility for student success isn't across the pond, across the hall, upstairs, downstairs, or the other side of the camera. It's university-wide.

That is the opportunity we have today, but what about tomorrow's opportunity? How will we do tomorrow? What direction will we go? The answer is simple: We will go forward, we will continue to provide opportunity, and we will continue to search for the answers to why what we do works so well.

In fact, that is why this institution was founded so long ago. We knew that chiropractic medicine worked, and we wanted a better understanding of how it worked. We have come a long way. We have diversified. Naturopathic medicine, acupuncture and oriental medicine, massage therapy and advanced clinical training have provided yet more opportunities to explore the "why?" as well as more opportunities to provide conservative health care, and more ways to redefine the health care landscape. We will continue to look for improved ways of delivering evidence-based, primary care driven medical education. Part of that answer lies in researching the patient-centered outcomes of our interventions.

National has become an example of how to integrate medical education from different disciplines. We will look for more opportunities to do so. Many of those opportunities lie outside of the walls of this institution. Integration and partnerships within education are the future. Gone are the days when you sent your child to school with a big box of 64 crayons. It is far more efficient to equip them with a box of eight and borrow burnt sienna and spring green from a classmate. Not only is it more cost effective, but also you have fostered an opportunity to interact, share and collaborate.

We will seek out those who are willing to come up with not just a simple answer, but also those who are willing to participate in the clever solution. National will be

successful because we will not focus on the problem, we will identify the problem and focus instead on the solution. We will focus on new opportunities for our graduates by redefining the definitions of our professions. Incidentally, this cannot be done by gravitating to the lowest common denominator.

Stephan J. Murphy wrote in a popular song, “I can change, if it helps you fall in love.” That is *not* the way to move ahead. That is a way to placate a moment in time. Instead of wasting energies in pointless tugs of war, we should look for other ropes to take us to new and higher places. We should not be talking about revolution, but evolution. Certainly there will be times of difficulty or missteps, but we shall measure our worth by how we react and rectify those situations and remain steadfast in our convictions.

The office of president is a service position, full of long hours and tough decisions. It is a position driven by policy and judgment, tempered by beneficence and compassion. The greater good of the university is paramount, without forgetting the people, families and communities that it affects. I look forward to tomorrow. I look forward to the opportunity. *Esse Quam Videri*. Thank you.

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