

# The College and Its Community



Florida Hospital College of Health Sciences (FHCHS), Orlando, Florida.

**F**lorida Hospital College of Health Sciences (FHCHS) is in its 10th year of operation. When it opened its doors in 1992 with 242 students, it was an infant institution without credentials. Today, it is a mature educational institution with full regional and professional accreditation. Additionally, the college is ranked by the Chauncey Group International (an international testing agency) in the top three percent of colleges in North America offering nursing and allied-health education.

This success story would not have occurred without the community that surrounds the institution. Most of the time, when religious institutions speak of *community*, they mean their own constituency—people with similar beliefs and philosophy of life. Any outreach beyond that group is usually done to promote the group or to influence others to adopt similar thinking and belief patterns.

The community I am speaking of at Florida Hospital College is much broader and more diverse. It includes physical as well as geographical components: the Seventh-day Adventist Church, the Adventist Health Systems, Florida

Hospital, and central Florida, with its variety of ethnic, educational, and religious constituents. This broad community has made FHCHS what it is today—and it is for this community that the college exists.

**By David E. Greenlaw**

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## **An Invitation to Participate**

I certainly don't want to give the impression that religious communities should not develop institutions intended to meet their particular "family needs." However, I believe that in many cases, others outside the religious community want to participate in activities that are traditionally regarded as part of the mission of the institution and are thus traditionally reserved to it.

Allow me to explain. Florida Hospital is the largest Seventh-day Adventist institution in the world. It does more than \$1 billion worth of business annually and employs some 14,000 people. It is also known



Viar Paul challenges FHCHS students' thinking as they learn anatomy and physiology.

both for outstanding medical care and as a Seventh-day Adventist institution that shares the principles of its parent organization.

FHCHS's success is directly related to Florida Hospital's presence in the central Florida community. Students came to us during the first years because of the reputation of Florida Hospital. Both hospital and college were established to reach out beyond our small community to practice the ministry of Jesus. This is not new; it has been part of our church's practice since the 1870s.

My family spent six years in Africa, mostly at Solusi College in Zimbabwe. Solusi's graduates who taught in church schools found that they were teaching mostly non-members. In some African countries, the church's primary schools provided the only educational opportunities available. The loyalty developed by these graduates—and the students they taught—has provided a stimulus for the church's rapid growth in Africa.

### Challenges and Realities

Since Florida Hospital College's identity is so closely linked to that of Florida Hospital, the two institutions share some of the same challenges and realities. These realities, stated from the hospital's perspective, include the following:

- Selecting professionals from the limited number available in society;
- Selecting Adventist professionals, who are even harder to find;
- Producing future clinical leadership;



Florida Hospital College of Health Sciences, like its parent organization, Florida Hospital, was established to reach out to the community to practice the ministry of Jesus and to provide excellent training and health care.

## The faculty and staff developed a clear statement of the college's mission, not in the formal language of an official mission statement, but in operational language.

- Developing a culture and an environment that reflects Adventist beliefs; and

- Creating a secure financial base for the institution's future operation.

Like its parent organization, FHCHS employs professionals from a wide variety of denominational persuasions. They participate in a Christian culture that, by design, reflects the ethos of its parent organization, Florida Hospital.

How can this work?

How can a mix of Ad-

ventists and non-Adventist teachers produce results the church will endorse? Complicating the issue still further is the challenge of producing these results when 70 percent of the students are non-Adventists from a wide variety of religious backgrounds.

### Reporting on Mission

In August 2000, Florida Hospital College invited Roy Naden, noted for his work on culture and mission, to do a study of mission-related issues on our campus and to use the results in conducting a workshop for faculty and staff members. College administrators wanted to know if our stated mission was working. After holding multiple breakout sessions gathering data from virtually every faculty and staff member, Dr. Naden wrote in his summary statement:

"I have never visited any Adventist-run college or university that has the spirit and involvement evidenced by this group of people. The College has a dynamic and an overt spirituality that one does not expect to find. It may be that it is the won-



Florida Hospital College of Health Sciences' reputation for excellent quality education for health-care careers attracts students from a wide variety of religious and cultural backgrounds.



Dr. Sebastian Farrell, associate professor in the FHCHS Department of Pre-Professional Studies, fosters in students a love of lifelong learning.



"Careers in health care provide a wonderful opportunity to enter a profession where a job is waiting, the pay is good, and the personal reward of helping others is immediate," states David Greenlaw, president of FHCHS.

derful mix of so many different Faiths that bring out the best in all of them."

Quoting still further from that report:

"Never, in research conducted by N associates at academy, college, and university levels, and all levels of the church structure from local churches to the North American Division, have we heard such frequent, spontaneous, and heart-felt expressions

about the dynamic spiritual environment of an institution. And never have we heard so many people speak the name of Christ with such spontaneity and obvious joy. Everything else learned seemed minor compared with this overwhelming response!"

From these meetings, the faculty and staff developed a clear statement of the college's mission, not in the formal language of an official mission statement, but in operational language.

"We are a unique and diverse community of Christian professionals," they said, "dedicated to providing quality health-care education. We are life-long learners who believe that Christ-centered education and relationships provide life-changing results."

They also delineated three the basic values that guide them in carrying out their mission.

- CHRIST-CENTERED RELATIONSHIPS that lead to caring and compassion;
- QUALITY IN EDUCATION that produces professionals of excellence with respect for others and a lifelong love of learning;
- A VISION FOR THE FUTURE that balances mission and margin.

### Things I Have Learned

From these 10 years of experience at FHCHS, I have learned many things. I would like to share three:

- There are ways for people of various faiths to participate in a particular denomination's outreach that enhances and strengthens that outreach;



- The family of God is a much larger community than we often allow for;

- If we are to successfully minister to and for a community, we must engage and utilize that community for the kingdom of God. ☞

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