



I am honored to have the privilege of sharing with you the highlights of the illustrious career of our friend, George F. Sheldon, M.D. Dr. Sheldon's tireless work to further the field of surgery, the University's School of Medicine and the way health care is provided in this county ensures a long and admirable legacy. His dedication to leadership, mentoring and teaching make that legacy all the more important for those of us at UNC and make him a perfect recipient of the Thomas Jefferson Award.

Dr. Sheldon's noteworthy career was centered in excellence long before he came to UNC. After earning his undergraduate and medical school degrees from the University of Kansas, he completed his internship at Kansas University Medical Center and later served in the Coast Guard Medical Corps in the Marine Hospital Service of the United States Public Health Service. He then completed a fellowship in Internal Medicine at the Mayo Clinic, surgical residency at the University of California-San Francisco Medical Center in 1965, a Special Postdoctoral Fellowship of the National Heart Institute and a Research Fellowship in Surgical Biology at Harvard Medical School at Peter Bent Brigham Hospital in Boston. Throughout these early years of his education and career, Dr. Sheldon displayed the academic, service and leadership skills that later became the hallmark of his career.

Though Dr. Sheldon honed his excellent teaching skills earlier in his career, he first achieved the rank of professor at the University of California School of Medicine in 1980. There he helped found one of the first Trauma Centers in the country at San Francisco General Hospital. His trauma service to San Francisco was lauded later with a Proclamation of Appreciation from then-Mayor and later Senator Dianne Feinstein. Among other accomplishments during that time, Dr. Sheldon was one of the first physicians to feed patients via hyperalimentation and to investigate the effects of intravenous feeding on the immune system. His interest in nutrition and trauma continued as a scholarly pursuit throughout his career.

Dr. Sheldon came to UNC in 1984 as the chairman of the Department of Surgery. When he arrived, our School of Medicine was poised to grow dramatically. His national acclaim helped establish UNC as one of the leading medical institutions in the country. His reputation also helped UNC to expand, attracting more than 100 of the best and brightest medical faculty in the nation. Under his stewardship, the School became a leader in transplant, oncology, critical care and pediatric surgery. Dr. Sheldon also helped to advance Area Health Education Center (AHEC) programs. His leadership in AHEC led to the development of trauma systems, database registries and new opportunities for medical education and outreach across our state.

Perhaps his greatest contribution to the UNC School of Medicine, however, is the example he sets for other faculty as a teacher and mentor. Dr. Sheldon's aptitude for designing teaching programs and expertise in developing curriculum has led to unparalleled expansion in the training programs of all surgical specialties. Today, General Surgery receives applications from more than 600 medical students throughout the country for only six positions.

Dr. Sheldon is a member of the state-wide Faculty Assembly of the University of North Carolina System, as an alternate; and he was elected to the oldest Honorary Society on the University

campus, the Order of the Golden Fleece. He is also one of fewer than five non-Afro-American surgeons to be awarded an Honorary Fellowship in the Society of Black Academic Surgeons.

On the national stage, Dr. Sheldon's accomplishments are as well-noted as they are at UNC. He is one of fewer than 20 surgeons in the last 100 years to have held the post of President or Chair of every major surgical organization in the United States. His passion to advance health care also has led him to national prominence on legislative and policy issues. He has testified before Congress several times and was appointed by the Secretary of Health and Human Services as one of the 17 founding members of the Council on Graduate Medical Education. Today, he continues to build on his reputation as an expert in health services as an author and is highly regarded as an expert in surgical workforce.

In 2001, Dr. Sheldon stepped down from his position as Chair of Surgery at UNC. Since that time, however, his pace has not let up. We are grateful that he continues his service to the University in many ways. For example, in 2001 he established a course through the Department of Social Medicine. He also continues to be a prolific writer and researcher, a pursuit largely fulfilled as the founding editor-in-chief of the web portal, e-FACS.org, which attracts more than 12,000 unique visitors each quarter for the American College of Surgeons.

Dr. Sheldon is the recipient of countless awards and is regularly recognized for his varied interests and passions. These accolades are more than just awards on a list; they signal his true character. They speak to the remarkable passion of a man who has lived a life devoted to hard work and tireless commitment to students, patients and the field of medicine. Like Thomas Jefferson, Dr. Sheldon is a true life-long learner, with interests in many and varied academic pursuits. We are extremely proud today to see our friend receive the distinguished Thomas Jefferson award, and we know that he exemplifies the Jeffersonian characteristics we hold in such high regard.