



Pioneering higher education virtual events through powerful technology partnerships

\$23,000

additional revenue generated for Lyceum 2020

10%

increase in targeted student attendance

\$45,000

saved in registration revenue by pivoting to virtual

Located in Spartanburg, South Carolina, Sherman College of Chiropractic is a premier private graduate college focused on health sciences. Dr. Jillian Farrell, Director of Continuing Education, is a practicing chiropractor, educator, and department lead managing a host of continuing education events. With a close-knit community, she notes that their annual Lyceum is an industry-leading event. The event includes continuing education courses to help retain licensure, chiropractic technique-focused breakouts, social events, and plenary speakers. The event hosts nearly 800 attendees annually between chiropractors, faculty, staff, and students.

Managing Lyceum 2020 During an Unexpected Global Crisis

With a nearly year-long planning process, Lyceum 2020 was intended to be Sherman College's best event yet. However, a global health crisis created an unexpected challenge. After starting their planning process in June 2019, Jillian's team had migrated Lyceum 2020 to a New Standard (Flex) registration site in Cvent. "When Cvent came out with Flex, I was really able to tailor it to our entire brand message," says Jillian. "It looked completely modern and was really intuitive to me."

With a dynamic site in place, her team opened registration in January 2020. By the end of February, the COVID-19 pandemic was spreading rapidly. Jillian worked with her leadership team to analyze several options, including canceling the event altogether. To do so would have meant refunding nearly \$60,000 in registrations, an invaluable source of revenue for the college. The choice was clear. "The administration decided to pivot from a live event to a virtual event, based off CDC guidelines," explains Jillian.



Relying on Streamlined Communications for Successful Virtual Integrations

Jillian decided to use Cvent's Event Marketing and Management tool in conjunction with Streamlined Communications and the ON24 virtual platform. As a dedicated integration partner, Streamlined was able to support Sherman College in pivoting and executing a successful virtual event in a matter of weeks. "From the day of our kickoff call with Streamlined to the actual event was fifteen days, including weekends," says Jillian. During that incredibly tight window, Streamlined was able to upload all content, support the virtual event build, enable needed functionality for sponsors and vendors, and manage attendee communications. This workflow allowed Jillian's team to pivot efficiently to create a premier attendee experience. The seamless integration with Cvent and the ON24 virtual platform consolidated key data points within a centralized data source. This eased an already stressful process and ensured the small team would not be forced to manage error-prone, manual data exports and imports.



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Expanding Marketing Reach to Drive Virtual Registration

With the shift to virtual, Jillian's team had to manage shifting audience expectations. She quickly retargeted attendees directly within Cvent's email marketing functionality. Leaving registration open through the event helped maximize revenue streams. "I was definitely able to use the email functionality right within Cvent to notify our already registered attendees of our switch to virtual and the options moving forward," she notes. "We were also able to communicate all sorts of items to them up to the event, like how to log in or choose which class to attend." She adds that pivoting their invite strategy directly within Cvent allowed her team to maintain the seamless registration flow that was already in place for their live event. "The functionality of that email tool inside the event was absolutely amazing and it allowed us to give our attendees the knowledge they needed, when they needed it," she adds.

Given the unprecedented nature of the pandemic, states began making exceptions to previous strict rules for CE credits. This, in addition to a fully virtual experience, presented new opportunities to expand Sherman College's marketing strategy. "States began allowing for online continuing education hours that had never done it before, so we had to shift our targeted marketing to that broader audience given the virtual event," explains Jillian. Her team sent targeted emails to contacts fitting specific list criteria for states making exceptions. They also used multi-channel strategies such as targeted social media ads on Facebook and Instagram to drive registration. Ultimately, they saw almost 750 registrations with significant increases in key demographics for registered chiropractors, students, and faculty. A 10% increase in student registrations was a particularly meaningful KPI for Jillian's team, as they continue to work to increase participation from the student body. She notes that this metric is a sign of success for the virtual format. She explains, "I think a testament to the virtual learning environment is the adaption of especially our younger generation and how they feel about technology."

Ensuring Engagement with Cvent and ON24

To ensure and track high engagement from attendees, Jillian relied on Cvent's integration with ON24. Her team needed a platform that could accommodate multiple sessions simultaneously, as well as live stream functionality, pre-recorded content, and discussion-based panels. ON24 not only provided this multifaceted functionality, but the seamless integration as facilitated by Streamlined Communications ensured all data points flowed back into Cvent for centralized reporting. To meet state requirements for issuing credit, the team was able to simply add required test questions and feedback survey per session.

Given the new virtual environment, Jillian's team also needed to pivot their sponsorship strategy. "We were very fortunate that many of our sponsors made the decision to stay with us after moving to a virtual event," she notes. As part of the new virtual offering, her team was able to formulate the event console to display each sponsor's logo. They also featured logos and company information prominently on their engagement hub, and sent dedicated emails highlighting various sponsors throughout the event. This offer was extended to both sponsors and vendors as a means of promotion within the virtual event.



A Testament to the Power of Virtual Events

Given the unprecedented nature of the pandemic, Jillian knew maintaining event momentum would be key for the institution. "If we would have canceled, we would have had to refund nearly \$60,000 worth of registration fees," she says. By expanding their marketing reach with targeted strategies, they were able to actually increase overall revenue. "While we still refunded about \$15,000 worth of registration fees, we brought in an additional \$23,000 by pivoting to virtual," she adds. With certain expenses paid or shifted to the next year's event, they ultimately tracked \$17,000 in revenue for their 2020 virtual event. "It was our highest revenue in over twenty years," says Jillian. "We were able to recoup many of our refunded attendees and actually surpass our goal."

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To support shifting event strategies during the pandemic and beyond, Jillian advises industry professionals to equip themselves with the right technology and tools to meet changing demands. "Right now, obviously the economy is in a downward spiral," she notes. "We're at a point where certifications and anything you can put on your resume is going to help you." With this in mind, Jillian recently completed a free Cvent certification as a part of Cvent's goodwill initiative during the health crisis. "I was able to earn my certification and potentially boost my resume," she adds.



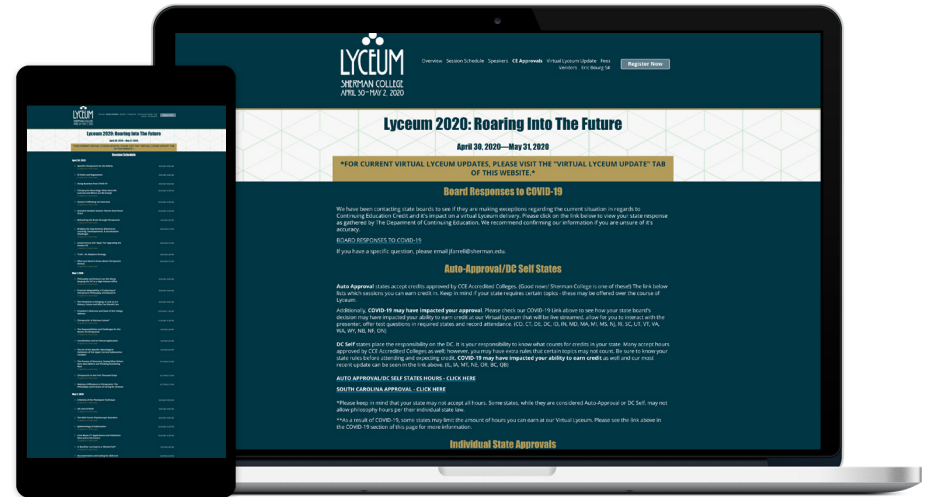
By strengthening her skillset and pioneering virtual events within the chiropractic industry, Jillian is quickly carving out new opportunities for Sherman College as a leader in the space. "In the Chiropractic industry, no one has ever done a concurrent speaker virtual event for credit before. We were the first to do that, and it has been really interesting to help others do that as well," she says. Her team has discovered a unique opportunity in working with Streamlined Communications to assist other organizations in executing successful virtual events. Several current CE clients and new clients have contacted Jillian's team to help execute their own virtual events, modeling them after Lyceum 2020. She explains, "We're very fortunate that Streamlined will provide the training for us to know how to host events on our license with the ON24 platform, and really that's an additional stream of revenue we didn't know we would have." Given the economic impact of the crisis on the meetings and events industry, as well as higher education, this quick pivot can help further support the college's financial goals during a time of uncertainty. "We've had some events cancelled this year, and this pivot will allow us to replace that revenue and still meet our revenue goals for the college in 2020," says Jillian.

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As online learning drives continuing education forward, Jillian foresees a valuable niche for virtual and hybrid events in the near future. She notes that attendee feedback for Lyceum 2020 was overwhelmingly positive, proving the value of a virtual aspect in the meetings and events space. “We’re able to be more inclusive of all of our people who are coming to our programs,” she notes. “There are people who definitely prefer to do an online event in the comfort of their own home, and you can target market to both virtual and in-person attendees.” The opportunities to expand marketing reach can only help push the industry forward. “It will help you increase your brand and it gets you in front of more people, and that bigger outreach will help you with whatever you’re trying to achieve,” she adds.



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