

Rumors Abound at Southern California College - - What's the Reality?

Editorial Staff

Rumors have been circulated about the welfare and financial integrity of Southern California College of Chiropractic, causing concern not only in the profession, but prompting the California State Board of Examiners to send a state investigator to the Pico Rivera campus.

In an effort to get an accurate picture of SCCC's current status, Dynamic Chiropractic visited the campus and conducted this exclusive interview with Dr. Graham Dobson, interim president:

"DC": Would you give us an outline of what the current status is of the college, where it stands both financially and academically?

Dr. Dobson: Sure. I can report that the college is operating normally, according to the rules and regulations of the State Board of California and the CCE standards. We're in the appeal process regarding the accreditation process with the CCE. I can't disclose anything regarding that, just that we are in the appeal process. So, of course we're very concerned at maintaining our standards. If the appeal is unsuccessful we intend to go into the reapplication process for CCE accreditation.

The financial health of the college is in a delicate balance and the administration and the board of trustees are well-informed regarding the financial position of the college. We're all working diligently on the funding aspect of the college's activities. The level of academic instruction is at least to the minimum required by CCE standards and California State Board regulations. Classes are being held as scheduled and attendance is being taken, of course. The full complement of properly qualified faculty are conducting those classes. The college clinic is operating as usual, 11-7 Monday through Friday, with qualified clinicians and a clinic director in charge. We have 110 students enrolled and eight full-time faculty, 12 part-time faculty, and seven administrators (five of those administrators also teach on a limited basis).

"DC": We've heard reports of power being cut off, of a limited phones system, of trash not being picked up for three weeks. Is there any truth to those rumors?

Dr. Dobson: We were amazed yesterday when we had a visitor from the department of Consumer Affairs. A representative arrived on campus yesterday saying that these sort of rumors had been reported to the California State Board. We showed him around, and he could see that the lights were on, the computers were working, there was no trash piling up, classrooms were operating. He went away quite satisfied that those kind of rumors were completely unfounded. I've spoken to Vivian Davis at the California State Board since then, and she has received the report from the Department of Consumer Affairs.

"DC": It has also been reported that the college may be in debt up to one million dollars, some of that potentially to the IRS. There's an assertion that this term's tuition money has been spent on last term's expenses.

Dr. Dobson: As I said before, the financial position is delicate, but such claims really are completely unfounded.

"DC": So you would say that the college is perfectly able to finish this term and has the funds to meet all of its obligations through at least the end of this term.

Dr. Dobson: Yes, we'll complete this term.

"DC": On the academic side, there is some real concern about faculty leaving and students transferring. There are also rumors of board members who have resigned.

Dr. Dobson: Regarding faculty, we've had no faculty resignations. We still have the full complement of faculty that we carried last term, in fact, that we've carried all year. The enrollment for last trimester was 124, we've dropped to 110. That's not a massive drop, but it certainly affects the overall stability of the college. Regarding rumors of students transferring out, we have no knowledge of anyone who is going to take it upon themselves to transfer during a term. As for the end of this term and the future, I can't comment on that at this stage.

"DC": It is our understanding that at the end of December the accreditation grace period extended by the Secretary of Education will come to an end. Is that correct?

Dr. Dobson: Yes, our position is that the federal financial aid eligibility actually expires for this college on December 4th and we're pursuing every means possible to try to get an extension to that. Unfortunately, we don't expect to receive an answer very early. It's likely to be December before we receive the final answer.

"DC": What plans have you made if the extension doesn't come through?

Dr. Dobson: One option relates to a private funding organization which provides financial aid for students. It's not federally guaranteed, of course, but this is a funding business that has been in business for many, many years and has actually funded other chiropractic college students, or students of other colleges at times over the years to the tune of millions of dollars. They are a substantial organization.

"DC": One indication we've gotten has been that the note that the college would have received from the settlement with the American Medical Association has been sold. Is that the case?

Dr. Dobson: I don't wish to comment on that.

"DC": Are there any other comments that you would like to make about the college that we haven't covered?

Dr. Dobson: Even in these troubled times the student body, although they are certainly anxious about their future, are very supportive and by and large most of them have indicated that they wish to complete their education at the college. They like it here. We have very loyal faculty on staff as well. I believe this college has an exciting future if we can just get through this major crisis that we are in at this present time.

"DC": Thank you Dr. Dobson.

After speaking with Dr. Dobson and visiting the Southern California College campus, two points became clear: Despite the obstacles the college is facing, classes are being conducted as usual: professors are teaching, students are attending classes and chiropractic is being passed down to

the new generation. Yet one recognizes the difficult position in which SCCC finds itself. Most classrooms have less than 10 students; enrollment has declined to perilous levels, and the very real loss of financial aid is facing the students on December 4, 1994. This could very well be the last term for a college that has more than once survived adversity and near ruin.

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