

## Florida Legislature Approves Funding for Chiropractic College at FSU

Editorial Staff

As we go to press, Florida Governor Jeb Bush is prepared to sign into law SB 2002, a measure that allocates \$9 million for the formation of a chiropractic college at Florida State University (FSU). The bill, which passed both houses of the Florida legislature by a combined vote of 151-1, makes FSU only the second public university in the nation to offer a doctor of chiropractic degree, and gives Floridians a less expensive alternative to enrollment in a privately owned chiropractic college.

SB 2002 was the first bill sent to Gov. Bush during the 2004 legislative session. It was approved 38-1 by the Florida Senate on March 4, and approved by the House unanimously, 113-0, the following day. A formal statement provided to *Dynamic Chiropractic* by the Florida Chiropractic Association (FCA) noted there will be "grand celebration" when SB 2002 is signed by Gov. Bush. The statement also offered the following observations concerning the bill's inception and progression through the Florida legislature:

"Obtaining funding for this historic program has been the most difficult legislative challenge ever undertaken by the Association," said FCA President Dan Dodd, D.C.

The effort began as a dream some twenty years ago and began to take shape as the association worked with FSU in setting up the Lincoln Eminent Scholar Chair in Chiropractic and Biomechanics at the university, funded by monies raised from the profession and matching state dollars.

In the last six annual sessions of the Florida Legislature, the association has sought appropriations for:

- a Board of Regents study to assess the need for a public chiropractic college in Florida;
- a study by Florida State University, to look at chiropractic education and the state of the profession, gauge public demand, and look at facility and faculty requirements to establish a program; and
- early program and curriculum planning.

Post 9-11 economic setbacks and resulting tight state budgets caused two years of delays in actually funding the program. "Throughout this long effort, the FCA, its lobby team and legislative leadership never lost sight of the goal to have a public option for a chiropractic education," said CEO Debbie Brown. "We have a long list of legislators, chiropractic leaders, educators and others to thank for helping to achieve this success."

"We look forward to sharing the great news with the chiropractic world that this program is funded and that future chiropractic students at last have an option of a public education," said CEO Emeritus Ed Williams, D.C.

Having a public chiropractic school at FSU has been a longtime goal of Senate Majority Leader

Dennis Jones, a 1963 graduate of Lincoln College of Chiropractic and former president of the FCA. While serving in the House of Representatives, he argued for decades that Florida had no chiropractic school to call its own. According to Jones, this caused hundreds of people who were interested in studying chiropractic to move out of state to obtain a degree.

While this situation was rectified somewhat with the establishment of the Palmer College of Chiropractic Florida at Port Orange in 2002, Jones believed that a less expensive, public option was still needed, especially to serve minority students. Of the approximately 5,000 chiropractors practicing in Florida, it is believed that fewer than 5 percent are minorities.

According to an article in the *Tallahassee Democrat*, the chiropractic degree program will be five years in length, as opposed to the usual four years of study in other chiropractic programs. In addition to the doctor of chiropractic degree, students will be required to obtain a collateral master's degree in microbiology, nutrition, health policy or biomechanics, depending on their course of study.

Lawrence Abele, the vice president for academic affairs and provost at FSU, called the new school "a win-win" for all parties involved, adding that a chiropractic program "will provide students with a cost-effective, in-state alternative, and it will broaden the science faculty and staff at the university."

Abele estimated that the first freshman chiropractic class would probably enroll at FSU in 2006, and that while enrollment will be low in the beginning, the school may eventually accept up to 100 students per year. In the meantime, administrators must fully develop a chiropractic curriculum, hire new faculty and staff, and construct a building to house the program.

The chiropractic program at FSU will be the second of its kind offered at a public university. The nation's first university-based college of chiropractic, the University of Bridgeport College of Chiropractic (UBCC), was established in 1990 and accredited by the Council on Chiropractic Education in 1994.

APRIL 2004