

Growing the Future: The Chiropractic Education Foundation

COMMITTED TO INCREASING CHIROPRACTIC ENROLLMENT - AND ENCOURAGING YOU TO DO THE SAME.

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The future is a topic that is top of mind to everyone. When the future comes up in conversations, words that are generally associated with it are *technology*, *improvement* and *growth*. But as we look into the future of chiropractic, one of those important words is missing: growth. Among chiropractic colleges, the enrollment trend has declined or flatlined over the past 10 years. The economy has been difficult, but we cannot place the blame there. A successful profession cannot last long when its college enrollment isn't strong. As a chiropractic community, we need to make an impact to grow the profession and invest in our future - the students.

I strongly believe there is a need for action to be taken to assist in [enrollment efforts](#). Obviously what is being done now needs to be tweaked or even fundamentally changed. To fill this need, I felt it was essential to create a nonprofit organization, the Chiropractic Education Foundation. The foundation was founded in order to develop chiropractic education and support the Association of Chiropractic Colleges (ACC) as it decides what actions need to be taken.



The health professions' education systems are increasingly competitive and the marketplace is changing. The demographic pool of students is changing as well. The ACC saw these changes taking place and formed an Enrollment Task Force to examine these issues. [Dr. Brian McAulay](#), executive vice president and provost of Life University, is the chairman of the task force, which will focus on bringing forward a plan to address the issue of declining enrollment and implement dramatic actions that need to be taken. This is an exciting project that will yield new and specific information about our student recruitment needs.

The Enrollment Task Force and the ACC wanted expertise in recruitment efforts in order to execute a successful plan. They sent out a request for proposals to a number of marketing firms with experience in this field. The ACC winnowed the responses to three marketing firms that were interviewed by the entire ACC Board, and initiated a contract with the Widmeyer Group.

To allow the initial research and development to occur, Foot Levelers and Standard Process each donated \$50,000 to the Chiropractic Education Foundation to support efforts for an enrollment campaign. Funds from the foundation will be used to retain the Widmeyer Group to do the underlying data development and collection.

In order to develop an enrollment marketing plan, chiropractic education needed to assess today's student population, the extent of chiropractic's student prospect pool, and have concrete information to advance the marketing plan. Initial plans include interviewing prospective students, current students and alumni to gather facts about their attitudes and perspectives on chiropractic education.

Foot Levelers and Standard Process funded the mechanism that will evaluate the vital information gathered from the research and market testing, so informed decision-making can occur. The data collected is important not only to create a marketing effort, but also to advance chiropractic.

The Chiropractic Education Foundation anticipates that this campaign will expand public and prospective student knowledge and understanding about chiropractic. The various stakeholders in this profession recognize the importance of chiropractic education. It is the lifeblood of a successful profession. Without a strong enrollment and continuous stream of new doctors, this profession will die on the vine.

According to Richard Brassard, DC, current president of the ACC and president of Texas Chiropractic College, "This undertaking was fully supported by the ACC member institutions and they have pledged to help advance this project with their cooperation and support." And in speaking with me, David O'Bryon, ACC executive director, shared, "The entire chiropractic education community is behind this much-needed campaign."

I am very encouraged with the assertiveness of many college presidents to recognize the issues and their willingness to do things differently to address the problems. I have already seen significant steps taken - steps that would have been unheard of a few years ago. Now is the time to keep that momentum and build a strong campaign that the entire chiropractic community supports.

"We all need to do a better job of selling a chiropractic career to a community of potential students. We recognize that we need to all be in this together," said Gary Cuneo, chief operating officer of the [Foundation for Chiropractic Progress](#). "We do believe that a coordinated campaign and the willingness for colleges to work together, and maybe do things outside of the box, will change the enrollment dynamics in chiropractic education. If we discovered anything from our highly successful [FCP] campaign, it's that this profession can accomplish anything when we work together. We hope to inject this same attitude in chiropractic education."

One easy way for you to contribute is to actively recruit students. [In his 2004 article](#), "State of the Profession: Chiropractic Colleges in the United States," Donald Petersen Jr., publisher of *Dynamic Chiropractic*, makes a profound statement:

"So, why are fewer students enrolling in U.S. chiropractic colleges? I believe it may have to do with our attitude. One of the primary reasons people enter chiropractic college is because they are encouraged to do so by their doctor of chiropractic. They visit their DC and become enthralled with chiropractic because of what it did for them or someone they know. They see chiropractic as an opportunity to care for people. When their doctor sees their interest, they recommend a chiropractic college."

Think of the day you decided to be a part of chiropractic. What helped you make the decision? Why do you love what you do every day? I challenge you to do your part to make an impact and explain to young people, or people wanting a career change, why becoming a chiropractor is such a rewarding life journey. Chiropractic changes people's lives; let's do our part to keep chiropractic college enrollment strong.

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