

# NCC Raises the Admission Standard

## BACCALAUREATE DEGREE NOW REQUIRED

Editorial Staff

It's been debated for years, but now the National College of Chiropractic (NCC) has become the first chiropractic college to require a baccalaureate degree for matriculation. This year's entering fall class will be the first to enroll under the new standard.

Some of the chiropractic colleges already require entering students to have 60 college semester units. The University of Bridgeport College of Chiropractic requires 90 semester units, and the Los Angeles Chiropractic College requires 85. Beginning Jan. 1, 2000, Northwestern will require 90 semester units.

We went to the source to ask why the college has taken this step. In his reply to *Dynamic Chiropractic* ("Change is Here"), NCC President Dr. James Winterstein explains.

### Change is Here

By James Winterstein, DC, president, National College of Chiropractic: "We believe that sooner or later all the chiropractic colleges or programs must arrive at the same conclusion."

In September 1992, I submitted the paper "Chiropractic Educational Requirements -- Is Change on the Horizon?" to the Board of Trustees of the National College of Chiropractic. From that paper and a survey of our faculty, our Board decided to commit the institution to a path that would lead to the baccalaureate as a requirement for entry into NCC.

With the entering class of September 1999, all matriculants at NCC have their baccalaureate degrees. We believe that sooner or later all the chiropractic colleges or programs must arrive at the same conclusion. Los Angeles Chiropractic College is also on this pathway, but I know of no others.

The reasons for the change can be found in two inseparable arenas: education and culture.

Educational reasons -- Our concerns about the need for the baccalaureate prior to entry into NCC were centered on the idea that too many of our students had an inadequate general education, which we believe to be essential preparatory work for the rigors of a professional education. This is problematic in the classroom as two-year students sit along side graduate students, causing the faculty to teach to the lowest common denominator. Further, this inadequate general education results in a graduate whose vision is too narrow for the needs of our society.

This concern has been raised by many, but perhaps never more cogently than by the late Allan Bloom who wrote the best seller, *The Closing of the American Mind* (Simon and Schuster, 1987). Bloom, one of the University of Chicago's best known and loved professors, expressed grave concern for our nation if we did not make a move to broaden the educational horizons of those who would move into the professions, and that our country would inevitably suffer from a lack of knowledge of the pillars of

our culture. He believed that professionals were becoming narrow minded experts who had little awareness of the concerns, values and needs of those around us. He felt that the lack of a broad-based education would also lead to a decline in moral values.

Some in our profession argue that there is no scientific evidence that having the baccalaureate will produce a "better chiropractor." I'm amused by the sudden requirement for "scientific evidence" from these chiropractors who often decry science when it comes to its application in chiropractic practice. Thus, they argue, "What is the point of having a baccalaureate if the end product is the same." Our point is that the end product is not the same.

Baccalaureate holders are more broadly educated and more knowledgeable people. We believe that they have the potential to be better chiropractic physicians, better leaders and better, more productive members of their communities. This is an instance where the *a priori* assumption is perfectly legitimate -- it stands to reason for it is self-evident. Better and more broadly educated matriculants can be expected to be more capable of succeeding in the chiropractic doctoral program and can be expected to be more capable and productive professionals. Are there exceptions? Of course there are, but they are just that.

Some in our profession argue that the cost of the additional education is not necessary and is a waste of the students' resources. We find this argument to be specious in light of the fact that there are virtually no people holding masters or doctoral degrees who do not have the baccalaureate as the foundation for those degrees. If those who pursue academic graduate or doctoral degrees are required to begin with this foundation, why are not those who pursue professional doctoral degrees? The argument has always been that the "U.S. Department of Education does not require it." This leads to the next reason for our change.

Cultural reasons -- In December 1991, the Foundation for Chiropractic Education and Research (FCER) published the study "An Evaluation of Federal Funding Policies and Programs and Their Relationship to the Chiropractic Profession." The study was funded by FCER and prepared by Corporate Health Policies Group. It was very pointed in its criticism of the prerequisites to chiropractic education. It concluded that the prerequisite education of chiropractic applicants was decidedly less than that of others who would lay claim to the "professional doctorate" title. While the vast majority of applicants to allopathic, osteopathic, optometric, dental, veterinary and podiatric programs have the baccalaureate, less than half of those applying to chiropractic college do. A recent study completed by Reed Phillips, DC, PhD, et al., came to the same conclusion.

It seems to me that the cultural demand is so obvious that one is tempted to ask, "What is the question?" If the members of our society expect doctors to have a baccalaureate degree prior to matriculation in the health care program, why does the chiropractic profession, the members of which want to be called "doctor," continue to resist the will of the people?

Perhaps this is no more clearly demonstrated than at the level of the state chiropractic boards of examiners who routinely struggle with the question of whether or not to mandate a pre-chiropractic baccalaureate. It has been my position for many years that if the chiropractic colleges would take the steps to institute the baccalaureate as a prerequisite, the issue of statutory mandates would be moot. Furthermore, if we as chiropractic institutions had taken the lead on this issue we would be in the position to grant the occasional exceptional three year student admission to our programs just as the allopathic programs do. When it becomes a statutory mandate, however, our latitude as an educational

institution is lost.

It borders on the unethical when we try to "fudge" the realities. When we are asked by governmental agencies what is required for admission to a chiropractic program, we like to say, "Over half of our students have a bachelor's degree." When the Alliance placed its ads about chiropractic education, the same approach was taken.

Why do we feel the need to "make it seem" better than it is? Probably because we, like most members of society, believe physicians of any kind should have a completed an undergraduate education. However, we must deal with the reality that most chiropractic colleges still recruit most of their students from community colleges and often promote accelerated courses so that students will meet the CCE requirements and be able to gain entry to a chiropractic program. This is not evidence of dedication to high-quality chiropractic education.

For all of these reasons, NCC has taken the step and now requires the baccalaureate. We are convinced that what we have done is the right thing to do for our students, for the profession, and for our patients. *Esse quam videri* -- to be rather than to seem to be -- NCC's motto.

SEPTEMBER 1999