

Association of Chiropractic Colleges: a Look Forward

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The late John F. Kennedy stated: "Our privileges can be no greater than our obligations." The Association of Chiropractic Colleges (ACC) has had the unique opportunity and privilege to serve the educational needs of the chiropractic profession. Our obligations to the future of this health care profession and the public that we serve are immense.

The ACC is a consortia of the accredited chiropractic colleges in the United States and Canada. The ACC is a blend of diverse institutions which represent a multiplicity of educational philosophies and individual responsibilities. The association does not control but shares common interests and domain relative to chiropractic educational issues, governmental relations, and the image that surrounds the chiropractic educational system. We have been successful in facilitating a thought process of individuality and concluded with statements of professional necessity concerning issues of chiropractic scope and depth. These statements have been presented to the profession for the purpose of discussion and debate. The sole intent of the ACC's two position papers was to outline the association's position on components of chiropractic practice, and the role of chiropractic within the health care delivery system.

The ACC's next challenge is to provide the profession the academic road map that articulates our collective educational mission and will weigh all the opportunities and negatives that will be gathered and facilitated into an appropriate action plan. It is necessary for associations such as ours to ask fundamental questions, and to study the environment and educational climate to further develop our function and goals.

The educational future of our chiropractic colleges is bright and demanding as we meet the needs of the chiropractic profession and move toward the new millennium. The advent of the chiropractic center within the National Institutes of Health will provide many of the resources necessary for our institutions to conduct high quality research, and provide an environment for the future training of scientists. These individuals could well have a chiropractic background and choose a multidisciplinary research setting. This is a giant step for "academic chiropractic" and is a result of the collective efforts of the ACC schools to educate and provide the rationale for the creation of this center. The ACC's governmental relations arm is strong and active.

The ACC now has a presence in Washington, DC, having recently hired Mr. David O'Bryon as its first executive director. The purpose of our presence in the nation's capital is to foster and protect our profession's educational interests and individual institutions, including the thousands of chiropractic students who use federal loans to finance their education. Our presence in Washington will also help to educate our government and its bureaucracy on the needs for chiropractic inclusion in educational programs, grants, and federal funding.

The vision of the ACC as we approach the year 2000 is the realization of our need for educational interdependence. The development of educational partnerships with institutions of higher learning is imperative to the success of chiropractic education. Accepting the status quo will contribute to the eventual decline or even failure of chiropractic education. Consequently, the ACC as individual institutions and collectively as an association, must be prepared to commit to clear and sensible plans that will have measurable outcomes for our future. This might include partnership agreements in the area of distance learning, which will expand interdisciplinary potential.

The development of a DC, PhD program, which will lead to an eventual clinical investigator or basic scientist who has a chiropractic foundation, will elevate chiropractic academically and institutionally. This dual degree could allow doctors of chiropractic the ability to enter the bio-technology work force as investigators, governmental health planners, and policy makers. We can all relate to strategic health planning on the state and national level. Doctors of chiropractic should be "at the table," and for parity we must be trained to take our respectful place in representing the profession.

We all can realize that under-representation of all minorities continues in various health professions, but especially the chiropractic profession. Although some improvements have been made in admissions, these improvements are meager when compared to the overall representation of licensed DCs. With the future of federal funding uncertain, we are presented with a challenge to pool our collective talents to realize our goal of increasing minority individuals seeking, competing, and completing chiropractic health care professional training.

The ACC seeks to continue programs and studies that will assist our member institutions in areas of financial stability, including student financial aid access, coupled with enrollment management data, utilizing strategic planning as a benchmark. The association seeks to continually set the standard for teaching, learning and research in the chiropractic profession. Motivational speaker and author Anthony Robbins states: "Life is a gift. It offers each of us the privilege, opportunity and responsibility to give something back."

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MAY 1997