

The Association of Chiropractic Colleges and the Chiropractic Profession

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The opportunity to write this column falls quickly upon the heels of my stepping down as the president of the Association of Chiropractic Colleges (ACC). Dr. George Goodman has succeeded me as the new president, with Dr. Ken Padgett as the vice-president and Dr. Peter Martin as secretary. Good luck to these capable men!

Historical Overview

The ACC had its inception about 15 years ago, when the college presidents found that issues discussed at the Council on Chiropractic Education (CCE) meetings did not cover all their concerns. They began to meet on an informal basis but soon recognized the need to meet regularly. The CCE meetings were focused upon issues related to educational standards and accreditation issues, and rightly so. Whenever there was a need to talk about student loan programs, research, on-campus management issues, etc., there was not enough time, nor was CCE the right forum.

There was some resistance to the college presidents actually formalizing the organization of their group. It was felt that another political organization would only muddy the already murky waters of chiropractic organizations. Nevertheless, need dictated that the presidents begin to meet. When the Health Education Assistance Loans (HEAL) became a hot issue in the early 90s, the ACC under the direction of Dr. Clum was able to move quickly in finding solutions that saved the colleges from a major disaster. Waiting to assemble at an annual CCE meeting would not have served our needs adequately.

ACC Educational Conference

Dr. John Miller, former president of Palmer-West, had proposed the need to bring the larger family of the colleges together more often. Initially, some of the colleges were participating in an annual faculty forum for paper presentations on chiropractic education. Under the auspices of the ACC, the first annual chiropractic educational conference was held in Las Vegas in 1993. Representatives from all the colleges, including offices of the academic deans, postgraduate deans, clinic directors, registrars, financial officers and others gathered to discuss common problems and share solutions. The conference attendance was around 150 and was felt to be beneficial to all who attended.

This conference has continued each year, the fourth being held in San Diego of this year with an attendance exceeding 300. The information exchange and problem solving that occurs has never been equaled in this profession's history. Keynote speakers, combined luncheons, interaction between different workshops and friendly socialization are the order of the day. While this conference is not the largest gathering of chiropractic related individuals, it is fast becoming one of the most beneficial to attend. It is also continuing to grow with the Council on Technique meeting at the same time, the Association for the History of Chiropractic considering a combined conference and the Conference on Research and Education (CORE), formerly part of the California Chiropractic Convention, also

becoming part of the ACC conference.

Legislative Actions

Traditionally, the chiropractic profession have been very dependent upon our national associations (ACA, ICA) to represent our interests in Washington, DC. They have done admirably well in their efforts and the college presidents are most appreciative of their continued work in this area. However, interests and needs with respect to legislation on a national level for the profession have not always been prioritized to meet the immediate needs of the educational institutions. This is not to lay blame or fault, just a statement of fact. Hence, the ACC engaged its own Washington, DC representation and became active in pressing issues of concern more specific to the educational institutions.

One of the first areas was funding for research. As a result of our lobbying efforts with support from the ACA/ICA, funding for research grants was made available to the chiropractic colleges. Most recently, the Office of Alternative Medicine (OAM) designated support for a research center for chiropractic. This will allow research funds to come directly to programs designated for and by chiropractic institutions.

Another area of interest more to the colleges than the profession in general is the issue of student loans and federal support for chiropractic education. We lobby strongly for continued inclusion in student loan programs and we continue to seek opportunities for funding similar to medicine from such sources as Medicare and the Veteran's Administration. There is a lot of work to be done in this area.

We need to work more closely with the Department of Education in Washington as it relates to areas associated with the Higher Education Act Reauthorization. This is an area that overlaps with CCE in dealing with educational standards and how educational institutions are evaluated and managed. A strong Washington presence can be of great value to the ACC and the profession.

Position Statements

As the college presidents have met and become more acquainted with each other, it has become increasingly obvious that much of our experience and belief regarding chiropractic is more similar than dissimilar. This was manifested quite clearly when Drs. Winterstein and Clum and later Dr. Gelardi presented papers to the ACC regarding their beliefs about chiropractic. As a result of this awakening, the presidents decided to hold a retreat to talk about our commonalities and our differences. During 1996, we met three times and produced two position statements regarding a common set of definitions and beliefs. The discussions leading up to these papers were very stimulating and interesting and the outcome has become historical. Never before in the history of this profession have all the college presidents been able to come to agreement on statements about the profession. I hope each of you have taken these statements and placed them where they can be reviewed and remembered. We of the ACC hope these statements will help to bring the profession into closer harmony and that dialogue will continue as we mature as a profession.

Future Directions

So where do we go from this point on? Has the ACC become what some feared, another political organization muddying the waters? Are we a good old boys (girls; sorry, Dr. Moss) club that is insensitive to the needs of the profession? Are we a retirement center for political figures of times gone by? I think not!

The ACC has moved forward in areas specific to our needs as educational institutions and there has

been general application of our successes to the entire profession. I believe the ACC needs to continue in a major role of leadership for this profession, not in place of someone but focused on our specific needs. We need to be active in Washington, DC. We need to continue our efforts in research. Our conference needs to continue. There is much to be done and the ACC is in a position to help.

As we look into the future, the ACC needs to take stock of its strengths and weaknesses and plot out its future direction. What is our vision of the future of chiropractic? What is our mission and what are the goals we have established to fulfill our mission? How do we know we are making progress? What are the outcome measures we are using to determine our successes?

The ACC has taken on a responsible role in the chiropractic profession. As a leader, we must determine our direction and then move effectively towards our goals. Good luck, Dr. Goodman. You have a great responsibility upon your shoulders and I know that each of the college presidents stands ready to give assistance to your leadership.

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