

Reactions to the SCASA Decision

FCLB, CCE, ACA, SCASA PRESIDENT, AND SCASA STUDENTS RESPOND

Editorial Staff

Because of the import of the Secretary of Education's denial of renewal of SCASA accreditation, Dynamic Chiropractic queried the chiropractic community for its assessment of the decision.

James Winterstein, D.C., president of the Council on Chiropractic Education, and president of National College of Chiropractic had these comments:

"Having attended the public hearings during which SCASA presented its case to the Advisory Committee and, subsequently, during the show cause hearing, it was evident to me that the Straight Chiropractic Academic Standards Association did not meet the criteria for recognition by the Secretary of Education as an accrediting agency.

"As the president of the Council on Chiropractic Education, I believe that the profession would be best served if all educational institutions would adhere to one set of educational standards. The actions taken by Secretary Alexander provide the opportunity for this situation to become a reality.

"It is clear to me that the majority of practicing chiropractic physicians in our country and abroad accept the standards of education that have been developed during the past two decades by the CCE, and I would hope that those who continue to be in the minority relative to educational standards would see the wisdom of joining with the rest of the profession as we continue to improve and upgrade the education of our students.

"It is my hope that the CCE colleges would make every effort to help those chiropractic students who, by virtue of this action by Secretary Alexander, will face the need to seek new education venues."

D. Brent Owens, D.C., president of the Federation of Chiropractic Licensing Boards made this statement:

"The Federation read Secretary of Education Lamar Alexander's decision with great interest. We applaud the Secretary for studying the issue so carefully, and for taking a stand based solely on accreditation standards, while rejecting arguments based solely on chiropractic philosophy. Issues involving philosophy have little to do with accreditation standards and protection of the public health, safety and welfare.

"The FCLB has been in existence since 1993 to support excellence in chiropractic licensing standards, which ultimately serve to protect the public interest. We believe that interest will be well served by

Secretary Alexander's thoughtful and well-articulated decision.

"We believe now that the issue has been decided, we must turn our attention to three tasks:

1. To inform our member licensing boards of the USDE denial of SCASA's petition for renewal of status and encourage them to review their board regulations and to consult immediately with their state attorneys' general to determine what impact, if any, this decision may have on each state's acceptance of graduates from schools accredited by SCASA as candidates for licensure.
2. To consider with sensitivity the situation faced by certain individual students who may be affected by this decision. Our member licensing boards need to understand that some students may be confused about the reduced options they have for licensing. However, at the same time we must insist that licensing standards are in no way compromised.
3. To inform prospective students through our Directory about the possible licensing consequences of the Secretary's decision. These individuals often purchase a reference copy of our Federation Directory as they plan their education and practice decisions.

"The Federation vigorously opposed a cooperative agreement between CCE and SCASA in August of 1991, since the proposed agreement was based on lowering educational standards to accommodate SCASA's accreditation principles. That position is unchanged. We believe it has been affirmed by the Secretary's analysis of SCASA's application of its own accreditation standards.

"We challenge SCASA students and colleges to set aside philosophical debate and dedicate their energies to raising their educational standards to those set forth by the U.S. Department of Education and recognized by every U.S. state licensing boards.

"At this historic turning point in our profession's evolution, the Federation stands ready to support chiropractic in its growth and development in any way we can."

Ralph Boone, Ph.D., D.C., president of the Straight Chiropractic Academic Standards Association, and president of Southern California College of Chiropractic had this statement:

At the invitation of Dynamic Chiropractic to submit comments regarding the USDE's continued recognition of SCASA, I am responding on behalf of SCASA and its member institutions.

SCASA and its member colleges are disappointed by the USDE decision to discontinue recognition of the agency. They are perplexed by the Department's apparent lack of consideration of pertinent information provided by SCASA which addressed the Department's concerns. Nevertheless, a number of options have been presented by the Department which when fully clarified will decide the direction the agency and its member institutions will take. A number of areas of concern are currently being explored by SCASA and the Department of Education.

SCASA member colleges will remain open and continue to offer their programs unchanged. The USDE decision is directed to the recognition of SCASA, not the current accreditation worthiness of Sherman College Straight Chiropractic, Pennsylvania College of Straight Chiropractic, and the Southern California College of Chiropractic. SCASA's recognition is continued until June 4, 1993, during which time SCASA will try to resolve the Department's concerns.

Although the wording of the decision paints a negative image of the agency and its member colleges, SCASA has taken seriously its role as an accrediting agency, and in addition to maintaining high accrediting standards, it has worked to assist colleges to develop and improve their educational programs. Regardless of the ultimate outcome of the USDE decision, SCASA will continue to function as an accrediting agency serving its constituents to the best of its ability.

The three member institutions reunited in their commitment to the principles which are expressed through their educational programs. While all options presented to the colleges will be considered, they are resolute in their dedication to preserve the unique mission, goals and objectives under which they presently operate, within the structure of high postsecondary educational standards.

-- Ralph Boone, Ph.D., D.C.

Licensing Boards

Donna Liewer, executive director of the FCLB researched the current status of the 50 state licensing boards, plus the District of Columbia. Forty-one states were already on record as accepting only CCE accredited graduates for licensure. Following the Secretary's denial of renewing SCASA accreditation, the 10 licensing boards that accepted SCASA graduates were contacted by the FCLB on September 15th and asked for their position.

Arizona:

Students must graduate from a college accredited by an accrediting agency holding status with USDE or COPA.

Arkansas:

Board will be re-evaluating its position on graduates of SCASA schools in light of requirement for USDE recognition.

California

Neither Sherman nor Pennsylvania Straight Colleges are currently on the approved list of institutions holding accredited status with the board. The board has no comment at this time on the possible impact of the decision on the Southern California College.

District of Columbia

The board will re-evaluate the status of SCASA schools in light of the secretary's decision.

Michigan

No word yet from Dr. R. James Gregg.

New Hampshire:

SCASA-accredited schools which do not also have another regional accreditation recognized by USDE will not be accepted after June 4, 1993.

New Jersey

No SCASA graduates will be eligible to apply for licensure after June 4, 1993. New Jersey does not recognize the Southern Association's regional accreditation.

Pennsylvania

After June 4, 1993, graduates of SCASA-accredited schools will be ineligible to apply for licensure unless the schools are also accredited by another regional or national accrediting agency which is recognized by USDE and COPA.

South Carolina

There may be no impact on SCASA graduates. However, the decision by Secretary Alexander will be reviewed by the Attorney General and the state's Commission on Higher Education.

Washington

The board approves chiropractic colleges on an individual basis. No changes are anticipated at this time due to the secretary's decision.

Note: A number of boards will have to review their regulations and state statutes with their attorneys' general. The Federation urges students to contact the licensing boards of those states in question in writing for their official state board positions. Please do not telephone the boards.

SCASA Student Officers Respond

Denise Taylor, student council president of Sherman College of Straight Chiropractic:

Asked for her reaction to hearing of the decision, Denise said, "Big deal. Big deal." She explained that the school had survived before SCASA and would survive after SCASA. The Sherman students heard about the decision from Dr. Gelardi at an all school assembly. Ms. Taylor said the students "took it kind of hard."

"I know that most of this is just politics, it's money talking more than anything, which is very unfair. It's like it takes away our freedom, our right to be what we want to be." Ms. Taylor acknowledged the school may lose some students, but that students would continue to enroll. "My hope is that people will put down their pride and their arrogance and decide to come together to further benefit chiropractic education and the field, without having all this bickering between us, because we're really hurting

ourselves."

Note: Ms. Taylor will not graduate before USDE accreditation of SCASA expires.

Angela Giorgione, student body president of Pennsylvania College of Straight Chiropractic:

Ms. Giorgione heard of the decision the day before she and a group of students were leaving for "boards." She noted the decision came on the day the student body was returning for classes. The decision came as a "bombshell" to the new students who had just been introduced to the campus, Ms. Giorgione said.

Note: Ms. Giorgione will graduate December 18, 1992, under the wire, as it were.

Aram Tomasian, student body president of Southern California College of Chiropractic:

Mr. Tomasian said the SCASA decision didn't surprise him, but "it hasn't affected us. Business as usual."

Mr. Tomasian said he was overwhelmed by the unity of the students and was impressed by their character.

Note: Mr. Tomasian will not graduate before USDE accreditation of SCASA expires.

Mark Goodin, ACA's legislative strategist:

"To me, SCASA represented an aberrant philosophy, and ultimately an accreditor of last resort for chiropractic colleges which could not or would not measure up to the high standards set forth by the vast majority of the profession," said Goodin. "And from my perspective as a former government official and political operative, it was a millstone around the neck of a profession that has been working hard to boost its image and its commitment to the highest possible standards of health care."

Louis Sportelli, D.C., former ACA chairman of the board and ACA's 1992 "Chiropractor of the Year":

"In the final analysis, I believe the government came to see one simple fact: That 'philosophy' had nothing to do with the issue of whether SCASA continued as a recognized accrediting authority. The real issue was quality and a commitment to standards. As President Lincoln once so correctly observed: You cannot raise up those on the bottom of the heap by lowering those on the top. So it is with standards in health care. Just because one element of a profession chooses not to abide by the standards embraced by the majority of its members -- not to mention what is demanded of them by the health care bureaucracy that places a premium on quality and consumer safety -- is no reason to allow that element to be credentialized as an organization worthy of continued federal recognition."

"And on the crucial issue of state recognition of SCASA -- that is, how many state boards actually had faith in the education standards of SCASA schools and the training of its graduates -- in my opinion, the department found them seriously deficient. This was not an issue of an organization with a meritorious commitment to the profession trying to build a support network for itself. It was an issue of an organization with a faulty premise, trying to pass itself off as a victim of some sort of philosophical war. In the end, the vast majority of states, and indeed the federal government, saw through that ridiculous charade."

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