

## Life Removed From Probation

### ANOTHER STEP FORWARD FOR ONCE-BELEAGUERED UNIVERSITY

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The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) has released Life University from two years of academic probation, reaffirming the university's regional accreditation status. The announcement was made on Dec. 7, 2004, at the annual SACS meeting in Atlanta, Ga.

"They have made the kind of progress we were looking for," said SACS Executive Director Jim Rogers.

According to the SACS, Life was removed from probation after putting its finances in order. At the time the accrediting organization placed Life on probation, the university was more than \$1 million in debt. Since then, the school has raised more than \$5 million from boosters. Student enrollment, which had dropped into the hundreds (from an estimated high of 3,500), has now stabilized at approximately 1,200.

"Last week, it was almost impossible to work waiting for the association's decision" commented Life President Guy Riekeman, DC. "We had to believe we were going to make it. This feels like a victory."

"The Life community has worked tirelessly over the past two years to gain the confidence of its alumni, the chiropractic profession and the local community," said Dr. Riekeman. "Without the confidence and support of those groups, our efforts would have been futile."

Life's regional accreditation is a major step forward for the university, which appeared on the verge of collapse before Dr. Riekeman's arrival in March 2004. The Council on Chiropractic Education (CCE) stripped Life's chiropractic program of its accreditation in June 2002, starting a whirlwind of events that included the departure of Dr. Sid Williams, longtime president of the university, and a sharp drop in student enrollment at the largest chiropractic college in the nation. Although a federal judge retroactively restored Life's accreditation in February 2003 and placed the chiropractic program on probationary status, the damage had been done.

Life remains on probation with the CCE, which recently announced it was extending the university's probationary status for another six months. The decision means that Life's chiropractic program retains temporary national accreditation until July 2005; university officials hope full accreditation will be granted at that time.

Both the CCE and the SACS have commended the university for maintaining the quality of its academic program amid less-than-ideal circumstances.

#### Sources

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