

Dynamic Chiropractic – September 15, 2014, Vol. 32, Issue 18

CCE Finally Takes a "Baby Step" Toward Reform

By James Edwards, DC

During a 16-month period from October 2010 to February 2012, I devoted four separate columns¹ to the heavy-handed attempt by the Council on Chiropractic Education to radically change the chiropractic profession through the accreditation process. I did so to alert the chiropractic profession that the CCE's self-ordained "intellectual elite" was proposing changes diametrically opposed to the mainstream view of the overwhelming majority of the profession's members.

While I never expected to write another column about the organization, recent events have put the CCE back on the "front burner" – this time for a *good* reason – and made an update (and possible future updates) necessary. But before doing so, here is a brief synopsis of what occurred in the recent past to put the CCE's latest actions in context.

Signs of Trouble Brewing

In the fall of 2010, CCE sent out a communication to interested parties asking for opinions about proposed changes that would delete all references to the subluxation, delete all language that states chiropractic is a drugless and nonsurgical profession, and permit chiropractic colleges to offer the "Doctor of Chiropractic Medicine" (DCM) degree.



The American Chiropractic Association, the International Chiropractors Association and the Congress of Chiropractic State Associations all officially opposed the

proposed changes, and submitted commentary to that effect. Several chiropractic colleges (who rely on CCE for their accreditation) also submitted commentary in opposition to the changes, including Cleveland Chiropractic College (Kansas City and Los Angeles), Life University College of Chiropractic, Life Chiropractic College West, Logan College of Chiropractic, Palmer College of Chiropractic (including Palmer Florida and Palmer West), Parker College of Chiropractic and Sherman College of Chiropractic.

So, did the CCE listen to the profession? The answer is no; other than backing off what could have been approval of a DCM degree, the CCE told the profession to "take a hike" by making the word *subluxation* a footnote and removing the phrase "without the use of drugs and surgery" in its entirety!

The next important event occurred in 2011 when CCE sought to renew its U.S. Department of Education certification as the accrediting body for chiropractic education, and met stiff opposition from doctors of chiropractic who did not believe the CCE represented the mainstream of the profession. After many hours of hearings and testimony, the highly prestigious *Chronicle of Higher Education* reported the following:²

- "The number of people who showed up to raise their concerns made an impression on Cameron C. Staples, a member and past chairman of the committee. Mr. Staple questioned whether the chiropractic-education council [CCE] had done enough to meet a federal requirement for accrediting agencies to show that their policies and procedures are widely accepted by educators, institutions, licensing bodies, and practitioners."
- "'You've hit the jackpot on deficiencies,' Arthur J. Rothkopf, president emeritus of Lafayette College and vice chairman of the committee, said to officials from the chiropractic council [CCE]. Mr. Rothkopf said the number and nature of the problems identified by the department indicated a 'sloppiness' on the accreditor's [CCE's] part."
- "In the end, the advisory committee ... will recommend to the secretary to continue the chiropractic-education agency's recognition, with a requirement that the council [CCE] show that it has made necessary changes after one year."
- "[T]he panel also took the time to add the expectations that the chiropractic accreditor [CCE] also deal with issues about the acceptance of its policies and show how the policies are advancing the quality of chiropractic education."
- "David O'Bryon, executive director of the Association of Chiropractic Colleges, said that overall, the lesson for the accrediting council [CCE] was that it needed to do a much better job of managing its image with practitioners: 'Always listen to your constituents.'"

Unfortunately, the CCE then sent a letter to U.S. Office of Education Assistant Secretary, Eduardo Ochoa, who "gutted" the extremely important requirement that the CCE demonstrate it had made necessary changes after one year. I will let you be the judge if his decision to reject the recommendation of the learned members of the committee was based on merit, or if CCE applied political "muscle" to get him to remove the requirement.

The First Step Toward Change?

Fast-forwarding to the present, several changes were adopted at the July 2014 CCE meeting regarding the number of councilors and who will elect them, along with establishing long-overdue term limits. While those actions are just a "baby step" in the right direction, their importance is that they finally address the paramount issue of governance.

One thing is certain: The current electoral process within the CCE is broken, totally unacceptable, and must be completely revamped if the entity wants to gain moral authority to represent the mainstream of the chiropractic profession. How terrible is the current CCE electoral system? Life Chiropractic College West Past President, Dr. Gerry Clum, summed it up by stating the following:

"Think about the appointment process to the Council – people get nominated, they are vetted by a committee of the Council on ambiguous criteria, they are put on a ballot that allows preferences to come into play, then a decision is made by the people who already sit on the Council. The opportunity for in-breeding, and election of people who represent a given orientation in the profession versus another, is obvious."³

Past ICA Board Chairman, Dr. Robert Braile, was even more critical of the CCE electoral process: "Over the years, the CCE has changed its own rules in order to continue to have a select few keep control. On more than one occasion, there was the possibility that conservative subluxation-based schools (which produce over 65% of the graduates) would have voting control of the CCE. In each of those instances, the group about to lose power would change the rules to keep their minority in control. Today, the CCE does not even remotely resemble a democratic organization led by the schools. Instead the CCE, as it is constituted today, is a dictatorial fascism led by a few individuals with an agenda so removed from chiropractic practice reality that it is hard to comprehend that these people claim to be in the same profession as the rest of us."⁴

Personally, I am optimistic that the CCE's July actions will someday lead to the council being composed almost solely of representatives from each CCE-accredited institution and whose *pro rata* voting strength is based on the number of students in each institution's chiropractic degree program. What a novel idea: allowing chiropractic educational experts to determine the educational standards necessary to award the doctor of chiropractic degree based on the number of students each has enrolled.

Until that can occur, the next "baby step" is for the CCE to mandate that the sitting body of councilors elect a maximum of one-third of the total members. Again, what a novel idea to select CCE councilors from a cross-section of the profession, rather than getting selected because of "whom you know" on the inside.

I plan to watch these dynamics as they unfold and periodically update you, because CCE requirements and policies can literally change the core principles of the chiropractic profession. Stay tuned.

References

1. Review Dr. Edwards' 2010-2012 columns regarding the CCE by visiting his columnist page and clicking on "Previous Articles."
 2. Kellerman E. "Chiropractic Accreditor Gets Extra Scrutiny From Federal Panel." *Chron Higher Educ*, Dec. 13, 2011.
 3. Clum G. "The Latest Stuff From Gerry," Jan. 31, 2011;11(14).
 4. Braile R. "The Information Age Newsletter," March 1, 2011.
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