

THE CHIROPRACTIC CHOICE

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COMMENTARY

The Shoe Is On the Other Foot

By Stephen Welsh, D.C.

The headline read "CCE Cited for Accreditation Violations by U.S. Department of Education".

On November 10, 2005 The Council on Chiropractic Education (CCE) issued a press release in an apparent attempt to address articles recently published that, according to CCE, contained information that was inaccurate and misleading.

In that press release CCE makes the following statements:

*The purpose of this communication is to provide accurate and reliable information concerning the status and activity of CCE... **CCE has not been cited for non-compliance by USDE for any accreditation decisions.***

CCE asserts that based on complaints filed by non-educational special interest groups (The Council of New Jersey Chiropractors and the Doctors for Excellence in Chiropractic Education), the United States Department of Education (USDE) staff reviewed and made recommendations regarding specific provisions of CCE policies and by-laws. CCE suggests that these recommendations are part of a normal process that contributes helpful guidance to all recognized entities.

The CCE appears to be an agency that is in denial. This press release seems to be a Clintonian attempt to avoid facing the seriousness of the situation that it now faces.

On July 5, 2005 the Office of Post-secondary Education of the United States Department of Education issued a letter to CCE in which it conveyed the results of a review of the complaints lodged against it. The Department reviewed the allegations for applicability to the Secretary's Criteria for Recognition and also reviewed all the documentation for demonstrated compliance. With regard to the criteria raised in the complaints the Department determined that the CCE was in fact compliant with three of the criteria raised.

However, for four of the other criteria the response was as follows:

"Staff Finding: The agency is not in compliance with this criterion."

One cannot help but wonder who is misleading who? Maybe it depends on what the meaning of the word *cited* is.

The four criteria for which the CCE was cited and/or found to be non-compliant vary in the degree of seriousness.

The violation of section **602.14 Purpose and organization**, which deals with the agency being separate and independent, addresses the current ability to serve on the Board of the CCE and the Board of the Association of Chiropractic Colleges (ACC) at the same time. This violation can be corrected with a change of the by-laws.

The violation of section **602.23 Op-**

erating procedures all agencies must have, deals with the handling of complaints. The CCE was advised to revise its complaint policy but it was also found to be not in compliance because it "...did not review itself in a timely and fair manner, and apply unbiased judgment to a complaint against itself." This finding does appear to be inconsistent with the spin included in the recent press release (see below).

The violation of section **602.18 Ensuring consistency in decision-making** is an interesting one. The USDE acknowledged the confidentiality of the settlement of a lawsuit reached with LUCC (Life University), however, it found that the decision to restore accreditation status to an institution that had previously had its accreditation suspended was in fact an inconsistent application of agency standards. The staff acknowledged that there is no resolution available or required at this time, however, the staff finding that "The agency is in non-compliance with this criteria" seems to contradict the CCE

assertion that "CCE has not been cited for non-compliance by USDE for any accreditation decisions." Maybe it depends on what the meaning of the word *decision* is.

The violation of section **602.15 Administrative and fiscal responsibilities** may be the most serious of all the findings. The staff found that "CCE apparently has never directly responded to the allegation of conflicts of interest by its members, commissioners, and evaluation team members..." and therefore concluded that "... either CCE does not have clear and effective controls against conflict of interest, or has failed to implement such controls where appropriate." In either case this issue will not be resolved by merely changing specific provisions of Policy and Bylaws. In addition to reviewing its internal policy documents for discrepancies the USDE stated that "The agency also needs to investigate the allegation of conflict of interest by its members, commissioners, and evaluation team members in its review of LUCC."

Considering the fact that the USDE has determined that CCE "...did not review itself in a timely and fair manner, and apply unbiased judgment to a complaint against itself", one has to wonder if CCE can be trusted to conduct an investigation into allegations of conflict of interest.

Three years ago Life University was faced with challenges that threatened its very existence. The Board of Trustees initiated monumental changes. Life

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The Council on Chiropractic Education

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DATE: November 10, 2005
TO: Interested Parties
FROM: Dr. Joseph Brimhall, CCE President
SUBJECT: CCE PRESS RELEASE

The Council on Chiropractic Education (CCE) has become aware that articles have recently been published about CCE by individuals unaffiliated with CCE. Some of the information contained in those articles is inaccurate and misleading. Unfortunately, CCE was not given an opportunity to provide input to the articles prior to their dissemination. The purpose of this communication is to provide accurate and reliable information concerning the status and activity of CCE.

CCE has held and continues to hold full recognition with the United States Department of Education (USDE) and the Council on Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA). CCE has not been cited for non-compliance by USDE for any accreditation decisions.

CCE follows good accreditation practice consistent with the Association of Specialized and Professional Accreditors (ASPA) Member Code of Good Practice. CCE complies with USDE regulations and CHEA criteria for recognition. Further, CCE continues to advance the chiropractic profession by demonstrating reliability, fairness and consistency in its accreditation activities and decisions.

USDE staff has reviewed CCE policies and bylaws based on complaints filed by non-educational special interest groups. Based on that review, USDE staff has made recommendations to CCE regarding specific provisions of Policy and Bylaws, and CCE has responded affirmatively. Contrary to the inaccuracies and speculation contained in recent publications, CCE is not in jeopardy of losing its recognition by USDE or CHEA. Periodic review of any recognized accrediting agency's policies, and specific review based on a particular complaint, is normal process with all agencies recognized by USDE. This oversight is the duty of the USDE as it contributes helpful guidance to all recognized entities.

Based on the CCE *Standards*, CCE does not define, support, endorse or accommodate any philosophical position within the chiropractic profession. CCE's sole interests are the quality and integrity of chiropractic educational programs, and the competent preparation of graduates to meet the professional responsibilities of a Doctor of Chiropractic.

The CCE Commission on Accreditation, the CCE Board of Directors and the Academy of Site Team Visitors include graduates or employees of every accredited Doctor of Chiropractic program and institution in the United States. Such broad representation by the accredited programs and institutions on CCE's Commission, Board and Academy is evidence of CCE's commitment to inclusion, balance and integrity.

CCE is dedicated to the consistent execution of our duties with the highest degree of integrity. Detailed information regarding CCE *Standards*, policies and procedures can be obtained at our website: www.cce-usa.org.