



Executive Director Report

ABFSE Annual Meeting

Friday, April 14, 2023

Since the 2022 Annual Meeting, ABFSE engaged in many proactive activities:

- Created an updated Strategic Plan
- Initiated the 5-year Review of Standards
- Rolled out the new Student Tracker as a precursor to an updated Annual Report that will auto fill with info from Student Tracker.
- Planning stages for an updated ABSE website and a Faculty database.
- Engaged in ongoing curriculum review (i.e., Merchandising, Business Law, Ethics, in summer 2022/ Embalming, Chemistry, Psych & Counsel planned for 2023)

Reminder: ABFSE has a copyright on the curriculum work. Rules for use of curriculum are found in the Accreditation Manual. New Candidate programs purchase the curriculum as part of the Candidacy Fee.

- ABFSE/funeral service education was represented at conventions/annual meetings of our associations member partners – NFDA, NFDMA, CANA and also The Conference.
- The voice of ABFSE was heard at a meeting of the Indiana State Board during which they were evaluating the place of funeral service education and testing in the state's future plans for licensure.
- Participated in meetings of CHEA & ASPA to facilitate understanding of the accreditation environment.

ABFSE membership - composed of schools & associations

58 schools, 3 associations, 2 public members

When I started in 2014 there were 56 schools/programs, 3 association members and 2 public members.

However, in that time 11 programs stopped operating and 9 programs went through the Candidacy process to earn accreditation/re-accreditation. Two associations dropped their membership in ABFSE and CANA came on board as the newest association member in 2017.

ABFSE is an accreditor recognized by the US Dept of ED and CHEA. Each agency has its own recognition criteria and most of the ABFSE accreditation standards and policies have their roots in USDE and CHEA expectations.

The USDE expectations carry what many view as a regulatory orientation.

The Department wants assurance that schools receiving financial aid dollars are legitimate institutions and programs worthy to receive federal dollars. CHEA emphasizes academic quality and improvement. CHEA's latest expectations are demonstration of DEI initiatives and innovation.

Both agencies require Self study like reviews every 5-7 years, plus mid-cycle reports.

ABFSE is one of approximately 25 accreditors recognized by both agencies. To maintain the accreditor recognition status ABFSE must demonstrate:

- that we have standards meeting the guidelines and expectations of both organizations,
- that accredited programs meet the ABFSE standards, and
- that ABSE takes action when programs fail to meet the standards.

USDE and CHEA requirements are also the reason that COA operates as a separate and independent committee within the ABFSE.

And those requirements are responsible for much of the content of our Accreditation and Policy Manual including the regular Review of Standards.

Some of the Manual language updates in recent years were driven by the need to meet USDE and CHEA expectations. Examples:

- publication of outcomes data (in our Directory on program webpage)
- Policy for approval of DE
- policy for teach out when a program closes

When most of the current COA members were selected for their terms, COA was meeting twice each year in April and October.

However, the workload has increased and additional meetings were added so COA met 4 times in April – June - October – February.

During that time accreditation related activity included

- 8 full site visits for re-accreditation
- 1 pre-Candidacy visit
- 4 Focus visits to approve the addition of Distance Education
- 8 USDE mandated follow-up visits after Covid-era virtual site visits.

The ABFSE Executive Committee instituted quarterly meetings this past year as well to supplement the traditional April and October meetings. Too much is happening in funeral service at the present time to wait 6 months in order to consider appropriate action.

In addition, the ABFSE officers continue to meet weekly via Zoom for informal conversation regarding the state of affairs in funeral service, funeral service education and ABFSE.

Annual Report - by its title, the Annual Report happens every year.

Your input for Annual Report provides valuable data about those preparing to enter funeral service and helps provide evidence for USDE and CHEA recognition.

Annual Report summaries are available on the ABFSE website dating back to 2013.

Some excerpts from the 2022 Annual Report:

- Total enrollment – highest level since we started tracking that statistic in 2010.
- Total enrollment increased every year since 2017 from 5394 – 7034.
- New Enrollees – at highest level ever 3462 (previous high in 1996).
- Graduates – 1588 is a 3% increase over 2021, but consistent with the level of the past 5 years except for a spike in 2020 (highest level ever 1995 - 2221).
- Graduation rate???? Calculation of grad rate is still problematic. ABFSE like many accreditors is struggling to find an appropriate technique to calculate and describe graduation rate.
- Attrition has grown every year since 2017 and reached an all-time high of 1049 in 2022. While there are multiple reasons for attrition, poor academic performance is cited 42% of the time.
- Female student population in 2022:
72% of graduates and
75% of new enrollees
- Non-accredited – 19 programs in 11 states offered non-accredited programs and had 231 graduates.
- part-time 43% (25 schools).
- DE
32 of 58 programs offered some FS courses via distance education
23 programs had DE grads defined as completing 50% of more of the program via DE
726 graduates reported as DE = 46.7%

Growth of DE was anticipated after the Covid experience. In addition to those programs with recently approved DE programs, three more are currently seeking approval.

Remember: Sub Change & visit are required for DE approval
US DE requires accreditors to approve DE

On the horizon/2023

- ❖ Updated accreditation statements
- ❖ Updated ABFSE Directory
- ❖ Faculty database & revised ABFSE website

Reminders:

- Deadlines – delays review of data, update of Directory, reporting of accredited status
 - fines
- Participate in the Review of Standards surveys
- Use resources available on the website/ask questions
- Read email / correspondence

As FS educators you have an essential role in the success of funeral service and its future, so let's work together so that FS can be the best that it can be !!!

One last detail – Boston in 2024 @ Omni Parker House
Dates: April 9-12

Suggestions:

If you are not an Omni Select member, join now. It is free and Omni Select members do enjoy some perks.

If you plan to extend your stay in the Boston area *after* our Annual Conference, make your plans early.

Convention rates will be available for 3 days before and 3 days after our conference. However, 30,000 runners and their fans and support teams will descend on the city for the Boston Marathon as we are leaving, which could make hotel rooms difficult to find if you do not plan ahead.