

ABFSE Town Hall ZOOM Meeting December 10, 2020

With report from ABFSE Research Task Force:

‘Exploring the Claim that FS Has a 50% Attrition Rate After 5 Years’

71 participants representing 32 schools, plus staff, NFDA, NFDMA, CANA, ICFSEB and guests. Executive Director opened the meeting at 2:00 p.m. (ET) and reviewed the PowerPoint that had been emailed prior to the meeting.

‘Coming Events’: ABFSE 59th Annual Meeting – April 23, 2021 (virtual)

ABFSE 60th Annual Conference – April 3-9, 2022, Dallas TX

ABFSE 61st Annual Conference – April 10-15, 2023, Atlanta GA

USDE Review of Recognition for ABFSE – February 2021

CHEA Recognition Review – Must be Completed by December 2022

Reminder: check out the Resources available on ‘For Educators’ Page of ABFSE website

- Link to Annual Report available late December
- Annual Report & Cohort Tracking seminars (schedule is on the website)
- Annual Report stats
- Sample Forms
- Assessment Ideas
- Notes from Prior Meetings etc.

President Ennis provided an introduction regarding the creation of the ABFSE Research Task Force and expressed appreciation to all who were involved. Dr. John Fritch and Dr. Gary Steward were introduced and made the following presentation:

‘Exploring the Claim that Funeral Service has a 50% Attrition Rate After 5 Years’

April 2019 the Research Task Force was created. The committee discussed various topics but the ‘50% attrition rate claim’ took priority. They determined that there was a lack of empirical-based research on this topic and developed the following approach to their research.

Phase One:

ABFSE accredited programs were surveyed in an effort to gather reasons for graduates leaving the profession. The committee defined who would be considered as ‘part of the profession’ and decided to use graduates practicing full-time or part-time as licensed funeral directors/and or embalmers as being ‘part of the profession’.

Instrument Development:

Programs would be asked:

- number of graduates and gender
- number of graduates who entered the profession full or part-time

- number of graduates who were still in the profession full or part-time in 2019

The following open-ended questions was also included:

- In your opinion, why do new (fewer than 10 years) licensed funeral directors and/or embalmers leave the profession?
 - List the most frequent reasons first, followed by second most frequent etc.

Response from Programs:

Of the 54 ABFSE accredited programs, 27 responded. Of the 27 that responded, 10 provided incomplete information and were removed, leaving 17 institutions (31%) of eligible programs.

The 17 programs provided the following data:

- 2292 total graduates (status of 25% was unknown by the program director)
- 1717 graduates were known by the program director (945 female; 772 male)
- 481 of the 1717 graduates were no longer practicing (28%)
- 481 of the total graduates (2292) drops the percentage of no longer practicing to 21%
- 308 of the 481 no longer practicing were female (64%)

Response to the open-ended questions fell into these categories: compensation; burn-out/hours; career expectations; domestic/family reasons; toxic work environment; lack of opportunity for advancement.

Frequency of response from the 17 Programs for each category was:

- Compensation: 7/17
- Hours/Burnout: 5/17
- Career Expectations: 4/17
- Domestic/Family Reasons: 1/17
- Toxic Work Environment: 0/17
- Lack of Opportunity: 0/17

Meaning of Results:

This research is a starting point as there is very little empirical work conducted on the topic. Many of the programs do not track or do not have the ability to track graduate attrition rate. Further exploration is needed in the funeral service profession.

Recommendations:

- More studies are needed.
- Each category could be studied in isolation.
- Create taskforce to determine 'best practices' for each category.

What is Next? Phase 2

Discussion followed prompted by the 'chat' questions.

- Part of the 'toxic work environment' is due to generational differences. (old school vs. new school)
- Vendors do exist that offer to track graduates but it is extremely costly.
- Email addresses for graduates are not always valid.
- Funeral director associations may have access to valid email addresses and data.

L. Wiensch, Executive Director of the Funeral Service Foundation stated that the FSF could possibly fund the research and would entertain a grant request.

Association partners of the ABFSE will be given access to the information. Drs. Fritch and Steward are willing to make a presentation(s) regarding the research. They will create an academic manuscript for journals as well as a presentation designed for the non-educator audience.

Executive Director suggested that program directors should encourage graduates to stay in touch so that data will be available in the future.

Executive Director continued the meeting and reinforced more topics in the PowerPoint that had been emailed previously.

Announcements/Reminders:

- Annual Report from all accredited programs due February 15, 2021
- Election of Officers will be held at the April 2021 virtual meeting
- College and University Council should meet in late March 2021
- WEAVE will be available in late December
- *Pathology and Microbiology for Mortuary Science, 2nd Edition* will be available January 15, 2021

Remote/Distance Learning as a response to COVID-19 received *temporary* approval from the US Department of Education. Plans to offer 50% or more of the accredited program via distance on a permanent basis is a Substantive Change which requires COA approval. It is recommended that programs look at Appendix E, Chapter VIII page 8-7 in the Manual and Appendix K-11. The ABFSE office must be notified of any plans in advance so that virtual visits can be done .

College and University Council should plan to meet during the week of March 22 – 26, 2021 to discuss the slate of officers, candidates for the COA, Notices of Motion (currently 4 are anticipated) and other business.

Elections in April 2021 will be held for ABFSE officers President, Vice-President, Secretary/Treasurer. COA will select new members from educator candidates advanced by CUC plus 2 Public Members and an NFDA representative.

Anticipated Time Frame:

- March 1, 2021 – deadline for resumes (officers; COA)
- Week of March 22 – 26, 2021 – CUC Meeting
- Week of April 6, 2021 – COA meets to select new members
- April 13-14, 2021 – COA Meeting
- By April 16, 2021 ABFSE committees will have met via ZOOM on a mutually agreeable timetable. Committee reports will be presented at the April 23, 2021 Annual Meeting.

- April 23, 2021 – ABFSE Annual Meeting via ZOOM

Executive Director encouraged those who are interested in serving on the COA or as a candidate for ABFSE Secretary/Treasurer to send their resumes to the ABFSE office.

Notices of Motion:

- Curriculum Outline Approval from 2019 Review
 - Microbiology, Restorative Art, Funeral Service Management, Cremation
- Curriculum Outline Approval from 2020 Review
 - Pathology, Anatomy, Sociology, History
- Revision of Standards proposed by the COA
- Bachelor Degree Guidelines – new Appendix N

Notices of Motion will be sent out at least 30 days prior to the meeting.

Textbook Survey

J. Grande stated that a textbook survey would be going out to the ABFSE program directors.

Embalming Textbook Update

President Ennis provided an update on the embalming textbook. The current schedule is that S. Gee-Mascarello will send a final draft to the editorial committee in March 2021. McGraw-Hill needs the final edits no later than May 2021 in order for February 2022 delivery.

Annual Report and Cohort Tracking Sessions

Annual Report and Cohort Tracking sessions will be offered via ZOOM in December 2020 (1 session) and January 2021 (2 sessions). Executive Director encouraged participants to look at Appendix B-5 to see a sample of last year's report.

An orientation session for WEAVE will be made available soon.

Meeting ended at 3:29 p.m. (ET)