



# AMERICAN BOARD OF FUNERAL SERVICE EDUCATION

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National Funeral Directors and  
Morticians Association

National Funeral Directors  
Association

International Cemetery, Cremation  
and Funeral Association

Accredited Institutions

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## **Press Release**

### **American Board of Funeral Service Education Meets in Jacksonville**

Funeral service educators and practitioners met in Jacksonville, FL April 14-17, 2015 for the 53<sup>rd</sup> Annual Conference of the American Board of Funeral Service Education (ABFSE). ABFSE is the sole accrediting agency for funeral service/mortuary science programs in the US, recognized by the US Department of Education and the Council for Higher Education Accreditation.

ABFSE accredits 58 programs in 35 states and there are currently 2 candidate programs. National Funeral Directors Association (NFDA), National Funeral Directors and Morticians Association (NFDMA) and International Cemetery, Crematory and Funeral Association (ICCFA) support the activities of ABFSE and provide input to the committees.

ABFSE President Eugene Ogrodnik (Pittsburgh Institute of Mortuary Science; Pittsburgh, PA) welcomed Conference attendees to a 'new look' event that offered ample time for professional development and access to exhibitors in addition to the traditional work of accreditation and ABFSE business.

Committee on Accreditation (COA) Chairperson Steve Spann (John A. Gupton College; Nashville, TN), completed his term of office and Venus R. Smith (Jefferson State Community College; Birmingham, AL) will assume the role of chairperson for the October 2015 meeting.

COA reviewed activities of 22 programs during their deliberations and 5 programs were re-accredited. – American River College, Des Moines Area Community College, John A. Gupton College, Lincoln College of New England and Northampton Community College. Arkansas State University at Mt. Home was granted initial accreditation.

Through the Scholarship Committee, ABFSE awarded four scholarships to students at Cincinnati College of Mortuary Science, Delgado Community College, Wayne State University and Worsham College of Mortuary Science. Scholarship support is provided through the generosity of several funeral service associations and vendors (a full list is available on the ABFSE website [www.abafse.org](http://www.abafse.org)). Additional scholarship awards will be issued in October. Service Corporation International was host of a reception for attendees at which SCI shared the results of their own scholarship program.

A significant aspect of the ABFSE mission is to maintain a current and viable curriculum to be utilized by the accredited programs. Curriculum updates were approved for Anatomy, Sociology, History of Funeral Directing, Pathology and Cremation. Review of the Embalming and Funeral Directing curricula will occur during summer 2015.

Cremation Association of North America (CANA) sponsored the Annual Awards Luncheon where ABFSE recognized the Educator of the Year and Professional of the Year.

Michael St. Pierre, Funeral Director from Indianapolis, and past President of IFDA, NFDA, NSM was recognized as 'Funeral Professional of the Year' for his contributions to funeral service education and the profession. St. Pierre served the ABFSE as a member of the Committee on Accreditation for the past 6 years and for more than a decade was a practitioner on the visiting teams who evaluate the accredited programs.

Dr. Elaine Reinhard was recognized as 'Educator of the Year' for dedication to funeral service education and the ABFSE. Dr. Reinhard retires from Hudson Valley Community College in 2015 where she has served as program chair since 1987. She also served on the ABFSE COA for the past 4 years and on the Curriculum Study Committee for 14 years.

Professional development for the educators was a highlight of the 53<sup>rd</sup> Annual Conference. Educators shared in sessions for 'Best Practices to Teach Funeral Directing, Embalming and Communications'. Jeff Chancellor from Eckels Co. provided a seminar on 'Embalming: The Art of Critical Care.' Representatives from International Conference of Funeral Service Examining Boards (ICFSEB) participated in dialog designed to improve communications between the testing agency and the educators.

During the 'Educators Only' portion of the Conference, school representatives had a question and answer session with the Committee on Accreditation.

New member orientation, strategic planning for the ABFSE and sessions designed to guide programs through the accreditation process were also well attended.

Exhibitors were included in the ABFSE Annual Conference for the first time and ABSFE was recognized as a continuing education provider by the Academy of Professional Funeral Service Practice (APFSP), allowing attendees to earn continuing education credit for participation in selected sessions.

Exhibitors included NFDA, NFDMA, CANA, APFSP, Dodge Co., Eckels Co., ICFSEB, Indigo Interactive, Kelco, SynDaver, Thanos, and the Wilbert Group.

NFDA, NFDMA and CANA shared resources and member info for educators and students. The Academy reinforced the value of continuing education and also encouraged educator and student participation. Representatives from The Conference provided tips on navigating the ICFSEB website and answered questions about the National Board Exam. Indigo Interactive impressed attendees with their on-line accreditation system designed to improve accreditation recordkeeping and self study documents. Representatives from Eckels, Kelco, Dodge and the Wilbert group described their offerings and reinforced their support for funeral service education. Author/Educator Ralph Klicker shared information about his textbooks and continuing education programs.

Florida State College at Jacksonville hosted the final sessions of the conference which included a demonstration of 'SynDaver', a synthetic cadaver designed to facilitate instruction in anatomy and embalming.

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