

ABFSE holds 56th Annual Conference in Anaheim, CA

American Board of Funeral Service Education President Karl Kann (Worsham College, Wheeling, IL) presided over the ABFSE Annual Meeting during the organization's 56th Annual Conference in Anaheim, CA.

Cypress College, Cypress, CA was the host school during the conference which ran from April 10-14, 2018. Jolena Grande (Program Director), Lori Collins, Damon de la Cruz, David McCament and Stephen Nichols represented Cypress College throughout the conference.

Forty-four of the 57 currently accredited programs of Funeral Service/Mortuary Science in the US attended the Annual Conference along with representatives of the four association members, National Funeral Directors Association (NFDA), National Funeral Directors and Morticians Association (NFDMA), International Cemetery, Cremation and Funeral Association (ICCFA) and Cremation Association of North America (CANA) and two candidate programs.

New officers were elected to lead ABFSE for 2018-2020. President is Jzyk Ennis from Jefferson State Community College, Birmingham, AL, Vice-President, Jolena Grande from Cypress College, Cypress, CA and Secretary/Treasurer, David Martin from Piedmont Technical College, Greenwood, SC. Mark Evely, Wayne State University, Detroit, MI was elected as Chairperson of the Committee on Accreditation and John Fritch, University of Central Oklahoma, Edmond, OK will lead the College and University Council.

ABFSE Committee on Accreditation (COA) reviewed specific accreditation activities of 14 programs along with graduation rates, NBE pass rates and job placement rates of all accredited programs. COA Chairperson Venus Riley Smith (Jefferson State Community College, Birmingham, AL), James Shoemake (Dallas Institute of Funeral Service), David Martin (Piedmont Technical College) and Gwen Mooney (ICCFA representative) were recognized and thanked for their years of service to the COA as their terms ended.

Enrollment and graduation statistics for 2017 were reviewed by the COA and the summary data will be shared with the programs and the public following the annual conference. Fifty-nine accredited schools and programs operated during 2017. Two programs closed during 2017, another is wrapping up operations during 2018. The program at Northeast Texas Community College was granted Initial Accreditation and another program is currently in Candidacy status. In 2017, 1646 graduated from accredited programs across the country and 2411 new students enrolled. Females were 64.8% of the graduates and 11% of all graduates had parents in funeral service.

Updated curriculum outlines for Business Law, Chemistry and Merchandising were approved and plans were made to initiate review of the funeral service law, small business management (w/accounting) and funeral service psychology and counseling teaching outlines during summer 2018. ABFSE reviews teaching outlines on an annual basis with input from the association members.

The scholarship committee recommended 2 undergraduate awards and 2 graduate scholarships. Names of recipients will be reported on the ABFSE website upon confirmation with the recipients.

The annual conference opened with an update on the ABFSE Strategic Plan and Review of Standards. The Scholarship Committee, Constitution & By-Laws Committee, Program Committee, NBE Liaison Committee, Curriculum Committee and COA Liaison Committee held their meetings.

Professional Development activities included “Advanced Embalming Made Easy; “Credit and Financing a Funeral Home”; “Best Practices for Teaching Funeral Directing” and “Assessment”. The International Conference of Funeral Service Examining Boards (ICFSEB) provided an update of their statistics, policies and job task analysis. The association members, NFDA, NFDMA, ICCFA, and CANA provided a summary of their education related activities.

ABFSE is currently in the midst of a ‘Review of Standards’. Periodically, accrediting agencies must evaluate the standards with which programs must comply. Comments from educators, students, funeral service practitioners and the general public were collected for the proposed update. The next round of comments on the Revised Standards will be collected during summer 2018. Updated Standards are due to be approved at the 57th Annual Meeting in Miami, FL.

Attendees received a status report on the pending 6th edition of the *Embalming* textbook and were treated to a reception courtesy of Service Corporation International.

Twenty-six exhibitors participated in a mini-trade show which included banking, education and grief related resources, embalming chemical companies, providers of death care products, potential employers and scholarship providers, textbook providers, and cremation-oriented companies along with the association members. A learner’s lounge was available to provide educators with assistance using the new online platform that will be used for self study submission.

Orientation for new members was included in the conference agenda and Martha Thayer (Arapahoe Community College, Littleton, CO) led a mentoring session designed to connect new program directors and faculty with experienced colleagues.

On the final day of the Conference, 15 program representatives attended a Self Study workshop to review expectations for the process known as the self study. At least every 7 years, every program undergoes a comprehensive review of its activities which is evaluated by a team consisting of two educators and one funeral service practitioner.

Formally established in 1962, ABFSE grew out of the efforts of NFDA, ICFSEB and the associations of funeral service schools and colleges. Today, ABFSE is recognized by the US Department of Education and the Council for Higher Education Accreditation as the accrediting agency for the colleges and universities teaching funeral service/mortuary science education in the US. ABFSE strives to cooperate with all groups and agencies having an interest in the advancement of the principles and standards of funeral service education.

ABFSE meets annually in April. A Directory of accredited programs is available at www.abfse.org.