



## **ABFSE 63rd Annual Meeting**

Friday, April 11, 2025

Crowne Plaza Downtown Kansas City – Kansas City, MO

***\*\*These minutes will be presented for approval at the 64th Annual Meeting in Houston, Texas\*\****

The meeting was called to order by President, Joseph Finocchiaro at 9:30 AM. The Pledge of Allegiance was made by all present.

The Invocation and Prayer of Remembrance and for Health was given by Brian Mullins. The following were remembered in prayer: Russell Adkins, George Connick, Raymond Finocchiaro, Kenneth Rohn, Deacon Cluese Lyons, Jr., Elizabeth Renay Palmer and Laurie Strohmayer. The following were remembered in prayer for their health: Constance Barrowe and Michael Mastellone.

Mark Evely (Wayne State University) was appointed parliamentarian.

Roll Call was called by Vice President, Cody Lopasky (Commonwealth Institute of Funeral Service).

### **ASSOCIATION MEMBERS**

CANA (Cremation Association of North America)

NFDA (National Funeral Directors Association)

NFD & MA (National Funeral Directors & Morticians Association)

### **INSTITUTIONS**

American Academy McAllister Institute

American River College

Arapahoe Community College

Arkansas State University-Mountain Home

Cape Cod Community College

Carl Sandburg College

Cincinnati College of Mortuary Science

Columbus Technical College

Commonwealth Institute of Funeral Service

Community College of Baltimore County

Cypress College

Dallas Institute of Funeral Service

Des Moines Area Community College

East Mississippi Community College

Eastwick College

Fayetteville Technical Community College

FINE Mortuary College  
Florida State College at Jacksonville  
Goodwin University  
Gupton-Jones College of Funeral Service  
Hudson Valley Community College  
Ivy Tech Community College  
Jefferson State Community College  
John A. Gupton College  
Lake Washington Institute of Technology  
Malcolm X College  
Mercer Community College  
Miami-Dade College  
Mid-America College of Funeral Service  
Milwaukee Area Technical College  
Mount Hood Community College  
Nassau Community College  
Northampton Community College  
Northeast Texas Community College  
North Shore Community College  
Ogeechee Technical College  
Piedmont Technical College  
Pittsburgh Institute of Mortuary Science  
Salt Lake Community College  
San Antonio College  
Southern Illinois University  
St. Petersburg College  
State University of New York - Canton  
University of Arkansas Hope-Texarkana  
University of Minnesota  
University of the District of Columbia  
Vincennes University  
Wayne State University  
Worsham College

Staff: Robert C. Smith III, Michael Landon, Trudy Ellmore

ABFSE Team Chairs: Melton Jones, Neal Henning

ABFSE Executive Committee: Joseph Finocchiaro, President; Jolena Grande, Past President; Cody Lopasky, Vice-President; Tony Moore, Secretary/Treasurer

There were sixty-eight (68) remote attendees from twenty-two (22) states. Eighteen (18) individuals signed the guest book.

Fifty-two (52) of fifty-eight (58) members and three (3) associations were present. A quorum was declared by Vice-President, Cody Lopasky.

Vice-President Lopasky gave a special thanks to our Gold Sponsors, Passare-Funeral Directors Life who hosted our reception the previous evening and Anubis Publications who will be hosting the Recognition Luncheon that follows the Annual Meeting. Bronze Sponsors and Exhibitors were also thanked for their participation in our annual conference, especially to Mr. Bruce Likly and TribuCast for the livestream. Mr. Likly could not be with us, but Mr. Oscar Belmont was warmly welcomed and appreciated for running the livestream in Mr. Likly's absence.

Our Exhibitors included the following:

ABFSE & Weave  
The Academy of Professional Funeral Service Practice  
Cremation Association of North America (CANA)  
Dodge Company  
Edgewood College  
FSERC  
Honorlock  
The International Conference of Funeral Service Examining Board  
Library Information and Resource Network  
Mortifin Consulting and Training  
National Funeral Directors Association (NFDA)  
National Funeral Directors & Morticians Association (NFDMA)  
NBE Exam Prep  
Passare / Funeral Directors Life  
Pierce College Books  
Postmortem Restorative Art Textbook  
RynoFlip, LLC  
Tattoo Memorials, LLC  
Thanos Institute  
Trajecsys Centralized Clinical Recordkeeping  
TribuCast©  
Tuesday Evening Publications

#### **ADOPTION OF AGENDA**

President, Joseph Finocchiaro asked for a motion to approve the Agenda as presented.

MOTION: David Hess (Mid-America College of Funeral Service), (second) Leili McMurrough (Worsham College) to accept agenda as presented.

VOTE: Passed unanimously.

#### **APPROVAL OF 2024 MINUTES**

President, Joseph Finocchiaro called for approval of the April 11, 2024 62<sup>nd</sup> Annual Meeting Minutes as presented which were emailed to the membership thirty (30) days prior to the meeting.

MOTION: Barry Lease (Pittsburgh Institute of Mortuary Science), (second) James Bullard (Fayetteville Technical Community College) to approve the April 11, 2024 62nd Annual Meeting minutes.

VOTE: Passed unanimously.

#### **REPORT FROM THE PRESIDENT, JOSEPH FINOCCHIARO**

My Dear Colleagues,

It has been a quick two years since I took office and the old adage that time passes quicker the older you get apparently holds some truth as I present this final report. You will please indulge me if this report is more verbose than what I typically present and your understanding is appreciated.

During my time I have largely engaged in the strategic priority of communicating the role and purpose of the American Board to others. In fact, as of late, there seems to be increased interest in the role of our organization and what it does and I've been privileged to speak about the ABFSE prior to this conference and will be doing so again the upcoming months. I am hopeful that through these engagements industry professionals will become more engaged in educational efforts. I also hope they become more involved in the testing process to ensure that the various parts of our licensure systems do what they're supposed to do. I hope that the industry spends less time on perceived quick fixes that may not address the source of the staffing problems. It is my belief that wage inequality in the funeral industry is the greatest threat to attracting and retaining talent and not all the alternatives to licensure in the world will resolve the wage issue, in fact, it may exacerbate it. Finally, I hope they see us less as educators from the outside peeking in and more along the reality that we are funeral professionals ourselves, many of which work both sides of the fence understanding industry problems while also engaging the next generation of professionals.

Outside of advocating for accreditation, I have been lucky to be able to present professionally to this organization on a variety of topics including professional development sessions and some sessions during this 2025 annual conference. When I started this educational journey twelve years ago I never would have thought to have the stage to share my knowledge and experiences – it seems all I did was listen. I understand now that this is the natural evolution of participation in our organization. The new members and faculty gain their footing and in time, become the leaders. Truth be told, I'm grateful and flattered that was able to serve you in the capacity that I have done and hope to continue to do in different ways.

One of the key offerings I wanted to see from the American Board was the creation of some type of mentorship program. I am very pleased that we were able to start this program and learn that the feedback we have received has overwhelmingly been positive. As I leave office I hope that the initiative expands from administration of a program into more areas as time progresses. Skilled financial aid representatives, bursars, and academic advisors would partner with their peers at different organizations to share their knowledge and skills. I also feel there is a need for subject matter coaches as not every individual is comfortable with every subject and unlike our general education counterparts, we are often not in a position to just teach one subject as our expertise. Perhaps a future leadership team will do precisely this and maybe a

professional development session or conference breakout can lead to meetings of subject disciplines. As always, you: the membership, need to communicate your desires and wants so the executive team can listen and respond.

I cannot stress the importance of our weekly officer's check-ins. In a world where all too often we get frustrated with meetings to have meetings, the regular reporting and conversation of the ABFSE leadership has enhanced the organization. It creates a sense of teamwork and comradery amongst the elected officers and, most importantly, guards against organizational memory loss. It is important that things don't get lost along the way, especially with the constantly changing landscape where situations develop quite literally overnight.

That being said, I regret that I did not have more time to work on the Model Apprenticeship Program. It is my desire that in my new found 'retirement' that I will be able to spend more time on this project and look forward to the future work product to come from this initiative.

I will not reintroduce the work and achievements of our committees that has already been presented by the committee chairs. Truly, the brunt of the work that is done by this organization is done by the committees and their members. If it wasn't for them, curriculum wouldn't be updated, professional development wouldn't get planned, and this organization would not make the gains that it has since I started attending more than 12 years ago. All of you have my admiration and respect for what you do for the greater good. To those of you who have just started your funeral service education journey: get involved however you can. Every bit helps and fresh perspectives need to be given.

From a financial standpoint the organization is thriving. Our Executive Director should deservedly be given much of the credit for this as his stewardship and oversight has been integral to our financial success. I would also be remiss to not mention the gracious gift by our respected peer Larry Cleveland which has given us even more stability. While we would certainly trade that stability for the ability to have Larry back with us, his profound kindness and generosity to us and the funeral service education community assuages the grief of his passing.

I would also like to acknowledge the ABFSE office team. Robb, Mike, and Trudy. I will simply thank you for all that you do even though I think these words are grossly insufficient to convey the appreciation that I and others have for the tremendous efforts that go into serving our membership.

For fear of neglecting someone, please forgive me as I offer a generous bouquet of thanks to all of you who have contributed to this organization during my tenure as your president. Thank you for patience, understanding, and your faith in me as your leader.

In closing, it is my personal desire that all of you enjoy every blessing and success life has to offer. My dear friends and colleagues, this concludes my report.

## REPORT FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, ROBERT C. SMITH III

### Acknowledgements:

- ABFSE officers – meet on a weekly basis.
- Executive Committee – meets quarterly, has helped effectiveness of the organization.
- Exhibitors
- Single purpose schools – meets monthly and has been productive.
- Program Committee – has ensured that there has been a monthly educational opportunity.
- Site visitors
- COA
- Staff

### Membership is made up of:

- Fifty-eight (58) accredited schools & programs in thirty-three (33) states & DC. Three (3) associations.

### Changes:

- There were thirty-five (35) accredited schools & programs in 1980. Nine (9) have closed since 2014.
- There are seven (7) new program and four (4) potential Candidate programs.
- The pace of Program Director change has slowed – only 3 in 2024.

### Annual Reports

- Deadline February 15.
- Uses data from Student Tracker, Faculty Database and more
- There was one (1) late report
- Fifteen (15) reports had errors (25%). Ten (10) were re-opened.
- Summaries available on ABFSE website back to 2013
- 2024 results will be available after Annual Conference
- Info used by schools for assessment, by the profession for understanding, by the public in their education selection and decisions, for accreditation.

### Selected Data Points

	<b>2024</b>	<b>2023</b>	<b>2022</b>
<b>New Enrollees</b>	3363	3072	3462
<b>Graduates</b>	2016	1912	1588
<b>Total Enrollment</b>	7193	6954	7035
<b>Attrition</b>	1034	916	1049
<b>Male/Female Ratios</b> (graduates)	25.5% / 74.5%	26% / 74%	28% / 72%

New Enrollees: 18% BA degree or higher / 41% prior work experience

Graduates: Part-time 44% / Family in business 14.9% (Parent 7%)

Total enrollment grew 3.8% v. 2023

Three (3) programs had 50% or more growth (must be reported to USDE)

### Impact of Distance Education

- Fifty-five percent (55%) of programs report offering some FS courses via DE
- Twenty-seven (27) (of 58) programs had DE grads
- Fifty-three (53%) of all grads were DE grads
- Seven (7) (of 58) had 100% DE grads (no traditional classroom instruction)

### Site Visits

- Ten (1) 10 site visits were for re-accreditation and three (3) DE site visits
- In 2025 have scheduled seven (7) visits and one (1) DE visit already

### US Department of Education recognition and process

- Quality assurance
- Eligibility for Federal Financial aid
- Every five (5) years (current process began August 2023; expected conclusion Feb/Mar 2026)
- Written petition (essentially a Self Study)
- Department analyst observes COA meeting, file review, attends site visit, writes an evaluation report
- COA responds to the written evaluation report appears before NACIQI

### Professional Development

- Provided by Program Committee many eligible for CEU
- Be sure to complete your evaluation when you get home

### ABFSE Website

- Annual Report summaries since 2013
- COA decisions
- ABFSE Directory of Accredited Programs
- Accreditation Manual
- Accreditation Standards
- Access to Student Tracker, Faculty Database
- SS Workshop PowerPoints
- tasks
- Assessment ideas
- Program Director expectations
- Professional license disclosure
- Site inspection suggestions
- Sample form for tracking
- Funeral Directing

### Announcements

- Curriculum Review & textbook update session - June
- Textbook survey – available next month?
- Website update - finally
- Directory info will be sent to each program after the Conference. Update by June 1.
- No accreditation fee increase in '25-26
- Expect \$500 increase for '26-27 & '27-28

## REPORT FROM THE PAST PRESIDENT, JOLENA GRANDE

Ms. Grande expressed gratitude for being invited to speak for a few more minutes as a past president and for all past presidents, their examples, their contribution and commitment to funeral service education and promoting the work of ABFSE.

As you have heard about the work of the American Board, you can see that we work diligently to advance, advocate, and articulate the value of post-secondary academic preparation for funeral service practice through accreditation standards, formalized curriculum, and support resources for faculty, staff, administrators, students, and us sitting here right now as practitioners. Despite revisions to our mission, vision, and values that naturally occur over time, I encourage everyone in this room to continually, wholeheartedly embrace our high ideals. We preface our seven values on meeting our mission and vision.

Our first two, accountability and consistent program improvement, are clearly demonstrated throughout our accreditation standards. Our Executive Director provided an update on our continuing recognition by the United States Department of Education as the only recognized accreditor of funeral service education programs in the United States. Shortly, we will be asked to vote on our systematically reviewed curriculum content outlines which provide the structure to our courses. And although we are encouraged to adapt instruction to include our unique geographic needs, all of our ABFSE graduates are expected to achieve licensure that is predicated in most, if not many jurisdictions on passing the National Board exam. It is one of the many metrics of accountability under our standard 10 program planning and evaluation and assessment. This leads to consistent program improvement, and our newly revised accreditation standards serve as that baseline.

We strive to provide all students the highest quality preparation for funeral service careers. We embrace the opportunity to address concerns and celebrate when our plans for improvement in graduation rates or job placement rates or NBE passing scores bear fruit.

When it comes to our core values of equity and inclusiveness, whether we're a 2-year Community College, a four year university, a diploma granting institution, single purpose or multipurpose, we all have our students complete the minimally mandated course of instruction that includes 25% general education. And for those of us that might be at a multipurpose institution where there is a historical binary between general and vocational divisions, it is incumbent upon each of us to recognize that all of the education that we provide, occupational or otherwise, is academic in nature. And we need to continue placing a value on experiential and work based learning that takes place at us outside of our structured classroom lectures.

And as we look to the inclusiveness amongst us in this room today, regardless of the size of our student cohort or the number of faculty in our programs, we are all dedicated to improving the lives of our students and ensuring that they are prepared for the rigors of funeral service practice.

Over the past five years, we have seen the migration of some of our programs to wholeheartedly embracing distance education. There is clearly a greater emphasis and an increasing reliance on technology to deliver our instruction. We are grateful to the willingness of those programs who are so skilled in that regard to work in tandem with those of us who are

just now embarking on it and assist so that all of our students will learn regardless of the method of instruction, the learning management system, synchronous or asynchronous learning environment.

In terms of integrity, transparency, and accountability, we are all very familiar with the work that we do to ensure all of our actions, deliberations, and decisions are widely promoted, publicized and shared. Whether as an educator or practitioner, your interest is welcome as we work to advance the mission of the American Board.

**FINANCIAL REPORT - TONY MOORE, SECRETARY/TREASURER & ROBERT SMITH III, ABFSE**

The ABFSE is in a financially stable position due to the diligence and fiscal responsibility of the Executive Director. We have exceeded our budgetary expectations regarding Cleveland textbook sales. Under the guidance of the Executive Committee, we are in a very solid position. All financial reports are available. Please contact the ABFSE office and a copy will be sent to you.

**COMMITTEE AND ORGANIZATION REPORTS:**

**Scholarship Committee, Sara Moss, Chair (NFDA)**

In her absence, the Executive Director presented the report.

The scholarship committee met via Teams video conference on the morning of March 31, 2025, to finalize the evaluation of the scholarship applications submitted for April 2025. Seventeen undergraduate applications were evaluated by the committee. The committee awarded scholarships as follows:

<b>Applicant</b>	<b>Institution</b>	<b>Scholarship Donor</b>	<b>Amount Awarded</b>
Jennifer Davis	Cincinnati College of Mortuary Science	NFDA	\$2,500
Nicole Caldwell	Chandler-Gilbert Community College	ASD (\$2,100)	\$2,100
Erika Stark	Community College of Baltimore	UMSEA	\$2,000
Emma Hyer	Worsham College	Dodge	\$1,500
Teia Hill	Gupton-Jones College of Funeral Service	NOMIS (\$1,250) The Champion Co (\$250)	\$1,500
Evie Brisley	American Academy McAllister Institute	McComb's (\$1,000) The Champion Co (\$500)	\$1,500
Nora Derthick	Cincinnati College of Mortuary Science	ASD (\$400) ABFSE (\$100) Heritage (\$1,000)	\$1,500
		<b>Total Awards</b>	<b>\$12,600</b>

**Curriculum Committee, Jzyk Ennis, Chair (Jefferson State Community College)**

ABFSE Curriculum Committee met in-person on Wednesday, April 9, 2025 at the annual meeting of ABFSE in Kansas City, MO. The main order of business was selectin of

curriculum outline reviewers for the upcoming 2025 Hilgenfeld Summer Curriculum Workshop this June in Littleton, Colorado.

The following were selected by the Committee:

Restorative Art

Ben Schmidt, Chair (self-paying)	Northeast Texas
Jennie Fredrickson	Lake Washington
Dan Shea	Cape Cod
Jake Smith	Brightpoint
Nick Astorino	Worsham
Edwin Jackson	CC Baltimore County
Ally Cabrera (Host School)	Arapahoe

Funeral Service Management

Lauren Budrow, Chair	Wayne State
Jzyk Ennis	Jefferson State
Stephanie Kelly	Salt Lake
James Robinson	Commonwealth
Nick Ricci Brittany Carrington	Pittsburgh Institute NE Texas
Ren Sherling (Host School)	Arapahoe

Cremation

Barbara Kemmis, Chair	CANA
Jeff Zealley	Salt Lake
Jennifer Werthman	Worsham
Mary Mena	San Antonio
Kate Schooley	Pittsburgh Institute
Matt Buel	Arkansas State- Mtn. Home
Faith Haug (Host School)	Arapahoe
Thomas Krowal	CANA

Discussion was also held on the new ABFSE curriculum outline access policy.

- Due to a suspected breach, new user name and password were established.
- Only the program director will be given the user name and password and must agree to ABFSE confidentiality and user agreement policies.
- Each program director is responsible for providing outlines to faculty who need these outlines or what level of access.

**Committee on Accreditation, Mark Evely, Chair** (Wayne State University)

COA met on Tuesday and Wednesday, April 8-9, 2025.

- Approved 2 substantive change applications for institutional leadership.

- Approved 2 substantive change applications for program leadership.
- Discuss new program inquiries from 3 institutions.
- Reviewed and discussed the Department of Education Recognition Report.
- Set a special COA meeting for May 28th and 29th to update the Accreditation manual.
- Reviewed data from the Annual Report.
- Elected Nick Ricci (PIMS) as the private educator member of the COA.
- Discussed inquiries from NFDA and the conference related to accrediting funeral director only programs and voted to appoint a subcommittee to develop responses.
- Reviewed financial reports and approved the 2025-2026 budget.
- Approved an increase in annual accreditation fees as outlined in the Executive Director report.
- Approved NBE exemption request for 42 students in Arts and 66 students in Sciences.
- Place 9 programs on warning for single year NBE pass rates below 60%.
- Reviewed 2 assessment plans in response to accreditation stipulations.
- Removed probation from 2 programs.
- Granted 3 years of accreditation for 2 programs.
- Granted 7 years of accreditation to 6 programs, approved one program for distance education, placed one program on probation and completed evaluation of the Executive Director.

We also met with the Accreditation Liaison Committee to address several questions. One question related to decreasing the NBE exemption period from one year to 90 days. COA voted to table that request until after analysis of persistence pass rate from 2025.

Also discussed was a question on why lists have to be submitted with the annual report. The Executive Director detailed that in his report.

There were also a couple of questions about COA terms, how COA members are elected. College and University Council submits 3 names for a COA position. Applications and resumes get sent to the COA. COA, discusses those, reviews those and then votes at the COA meetings. You might recall from CUC meeting in recent history, there was a concern about 5 Committee on Accreditation members completing their terms at the same time in 2027. So the COA did vote on that, decided not to extend or shorten any of those terms. Those 5 members will be going off at the same time. But some of the new terms will be shortened to hopefully encourage a staggered approach in the future.

**NBE Liaison Committee, Kevin Patterson, Chair** (Des Moines Area Community College)  
The NBE Liaison Committee welcomed representatives from The International Conference of Funeral Service Examining Boards at a meeting in conjunction with the ABFSE meeting on April 10, 2025. During the meeting, the Committee and guests in attendance received an update on the items discussed by the Committee at their January meeting.

**College & University Council, Jolena Grande, Chair** (Cypress College)  
2025 annual CUC VIRTUAL meeting called to order on Friday, March 7, 2025, with 31 of the 58 programs present. Our most recent CUC meeting was noteworthy for being relatively

uneventful but for the impromptu interruption. The meeting was quickly reconvened following the interruption.

ABFSE committee reports were received from those that have met since the last CUC meeting, followed by a report on ABFSE participation in the 2025 ICFSEB annual meeting.

A report from Nominating Committee presenting nominees for CUC Chair, CUC Secretary, and three nominees to be selected as a COA Private Educator, along with a slate of officers for the ABFSE.

ABFSE Candidate slate of officers presented:

Erin Wilson, Secretary,  
Tony Moore, Vice President  
Cody Lopasky, President

The committee presented David Hess, Lisa Meehan, and Nicholas Ricci for the COA Private Educator seat.

Eboné Dukes was nominated for CUC Chair and Lori Purcell was nominated for CUC Secretary.

ABFSE Notices of Motion, specifically updates to ABFSE Curriculum Outlines were reviewed and without opposition to the following content areas:

- Small Business Management
- Microbiology
- Funeral Service Law and Federal Trade Commission

**Program Committee, Faith Haug, Chair** (Arapahoe Community College)

The Program Committee has met twice virtually since the last executive committee meeting in January.

Our work has consisted of:

1. Finalized the dates for all professional development webinars through January 2026.
2. Content developed for these webinars through January.
  - a. Topics we have planned include
    - Advocacy/Formaldehyde standards update from NFDA's Lesley Witter
    - Program recruitment best practices
    - DMORT
    - DOVER
    - Beginning a series on best practices for instruction by curriculum outline
3. We will now begin planning programming for Houston!

**By Laws Committee, Audrina Dollar, Chair** (Mid-America College of FS)

The Bylaws Committee has had no new request to visit language after last year's review of the term educator for the purpose of advisory committee membership. As such, the committee has had no new meetings and there is no new information to share at this time.

**Accreditation Liaison Committee, Michael LuBrant, Chair** (University of Minnesota)

The questions that you presented have already been answered by your panelists, by Mark Evely, the Executive Director and others. We, as our committee, most recently met in March a couple of occasions to go over the feedback that you provided to us as part of your surveys.

The three principal areas that members provided feedback to us and our committee to work with have been addressed. They concerned, for example, the question regarding the NBE participants pass rate as well as the request that had to do with looking at that review period from one year versus 90 days, and we appreciate the ongoing work that the Committee on Accreditation is giving to that consideration.

Additionally asked, "Why do we have to provide lists?" And again, I appreciate what both Mark and as well Rob explained, the reasons for those lists and the component on term limits as well and how things work with the membership on the Committee on Accreditation.

I also want to thank all of you that reached out to myself and others on the committee with questions that you had over the past year. I also want to thank all of you that reached out to myself and others on the committee with questions that you had over the past year.

The committee has selected Erin Wilson, a current member, to take over as the chair of the committee.

**NFDA Report, Randall Anderson, CFSP, CCO, Past President**

It's an honor to be back with you again to represent NFDA. I will explain the absence of our NFDA members as they are concluding the very successful advocacy Summit in Washington, DC this week.

I want to thank ABFSE for including the practitioners through the participation of the associations. They have something to say and you all give us a place to say it. Thank you for that. We enjoy being a part of building a successful funeral service practitioner career for many, many young people. NFDA offers several helpful resources to students.

As most of you are well aware, one of the things that we had that has been very popular is our podcast *Brush With Death and Voices of Funeral Service*. These are very helpful resources to students and I would encourage you to encourage them to participate and catch those as they come out monthly. Our new program is called *Digging in a Death Care Dialogue*.

We have our Career Center that is helping people in funeral service. I encourage you to make that available to your students in your schools.

We also have the student membership with The Director Edu. That's a \$35 membership, and students can access a variety of resources and support through their membership there.

Our level of learning webinars are free to members, including student members, and they explore a variety of topics important to students that and to seasoned professionals as well. We also offer specialized training for individual schools and for students.

Our cremation certification program is also available to schools.

Any information that you desire to have from NFDA, you can go to the website [nfda.org](http://nfda.org) to obtain that.

### **NFD & MA Report, Kyle Ledford Jr.**

Mr. Ledford reported in the absence of Mr. Shawn'te Harvel, NFDMA President

We are committed to the ABFSE organization and want to ensure that our relationship and our presence continues to grow. NFDMA representatives serve on ABFSE Advisory Committees.

Our first Board of Directors meeting under the new administration was held in Atlanta, October of 2024. February 2025 was our *40 and Under* educational and leadership summit that we typically have every year. In just a few weeks, we'll be meeting with the House of Representatives from our organization in Biloxi, MS.

I'm excited to note that three of our newly executive, newly elected executive officers are from the state of New Jersey and we will be hosting our Annual Convention July 5th through 9th in Secaucus, New Jersey. Also noteworthy, two of the five executive committee members are active in funeral service education.

Just like many of you, both colleges and associations, we are challenged with attracting and retaining members for our associations. We're looking at new and creative ways to ensure that again, we're partnering and aligning with a BFSC and its programs.

And then lastly, we're also working on ways to connect with students both pre, during and post the ABFSE schools to ensure that the face of funeral service continues to grow and expand.

### **CANA Report, Barbara Kemmis, Executive Director**

#### **CANA Membership**

Accredited programs of the American Board of Funeral Service Education are personally invited to join CANA and extend the benefits of membership to their faculty and students for standard membership dues rate of \$539. In 2025, dues increased for the first time in 5 years for all members except students who can join at just \$35.

With CANA membership, each school:

- Receives one print copy of *The Cremationist* and other publications and access to digital archived issues on our website.
- Students, faculty, and staff receive access to CANA member benefits via [cremationassociation.org](http://cremationassociation.org).

- Students, faculty, and staff receive student rate for COCP of \$195 – in person or online. Students, faculty, and staff will also receive the member rate on any CANA Education Online courses.
  - Schools may negotiate with CANA to host a COCP at a lower rate.
  - Schools may negotiate with CANA to enroll groups in CANA Education Online at a lower rate.
- Support your research and the work of students with the most accurate collection of disposition data in the industry.
  - Access includes archived data and reports.
  - Exclusively for schools, CANA can provide raw data on request for use by researchers.
- CANA membership gives opportunities to meet and talk with the best working in the industry. Expand professional network with CANA’s leadership community.

Current School Members:

1. Chandler-Gilbert Community College Mortuary Science Program – Mesa, Arizona
2. Cincinnati College of Mortuary Science – Cincinnati, Ohio
3. Commonwealth Institute of Funeral Service – Houston, Texas
4. Cypress College – Cypress, California
5. Dallas Institute of Funeral Service – Dallas, Texas
6. Des Moines Area Community College – Des Moines, Iowa
7. FINE Mortuary College LLC – Norwood, Massachusetts
8. Goodwin University – East Hartford, Connecticut
9. Gupton-Jones College of Funeral Service – Decatur, Georgia
10. Hudson Valley Community College – Troy, New York
11. Kansas City Kansas Community College – Kansas City, Kansas
12. Lake Washington Institute of Technology – Kirkland, Washington
13. Mid-America College of Funeral Service – Jeffersonville, Indiana
14. Northeast Texas Community College – Mt. Pleasant, Texas
15. Pittsburgh Institute of Mortuary Science – Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania
16. Southern Illinois University – Carbondale, Illinois
17. University Of Minnesota Program of Mortuary Science – Minneapolis, Minnesota
18. Worsham College of Mortuary Science – Wheeling, Illinois

CANA also offers Student Memberships at the annual dues rate of \$35 for a maximum of two years. Students can be part- or full-time and must be enrolled in a recognized program and can be held for a maximum of two years. Student members receive all of the benefits of membership but are not listed in the CANA Membership roster or website, cannot vote on association business or hold an office in the association, and are not permitted to use the CANA logo on business cards or any promotional material.

Typically, students inquire if their school is a member and whether they are therefore applicable to receive a complimentary membership. Students of school members who join receive the additional benefit of a printed copy of *The Cremationist*.

Current Student Members: 21, from the following schools

- American Academy McAllister  
Institute of Funeral Services
- Commonwealth Institute of Funeral  
Service

- Cypress College
- Dallas Institute of Funeral Service
- FINE Mortuary College
- Goodwin University
- Ivy Tech Community College
- Malcom X Community College
- Miami Dade College
- St. Petersburg Community College
- Worsham College of Mortuary Science

CANA staff have been invited to participate in the orientation events for University of Minnesota, Goodwin University, Cincinnati College of Mortuary Science, and Worsham College to introduce incoming students to the profession and share the resources available to them during their studies and throughout their career. Please contact Brie Bingham, Membership & Marketing Manager, [Brie@CremationAssociation.org](mailto:Brie@CremationAssociation.org), if you are interested in having CANA speak to your students.

#### CANA Publications

Published quarterly, CANA's widely-read magazine, *The Cremationist*, delivers business-oriented information including timely articles, regular columns and news from CANA Headquarters. As part of their member package, the publication is sent to all CANA members — print copies to more than 3,700 cemeterians, funeral directors, and cremationists and digital copies to over 700 more.

In 2024, *The Cremationist* featured Cypress College faculty member Jolena Grande on “10 Death Becomes Her: The Changing Demographics of Funeral Service Practitioners” based on her presentation at CANA's 106<sup>th</sup> Cremation Innovation Convention. Issue 4 also debuted new research from Wake Forest School of Law Professor Tanya Marsh on consumer disposition preferences in “Beyond Cremation”.

Launched in July 2017, *The Cremation Logs* blog is a publicly-available resource for anyone in the profession to benefit from shared expertise, resources, and current trends. Over the last year, CANA's blog had more than 55,000 site visits.

In 2024, *The Cremation Logs* blog featured University of Central Oklahoma faculty Glenda Stansbury on the importance of working together called “Who's the Enemy?” and University of Connecticut faculty Dr. Sara Murphy on “Surviving Suicide Stigma” and supporting families.

Please contact Brie Bingham, Membership & Marketing Manager, [Brie@CremationAssociation.org](mailto:Brie@CremationAssociation.org), for more information on submitting content for the blog or magazine.

In 2026, CANA will mark 150 years since the first modern cremation in North America. The association is soliciting articles of history, reflection, and related topics to mark the sesquicentennial of LeMoyne Crematory in Pennsylvania cremating Baron de Palm in 1876 and changing our profession. Please contact Brie Bingham, Membership & Marketing Manager, [Brie@CremationAssociation.org](mailto:Brie@CremationAssociation.org), to learn how to get involved in this anniversary.

CANA Education  
Online

Approved by twenty of the twenty-one states that require certification, CANA's Online Crematory Operations Certification Program has been widely used by independent students and schools across the country. Nine schools have integrated the Online COCP course into their program with four more schools encouraging students to complete the certification during a designated class of their curriculum.

In 2022, the CANA Crematory Operations Certification Program™ (CANA COCP™) was updated to feature best practices in all forms of cremation, including alkaline hydrolysis. Popular activities such as the *Plan Your Day* exercise have been newly revised, there is an all-new animation to demonstrate the cremation process and the COCP Manual has been updated, keeping CANA's curriculum at the cutting edge of crematory operation best practices.

In 2024, CANA launched the Natural Organic Reduction Operations Certification (NOROC) on this emerging disposition method to support the understanding of natural organic reduction (NOR) and will provide you with a solid overview of best practices among funeral professionals. Of the nine schools that have integrated the Online COCP into their curriculum, three have also added the NOROC, with two others encouraging their students to complete it.

In 2025, CANA expands its support of mid-career professionals with continuing education credit and professional development with the Deathcare Business Administration Certificate. Focused on the essentials of people management and business finance, this is a 10-week, fully digital program designed for current and aspiring leaders in the deathcare industry. Plus, the CANA-Certified Cremation Specialist program continues for the third year for experienced professionals to be more confident and engaged with families from first call to interment.

#### In-person

CANA will offer four live, in-person Crematory Operators Certification Programs in 2025 – students are welcome at all courses: Southern California on March 4, Dallas on June 25, Albany on October 28, and Central Florida on November 18.

CANA will hold the 2026 Cremation Symposium at Paris Las Vegas on February 25- 27, 2026.

In the summer, the association will welcome the profession to the 107<sup>th</sup> Annual Cremation Innovation Convention at the Arizona Biltmore in Phoenix on August 6-8, 2025.

CANA certified over 703 students in the year of 2024 through both online and in-person courses. Starting in August 2023, CANA-Certified Cremation Specialists and Crematory Operators receive digital badges and certificates to demonstrate their achievements. Rather than relying on mail, certificates are distributed by email in a format suitable for printing at the office and showcasing on social media or a resume. More than promoting personal achievement, these credentials are protected by blockchain security and cannot be copied or

faked. Both employers and regulators can now verify that a printed certificate is legitimate and current from a unique QR code included on each certificate.

### Faculty

Additionally, CANA has created a resource section on our website specifically for faculty of the schools to supplement their cremation curriculum. Items available include cremation statistics, video animations, and a list of teaching activities that could be incorporated to help teach cremation in the curriculum.

Contact Barbara, Executive Director, [Barbara@cremationassociation.org](mailto:Barbara@cremationassociation.org), for more information on teaching tools and education.

### CANA Scholarships

CANA has chosen the Funeral Service Foundation to administer the CANA/Jack Springer Memorial Scholarship of \$2,500 twice each year to current mortuary science or funeral service students. The Fall 2024 awardee was Lauren Brunke from DeFuniak Springs, Florida, enrolled at Southern Illinois University. The Spring 2025 application will open April 1.

Joseph Finocchiaro, President called for a motion to accept the Committee Reports.

MOTION: David Penepent (State University of New York -Canton), (second) Howard Beckham (Floria State College at Jacksonville) so moved.

VOTE: Passed unanimousl

### **UNFINISHED BUSINESS - JOSEPH FINOCCHIARO, PRESIDENT**

There was no unfinished business.

### **NEW BUSINESS - JOSEPH FINOCCHIARO, PRESIDENT**

#### Small Business Management, Microbiology and Funeral Service Law.

MOTION: Lisa Meehan (Dallas Institute of Funeral Service), (second) Matthew Buel (Arkansas State University-Mountain Home) that the Small Business Management, Microbiology and Funeral Service Law outlines and glossaries, with revisions shown and any subsequent technical corrections be approved for use in the classroom by the ABFSE.

VOTE: Passed unanimously.

### Election of 2025-2027 ABFSE Officers

President Finocchiaro announced the Slate of Officers presented by the College and University Council

President: Cody Lopasky, Commonwealth Institute of Funeral Service

Vice President: Tony Moore, Northampton Community College

Secretary/Treasurer: Erin Wilson, Dallas Institute of Funeral Service

MOTION: Lisa Meehan (Dallas Institute of Funeral Service), (second) Leili McMurrough (Worsham College of Funeral Service) to accept the slate of officers as presented by the College and University Council.

VOTE: Passed unanimously

Jolena Grande, Past President administered the Oath of Office to Cody Lopasky, President-Elect; Tony Moore, Vice-President-Elect; and Erin Wilson, Secretary/Treasurer-Elect.

**CLOSING COMMENTS - JOSEPH FINOCCHIARO, PRESIDENT**

Thank you all for your hard work. It has been a blast.

**ADJOURN**

MOTION: Kevin Davis (St. Petersburg College), (second) David Penepent (SUNY-Canton) to adjourn.

VOTE: Passed unanimously

Meeting adjourned at 11:30 AM (ET).

DRAFT