Department of Funeral Service Education

Advisory Board

Spring 2015

Minutes 3-3-2015

Greeting and Introduction of UCO Faculty, Staff and Board Members Present

The following Members, staff and guests were in attendance:

Traci Williams, Jenna Barry, Bryan Cogbill, Bruce Kelley, Mark Riley, Ed House, Tom Demuth, John Davenport, Chris Ferguson, Kerri Haines, Charlotte Simmons, John Fritch, Chris Burkey, Larry Morgan, Joe Grzybowski, Angela Knight, Heather Zeoli, Mike Shetlar, Katelyn Magruder, Makayla Gunn, Chassi Kopec, Jackie Garman

State of the Department:

I. Last year Department Goals and progress:

1. Self-Study - The first goal we set last year was completion of the self-study document for this year’s ABFSE’s site visit. It has been in preparation over the last year. It is now ready ahead of schedule and in the editing phase.

   The date for the visit has not been set but it will be sometime this coming fall. Advisory board members may be asked to meet with the visiting team. More details will follow once we have been contacted with a date.

2. Leader in Funeral Service Education – A continued primary goal is for UCO to be a leader in Funeral Service Education. We are pursuing this goal in a variety of ways and feel that much has been accomplished in the pursuit.

   a. One way to measure this goal is by how we are serving the Oklahoma Funeral Directors. Finding out their needs by keeping an open line of communication through a variety of ways besides just the advisory board meeting. Dr. Fritch noted that he and other instructors make stop in visits to various funeral homes, and the department mans a booth at convention to meet and greet professionals in addition to hosting a breakfast for alumni at the Norman convention. A need identified in the last few years is that it was necessary to expand opportunity outside of the metro when it came to serving students and professionals alike. By expanding
Practicum opportunities statewide and continuing to increase courses available via distance education we intend to help students stay in the community in which they intend to work, or start serving earlier than they normally would have been able to.

b. Another way we try to satisfy this goal is by continuing to try to maintain and exceed a high quality of instruction to better prepare students and attract and retain quality students. We are doing a decent job but intend to continually improve the quality of graduates of the program. The C standard to all funeral course work was instituted in recent years and it seems to be helping to better prepare students for the National Board Exam. We continue to improve our quality of instruction and prepare our students to do well on the board exams as a high pass rate works to attract and retain quality students as well.

**Advisory Members input:**

Mark Riley postured that another way for the department to attract additional quality candidates may be undergraduate research. He also mentioned that compensating new directors adequately will help draw quality individuals to the field. Dr. Fritch agreed and expanded on this thought that there is sometimes an issue with compensation. Keri Haines added that sometimes funeral homes outside of the metro can pay better and that students may not realize this.

Dr. Fritch expanded on the fact that it may be hard for the smaller communities to attract young graduates from the Metro and that it does help to find someone already within the community that can attend via distance education as they pursue their license.

Ed House questioned as to whether there could be some kind of a job fair to introduce students to funeral directors who are looking. Dr. Fritch mentioned it had been in consideration but participation and reach needed to be ironed out. It was suggested that it could be combined with a UCO Career Fair or somehow be incorporated in with convention.

Mark Riley asked if students were educated on appropriate dress and behavior, etc. for job searches. Dr. Fritch noted that mock interviews and hiring panels are done in multiple classes throughout the curriculum.
3. **Continue to increase enrollment and graduates.** Dr. Fritch noted that we have had a continued increase in enrollment and more importantly more graduates which speaks to retention. The pass rate is still high among graduates. Students now do graduate with minimal embalming skills as they must be certified prior to graduation. We have had several students also inquire about exceeding the embalming minimums for more practice and experience.

4. **100% pass rates on the National Board Exam.** We fell short of this goal but still achieved a 95% pass rate on the science portion and 80% on the arts.

   **Advisory Members input:**

   *Keri Haines asked what could explain the imbalance for the pass rates between science and arts. Dr. Fritch said this is difficult to determine as there is no longer data from the conference to evaluate and identify which areas the students are lacking and determine those problem areas. He also added that the ABFSE no longer requires the NBE for graduation. However, it is still a graduation requirement at UCO that the students take their exams. We continue to try to improve the quality of the program over all and maintain high standards and motivation to reach our goal of 100% pass rate.*

5. **Increase the scholarship opportunities within our department for students.** Education is expensive and we often see students who have to take a semester off or extend the length of their program due to cost. It was presented that the OFDA match is still available and Dr. Fritch is encouraging 100% participation from the department and urging others to contribute to help us reach our goal.

   Heather Zeoli was introduced, the development manager for the college of math and science. She mentioned how much more expensive school is now so it makes it very hard for a student to pay their own way. As Funeral Service is so unique and individualized there is also less opportunity for scholarships. She encouraged everyone to consider helping support scholarship opportunities which will in turn help attract students to the profession. She encouraged the large base of alumni to link together to create more opportunities for students. If the community joins together it only takes a small amount from individuals to make a difference and an impact.

6. **Continue to improve access through online education opportunities.** As mentioned earlier there is a definite need for funeral directors in communities outside of the metro area. This can be accomplished by finding people who are already in these communities and allowing them to
remain and work in their community by offering attendance via distance education. Rather than having to relocate for the extent of their education they can avoid the commute and stay in their community while attending school. This will help funeral directors to locate a local candidate rather than trying to attract one from elsewhere.

Our goal is to have a majority of the program online and for students to only have to visit campus for required labs that do not require entire semester attendance.

We are requesting money for a second IVC (Interactive video) room to meet this goal.

7. **Build a strong alumni association.** A work in progress, just like all the other goals, this can be met by quality of the program. We do work that makes alumni proud, and then work towards unifying opportunities. Need leadership.

8. **Be a part of the American Board leadership.** This goal has been met. We do currently have faculty serving memberships on committees.

II. Department Enrollment:

We have 161 majors declared this year which has been a continual increase, doubling our enrollment over the last 5 years. More scholarship opportunities will attract and retain more students and graduates. Increased enrollment is positive but increased graduation rates are the ultimate goal.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Enrollment</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>150</td>
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<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>157</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>161</td>
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III. National Board Exam Results

We have continued to improve from a 71% in 2011 to 93% in 2012. In 2013 they began splitting results between Science and Arts so we actually had a 100% pass rate for Science that year and a 94% for the Arts. Another change came to the exam itself and we managed to maintain a 95% pass rate for the Science and 80% for the Arts. Changes have been made as we have tried to identify areas needing improvement to help improve scores. Expectations are now high and students rise to the challenge.

IV. Curriculum and Program Changes

We have started to offer intersessions in psychology of grief, funeral directing, and an embalming seminar to increase opportunities for students in these areas.

UCO has opened a satellite and is now offering courses downtown in the Carnegie building. We are offering one grief class there as of now. It draws some
students that may not otherwise be able to attend on campus and introduces them to the major as it is a University elective so non-majors are enrolled. We are also continuing to offer a Minor in Grief, Death and Dying which introduces students outside of the profession to important issues about the profession. Helping to educate future patrons as well as professionals.

V. Self-Study and Accreditation

As mentioned there will be an onsite visit by the ABFSE for accreditation purposes in the fall and the advisory board will be a part of the review.

VI. OFDA Match

A reminder was given about the OFDA matching program to promote scholarships and retention. Contributions made to the UCO foundation are currently being matched by the OFDA.

Advisory Members input:

Tom Demuth noted that perhaps OFDA needed to further promote the opportunity as there may not be many that are aware of the opportunity. It was discussed that there may need to be follow up information in the OFDA magazine.

VII. Convention Alumni breakfast

Was well attended last year, we intend to continue in Norman but one will not be held in the Tulsa area due to timing and travel issues but UCO will be sponsoring a refreshment break for a continuing education program and will have faculty, staff and student support at our booth.

VIII. Student Organization

Students representing the student organization were introduced.

Katelyn MaGruder, Chassi Kopec, and McKayla Gunn

Current student organization president Katelyn MaGruder presented her goals for the organization. She wanted to connect students with current professionals through convention and encouraging students to serve apprenticeships during school. She wanted to further education and experience by participating in field trips to places like Pierce chemical and Batesville Casket. Chassi Kopec, current student organization committee member, spoke about fundraising for these trips. She presented their T-
shirt fundraiser idea whereby they would ask for sponsorship from funeral homes statewide and requested feedback on price. She also mentioned the cemetery project Katelyn had been working on and explained their goals for finding a cemetery to clean up and asked for recommendations.

IX. 2015 Goals

Dr. Fritch presented the goals for the current year.

1. Successful ABFSE Reaccreditation visit
2. Improve distance education-achieve 100% online with scheduled lab attendance.
3. Continue to strive to be the best Funeral Service school in the nation
4. 100% pass rate on the National Board Exams
5. Increase enrollment and retention as well as strive for high academic standards, graduation rates and scholarship opportunities.
6. Build a strong alumni association.
7. Leadership position with ABFSE
8. Continue to grow and foster relationships with OFDA and Oklahoma Funeral Board.

X. Questions and Comments and address topics received with RSVP’s

Job placement programs: This was addressed earlier with regards to job fairs, etc. Current job opportunities are posted on the Facebook page for student access.

Attracting and retaining practitioners: Accomplished through maintaining high standards, providing learning opportunities during apprenticeships and compensation.

How to motivate the younger generation passing down time honored traditions: Make sure they are educated on the reasoning behind the traditions. The Why. Provide opportunities for learning experiences.

Engage with research and Coaching.

Advisory Members input:

Katelyn Magruder voiced that she really appreciated the hands on learning opportunities she received during her apprenticeship and the ability to be engaged rather than just observing.

XI. Thank You and Adjournment