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## **Associated Bodywork & Massage Professionals (ABMP) Releases Biennial Research on Massage School Operations**

### *Changes in Financial Aid Mix Since 2008*

Golden, Colo., Dec. 14 – Associated Bodywork & Massage Professionals (ABMP) today released results of its biennial survey of massage school operations, providing benchmarking data massage therapy schools and programs can use to evaluate their operations. ABMP has conducted the research since 1998 as a service to the profession.

In September, ABMP e-mailed a confidential survey to 1,229 massage, bodywork, and somatic therapy schools in the United States for which ABMP had e-mail addresses on file. ABMP received 253 responses, a 20.6 percent response rate. The survey results were tabulated and analyzed in October.<sup>[1]</sup>

Of the respondents, nearly half were career schools, a quarter were proprietary, 20 percent were colleges, and the remaining 5 percent were public institutions. Nearly 70 percent of the responding schools reported being accredited.

#### **Tuition and Attrition**

Financial aid was reported as available to students in 150 of the schools surveyed, representing 73.9 percent of the 203 respondents who answered this question. The percentage of students receiving financial aid varied widely. The financial aid entities used by massage programs were as follows.

- Title IV – 83.2 percent.
- Personal loan – 66.4 percent.
- Sallie Mae – 48.2 percent.

These figures represent a dramatic change from two years ago in that Sallie Mae declined over the two-year period from 65.5 percent to 48.2 percent, while Title IV financial aid jumped by 36.4 points from 46.8 percent in 2008 to 83.2 percent. Personal loans rocketed from 3.8 percent in 2008 to 66.4 percent this year.

Fifteen schools (7.4 percent) offer payment plans for students, while 10 schools rely on state aid (4.9 percent) and 13 schools (6.4 percent) offer scholarships, Veterans Administration funding, and work-study programs.

School attrition rates dropped slightly from the 14 percent reported in 2008 to 12.6 percent reported this year. In 2006, the average attrition rate was 9.9 percent and in 2004 it was 11 percent. This year, schools identified the top 10 reasons students say they do not complete school. Family or personal reasons and financial problems were the most common reasons students gave for leaving school.

### **Marketing Tactics**

Reflecting a trend over the last six years, schools report their most successful marketing efforts are word of mouth, their Web sites, and pay-per-click advertising. Of those answering the question, 92.4 percent named word of mouth (146 respondents) and their Web sites (145 respondents) as their most effective marketing tools. Social media are beginning to be used more often by schools for communication and marketing to prospects and students. More than 95 percent identified Facebook as their preferred medium for social networking efforts.

ABMP serves massage, bodywork, and somatic therapy professionals, and is devoted to promoting ethical practices, fostering acceptance of the profession, and protecting the rights of legitimate massage and bodywork practitioners. Representing more than 75,000 members, ABMP is headquartered in Golden, Colo. ABMP is employee owned and is the largest massage therapy membership association in the nation.

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<sup>[1]</sup> The questionnaire was e-mailed to state-approved massage therapy programs. Not all respondents answered every question. The same methodology has been used in the surveys since 1998.