



Massage School Enrollment Leaps Forward

EVERGREEN, Colo., March 31, 2005 — The number of students enrolled in and graduating from massage school continued to climb in 2004, with nearly 74,000 students currently enrolled in massage programs nationwide. More than 71,000 graduates completed their studies in 2004.

These results come from the 2004 census of massage and bodywork programs conducted by Associated Bodywork and Massage Professionals, a professional association representing more than 53,000 practitioners, students, and training programs.

"The massage profession is continuing the strong growth we have seen over the past five years," says Les Sweeney, Executive Vice President of ABMP and coordinator of the school census. "The growth in the number of graduates has averaged nearly 12% per year since 1998."

ABMP staff contacted each school listed in its database in the fall and winter of 2004–2005. The census was limited to schools operating under state educational authority approval. ABMP staff reached more than 85% of such schools operating in the United States.

Notable in this year's census is the growth in the number of students enrolled in career schools (defined as schools offering vocational training in multiple fields), which now represent 25.4% of all U.S. massage and bodywork training programs. Career schools report an average current enrollment of 67 students, more than 30% larger than their proprietary school counterparts (schools specializing in massage and bodywork training) and nearly double that of community or technical colleges. The 900+ proprietary schools still graduate the lion's share of graduates, with 53,878 students graduating from proprietary massage and bodywork schools in 2004.

"The number of career schools continues to grow," Sweeney says. "Programs that offer medical assisting, computer programming, and other technical careers are finding interest in massage programs and are responding to market demand."

Going hand-in-hand with the increasing enrollment is the number of programs offering massage and bodywork. ABMP identified 1,419 schools providing massage and bodywork training in 2004, an increase of 35.5% since 2002. The number of schools has increased a whopping 123% since the first census conducted in 1998. The explosive growth in massage programs has resulted in the average enrollment per school decreasing slightly, as more education options are available to students.

Nearly half of all schools (46.6%) reported their enrollment was trending upward over a year ago. Less than 19% reported a downward trend (18.8%), while slightly more than a third (34.6%) reported enrollment about the same as in 2003.

Larger schools leave quite a footprint in the massage education field. Half the schools account for more than 90% of student enrollment; looking more closely, the largest 125 schools (8.8% of schools) account for more than 38% of all students enrolled.

The economic impact of the 73,933 currently enrolled students shows is considerable. At approximately \$8.95 paid tuition per classroom hour for a median length program of 620 hours (from ABMP's 2004 School Operations Survey), total annual expenditures on massage school tuition in the United States are approximately \$410 million.

Associated Bodywork & Massage Professionals is the nation's leading professional organization for massage therapists, with more than 53,000 members throughout the United States. For additional information, an extensive article database, or to find a massage therapist, visit our consumer website at **massagetherapy.com**.

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