

May 21, 2024

Cañada College Mortuary Science Advisory Board & Industry Partners

To Whom It May Concern,

In response to the recent ABFSE accreditation requirement changes, including the addition of requiring two (2) full-time faculty by the academic year of 2027, we as funeral professionals in the State of California want to emphasize how incredibly vital this program is to the future of funeral care in our state.

Overall employment of funeral service workers is projected to grow by 3 percent from 2022 to 2032. About 5,700 openings for funeral service workers are projected each year, on average, over the decade. Many of these openings are expected to result from the need to replace workers who transfer to different occupations, or who exit the labor force entirely, according to the research provided by the U.S. BUREAU OF LABOR STATISTICS. Unfortunately, employment demands are outpacing the number of professionally licensed practitioners we can train. This is in large part due to limited access to mortuary science programs, not only in the State of California, but in the United States as a whole. Up until recently, there have only been two (2) full-time, in-person, programs in the State of California. The introduction of the Cañada College online mortuary program provides a third, more widely accessible, option.

The Cañada Mortuary Science Program is accessible to students in every county within the State. The online format provides an entryway for students who are not able to attend full-time, on-campus programs. Several students are current practitioners in the field who have finally found a route to formal instruction and professional development through Cañada College. Attending either of the two (2)

other programs in the State is often challenging due to the long-distance commutes required to attend. Cañada College's program is accessible to students who do not live near Los Angeles or Sacramento, which is a large segment of the population. Out-of-state mortuary science programs exist, but the fees are prohibitive for the average funeral practitioner or person interested in entering the field. Cañada College provides low-cost, high-quality professional development tailored to Californians who will go on to contribute to California's economic growth.

There is a dire need for this program to succeed. Without Cañada College, this State's funeral profession will be reliant on the graduating output of the two (2) currently accredited mortuary programs, which will only graduate approximately 50 students per year due to program enrollment limitations. This far under-supports the need for professionals to care for the aging population in the State of California.

As members of the advisory board and industry partners, we as a collective are hoping to work with Cañada College and San Mateo Community College District to investigate ways to maintain the current progression of the mortuary program towards accreditation and future growth.

Thank you for taking the time to read this and work with us to continue this essential, one-of-a-kind program in our State.

Respectfully,

Cañada College Mortuary Science Advisory Board & Industry Partners

Cecyline J. Moore C. Delva June Inpton Serena Bockelman

Cecelynn C. Inpton Jess Wakefield Kellie M. L.

John O. Zuel Bob Lerner Chitra

A note on Industry Partners:

We have gathered tremendous support for Cañada College to move forward with an Accredited Funeral Service Program. I was hired in May 2022 to establish Industry Partners to advocate for the launch of an Accredited Funeral Service Program at Cañada College. I have done just that. We have Funeral Homes, Cemeteries, Crematories, Industry Vendors, State and Local Associations and the Cemetery and Funeral Bureau ready to support this program. We have Presidents, CEOs, Vice Presidents, Owners, and Managers across the Bay Area ready and willing to throw resources our way.

Cañada College will be able to establish a pipeline to higher education for our graduates. Cypress College is ready to create an MOA for our graduates into the Funeral Service Baccalaureate Program they host to further the student's education and expand their opportunities.

Not offering FSE 200 this Spring indirectly caused Cañada College to be watched closely by our industry partners. They have expressed concern that their employees, potential students, cannot enroll with Mortuary Science as a major. They have expressed concern that there are no Funeral Service Education course listings offered. Most recently, they have expressed concern that our Candidacy Fees have not been paid yet to move forward with accreditation.

Due to the above concerns, I have constantly been asked- "How can we help?" They are looking for an answer to their concerns and soon we will have to give them one. I am concerned about the fall out of our industry partners if we do not move forward with the accreditation model that was proposed in 2019 and I reaffirmed in 2022 when I was hired to bring to this program to fruition. None of the partners showed support when I mentioned, "We are weighing the options of creating a certificate-based program vs. an ABFSE accredited model." However, they do show support for stackable certificates within the ABFSE accredited model.

We have a large support group, ready and willing to advocate for this program. They are willing to create paid apprenticeship positions, host practicums and establish pipelines for future students. They are willing to create scholarships, donate equipment and material, host field trips and training demonstrations. We have a passionate support group comprised of influential members in the California Funeral Industry. They are ready to give their time, energy, and donations to Cañada College.

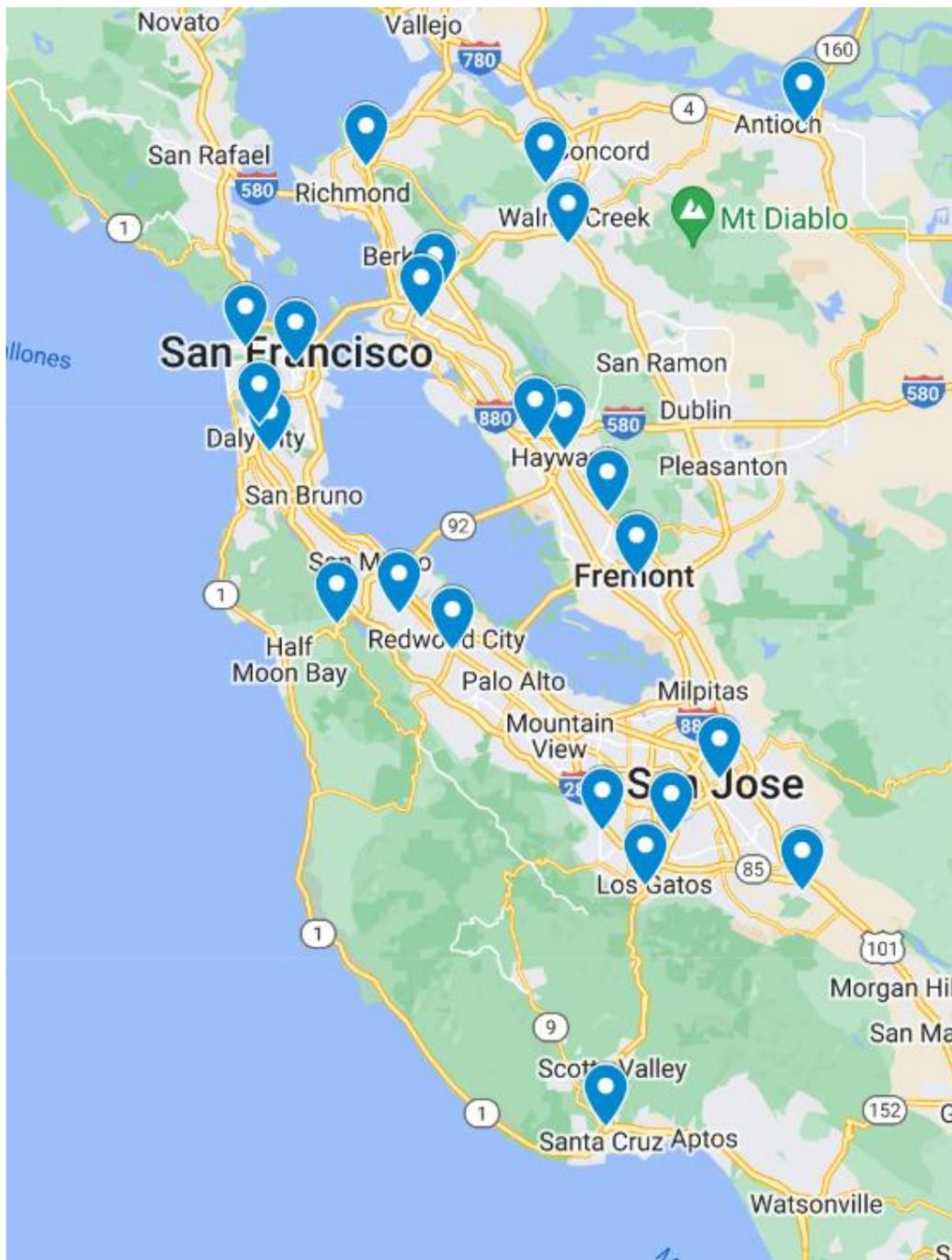
This document contains information about our Industry Partners and support letters for Cañada College's Funeral Service Program.

Funeral Establishments willing to create an affiliation agreement, host practicum sites and hire graduates to create pipelines for our students

NOTE: California Funeral Directors Association has agreed to help find job placement for students that do not live in the Bay Area. There are more locations willing to work with Cañada College. These are the locations that have gone through the necessary channels of approval and have had a site visit conducted to ensure a proper learning environment for future students.

Location Name	City	How many students the location will host for practicums each semester	How many students the location will interview for hire
Cypress Lawn Memorial Park	Colma	As many as needed	As many that apply
Sky Lawn Memorial Park	San Mateo	As many as needed	As many that apply
Chapel of the Chimes	Oakland	3	As many that apply
Chapel of the Chimes	Hayward	As many as needed	As many that apply
Darling and Fischer Chapel	San Jose	As many as needed	As many that apply
Duggan's Serra Mortuary	Daly City	7	7
CFCS- Oakland Archdiocese	Oakland	10	10
Santa Cruz Memorial	Santa Cruz	2	2
CFCS-Hayward Archdiocese, Sorensen Chapel	Hayward	3	3
St. Joseph Cemetery & Funeral Center	San Pablo	3	At least one at this location, but there are other locations to refer students to
Queen of Heaven Cemetery & Funeral Center	Lafayette	As many as needed	As many that apply
Holy Cross Cemetery & Funeral Center	Antioch	As many as needed	As many that apply
Grissom's Chapel and Mortuary	San Lorenzo	As many as needed	As many that apply
Sacred Space Funeral Home & Cremation Services	San Jose	3	As many that apply
Crippen and Flynn Mortuary	Redwood City	Still to be determined on exact number.	Still to be determined on exact number.
Crippen and Flynn Mortuary	Belmont	Still to be determined on exact number.	Still to be determined on exact number.
SCI Trident Society	San Francisco Bay Area	As many as needed	As many that apply
Alameda Family Funeral & Cremation	Saratoga	3	As many that apply

Below is a map of Funeral Establishments that have been toured and confirmed to host students for their practicums and create an affiliation agreement with Cañada College.



Question: How has the lack of accessible Accredited Funeral Service Education impacted yourself, other associates and/ or business? 19 responses

- Students are unable to attend mortuary school because they must work full-time to support families, live too far to commute, cost of living is far too high to relocate closer to in-person schools, and the only option is to take on suffocating student loan debt to attend an out-of-state college that is online.
- The San Francisco Metropolitan area is too large of a population not to have a Mortuary Science Program. To attain schooling, needed for licensing, one would need to commute to Sacramento
- The current locations for AFSE is in Sacramento, which is way too far for me to drive to on a daily basis or weekly basis, I work full time and have a family. Having access to AFSE locally makes it possible to achieve educational goals for career growth
- There is a huge lack of licensed professionals. The hiring pool is mostly people who have no experience or lifelong apprentices or funeral assistance. Once we train up people, due to lack of local resources, they consistently feel unmotivated to move on to the next step, often leaving for other career paths.
- When there are less professionals in the field, there is a steep decline in work quality and even the quality of the culture of the workplace. There are less people around to hold a high standard and ethics become murky. I would like to see more professionalism in funeral homes. Mortuary schools create a sense of lineage, a sense that the student is part of a tradition and a code of ethics going back many years. We need this in funeral homes in order to offer our communities the care they expect.
- Lack of students entering the funeral industry is hurting business. We really need a school that is local
- We have less licensed applicants to employ therefore it causes hiring shortages. We simply cannot find the qualified candidates to do the work. Having professionals that have went to an accredited school is crucial for our industry; without licensed professionals we are in a dying industry (no pun intended). It would be no different than an area not having accessible schooling for doctors or nurses.
- Not having qualified individuals who have gone to school- we cannot retain them. They have no loyalty to the industry and with no experience they truly have to be taught from the ground up by their manager.
- This has a direct impact on the employee pool and finding candidates for vital roles. Lack of candidates causes a strain on existing employees and a feeling of being overwhelmed in an already stressful career.
- There is not enough people in the industry to hire; really hard to properly staff funeral homes
- It is difficult in trying to find young apprentices in the Bay Area
- Limits the amount of candidates. There is no encouragement to pursue the industry so they find something else to do.
- Lack of educated/degreed employees.
- We struggle to find candidates to fill positions in our funeral home and cemetery.
- The industry has turned to sales people versus industry professionals due to lack of access to a quality program. Availability of education will bring a wave of trained, knowledgeable and LICENSED persons back to our very necessary field.
- Yes. I am about to start an apprentice embalmer. The commute is onerous, on top of her other responsibilities.
- Having applicants for employment from students interested in the industry doesn't occur
- When looking for a school to get my education at when I first entered the industry, I was severely constrained. I had initially wanted to move to the Bay Area to be closer to my family, however my only options for an education in the industry were in Orange County or Sacramento. On top of that, instruction had to be in-person. These requirements kept me from my family and achieving my larger life plans by a couple years just to attend school.

- Yes, it makes it difficult for students to work for Santa Clara County funeral homes while going to school when the school is over 4 hours away.

Question: Is there anything else you would like to add about your viewpoints on the current state of the Funeral Industry and accessible education? 17 responses

- There is a need and a want for this program. Enrollment in mortuary science is increasing in accessible programs and decreasing in inaccessible programs. This program is worth your support and funding, and, in a very relatively short time, will grow to attract more students than the in-person only schools that currently exist.
- proper education can lead to better career paths which can lead to better financial opportunities
- It's important to remove the barriers to education within our field. Certificates are great but they don't get people to positions that pay well enough to pay the high cost of living. We are creating high turn over in our field, which should be regarded as a career, not a stepping stone.
- I think we need to make all trade school more accessible in general. Low cost degrees that teach practical skills and place students on the path to work are what we need more of, and we need a variety of it! This is where education is headed and Cañada should see this as an opportunity.
- We need more students and embalmers in this industry. The major problem is no school in our local area. Sacramento is too far
- Not having an accessible school is hindering the funeral industry and taking the wind out of the sails of potential students. With the cost of living and inflation there is no option to move to go to school and uproot someone's life. There needs to be a school to service the greater Bay Area.
- The opportunity for a Bay Area program is extremely exciting. We have a number of employees who would like the opportunity to grow in this industry and need schooling to get there. Giving this program as an option will allow for people to be fully in charge of their own growth.
- We desperately need educated funeral practitioners so we can better serve families. The pandemic drove a lot of people away from the industry and I would love to see people come back or people who show interest have an option that isn't so far away from the Bay Area forcing them to relocate. I believe location is absolutely key in attracting students to the program.
- Draw from established Funeral Homes as to loyalty, commitment, dedication. We want to help
- There are people that would like to get into the industry but end up picking a different route because there is no avenue to get education.
- The Funeral industry is a growing field with opportunities for employment increasing over time.
- We need more people going into education for funeral services and mortuary science. We need a new generation of professionals to fill the positions of those retiring from the industry. I will have 20% of our staff retiring in the next two years.
- Funeral Services are and will always be the most lucrative industry in the USA. To not have this a credential program with our college system would strip us of hundreds of thousands of dollars a year not to mention hinder students from a potential career path.
- Communication and education is the key to professional sustainability. Grissom's has the opportunity for us to help teach and grow the next generations of our vital service providers.
- There has never been a better time to enter funeral service. Growth and opportunity to add value are everywhere.

- As a licensed funeral professional and advocate for funeral service education, I strongly believe that accessible education and professional development opportunities are critical components of a vibrant and sustainable Funeral Industry. With the growing demand for personalized funeral services and the need for innovation in the industry, it is imperative that we invest in the education and training of funeral professionals at all stages of their careers. Accessible education should be affordable, flexible, and tailored to meet the needs of funeral professionals, while continuing education and professional development should ensure that funeral professionals stay up-to-date with the latest industry trends and best practices. By prioritizing education and training, we can ensure that the Funeral Industry remains relevant and responsive to the changing needs of our communities.
- I applaud the conversation about having another Mortuary school in California



Cypress College Mortuary Science Department

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(714)484-7278

April 30, 2023

Cañada College
Funeral Service Education Program
Attn: Gina Hooper, Program Supervisor
4200 Farm Hill Blvd.
Redwood City, CA 94061

Dearest California Community College Colleagues:

I am writing to you regarding the opportunity to partner with Cypress College in support of the Funeral Service Education Program at Cañada College. When we were first contacted about the potential for designing an accredited Funeral Service Education program in the San Francisco Bay area back in February 2019, one of our faculty members, Dr. Damon de la Cruz, answered the call to help guide the creation of an American Board of Funeral Service Education-accredited instructional program. Although a global pandemic intervened and created an opportunity to re-evaluate course offerings and instructional methodologies for all institutions of higher education, one thing has remained constant—funeral service practice is a necessary and essential workforce.

As I envisioned a third ABFSE-accredited program in California, I often wondered how a state as large and geographically expansive as ours had managed to only have two options for students interested in learning the skills required for professional practice as funeral directors and embalmers. Many students not located within a 50-mile radius of American River College or Cypress College are at a significant disadvantage when considering a career in funeral service. At Cypress College, students are required to attend classes on campus every week and regularly commute from distances greater than 130 miles away. I imagined that if Cañada College were to offer its program online, not only would it reach those in the Central Valley and the northern, eastern, and southern parts of this great state, it would also have a competitive advantage since students seeking accredited online funeral service education must currently pay tens of thousands of dollars to out-of-state colleges and private schools with this offering.

Neither Cypress College nor American River College currently offer online ABFSE-accredited funeral service education programs, and there does not appear to be plans in place to begin offering such a program at the Associate Degree level. I do hope that Cañada College considers the opportunities available for offering an ABFSE-accredited funeral service education program to prepare individuals for professional practice as funeral directors and embalmers. Furthermore, Cypress College Mortuary Science faculty are interested in how we may be able to partner with Cañada College and American River College to meet the student demand for our programs.

If I might be of any further assistance, please do not hesitate to reach out.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jolena Grande".

Jolena Grande
Professor, Cypress College Mortuary Science Department





May 01, 2023

Dear Gina,

My name is Cary Boisvert, General Manager of Chapel of the Chimes in Oakland and I enthusiastically support Cañada College's Funeral Service Education Program. I have been in the industry since 1996 and have been employed in the following capacities: Embalmer, Funeral Director, Mortuary Supervisor, Crematory Manager, Cemetery Manger, and now, General Manager at a variety of organizations. It is important to have accessible, accredited funeral service education because of the great difficulty we are having in hiring local professionals in any of these capacities. The lack of a local college, since the demise of the San Francisco College of Mortuary Science, has made it even more of a challenge since easy access to a local program discourages people from pursuing a career in our field.

My colleagues and I are willing to help Cañada College students in any capacity by being a guest speaker discussing practices and product knowledge, allowing a tour of our locations, providing education on various funeral rites and practices, hosting students to complete practicums, and, of course, interviewing them as applicants for our open positions.

I have seen a major employee issue in the Bay Area. Most of the funeral homes that I speak to in the Bay Area are looking to hire yet can't seem to find the right people. It is discouraging to try to hire someone within the industry but find that there are not many candidates. While many positions can be trained, having someone educated in the key areas of our profession is crucial for maintaining professional standards. This is especially true for hiring embalmers and apprentice embalmers since they must have a degree and or be in school in order to get a license and practice the craft. It is nearly impossible to convince a funeral director or embalmer to relocate to the Bay Area due to relocation and cost of living expenses. I would say that we are almost in crisis mode as funeral homes struggle to hire.

Our local funeral profession desperately needs another accredited funeral service education program to service the aspiring practitioners of California and Cañada College would be an excellent place to host it.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Cary Boisvert'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Cary R. Boisvert
General Manager
Chapel of the Chimes Oakland
510-228-3200
Cary.Boisvert@nsmg.com

Gina Hooper and Cañada College Colleagues,

I see significant value in funeral service education programs being accredited by the American Board of Funeral Service Education (ABFSE) for several reasons.

Firstly, ABFSE accreditation ensures that funeral service education programs meet a set of rigorous standards and guidelines, which are designed to ensure that students receive a comprehensive education in all aspects of funeral service. This includes a broad range of topics such as funeral directing, embalming, funeral service law and ethics, grief counseling, and business management. Secondly, ABFSE accreditation is recognized as the gold standard in funeral service education, both nationally and internationally. Graduating from an ABFSE-accredited program is often a requirement for licensure in many states, and it provides students with the knowledge and skills needed to provide compassionate and professional service to families during their time of need. Finally, ABFSE accreditation provides students with the assurance that they are receiving an education that meets the highest standards of excellence. Accreditation also assures potential employers that graduates from accredited programs have received a quality education that prepares them for the demands of the profession.

ABFSE accreditation is a valuable asset for funeral service education programs and their students. It ensures that programs are held to high standards of excellence, prepares graduates for licensure and professional success, and provides assurance to families that they are receiving compassionate and professional service from highly trained and qualified funeral professionals. As a licensed funeral professional and an advocate for funeral service education, I strongly believe that the current state of the Funeral Industry and accessible education is at a critical juncture. With the growing demand for personalized funeral services and the need for innovation in the industry, it is imperative that we continue to invest in the education and training of funeral professionals.

The Funeral Industry is facing numerous challenges, including changing cultural attitudes towards death and mourning, evolving consumer preferences, and increasing regulatory requirements. To meet these challenges, funeral professionals must be equipped with the knowledge and skills needed to provide compassionate, personalized service to families and communities. Accessible education is essential for the growth and development of the industry, particularly for those who may not have had the opportunity to pursue formal education or training in funeral service. It is crucial that we provide accessible education that is affordable, flexible, and tailored to meet the needs of funeral professionals at all stages of their careers.

In addition to accessible education, we must also prioritize continuing education and professional development opportunities to ensure that funeral professionals stay up-to-date

with the latest industry trends and best practices. By investing in education and training, we can ensure that the Funeral Industry remains relevant and responsive to the changing needs of our communities. I believe that accessible education and professional development are critical components of a vibrant and sustainable Funeral Industry. As a board member of the Funeral Directors Association, I am committed to advocating for these priorities and supporting initiatives that promote excellence in funeral service.

Thank you,

Steve Crawford, CFSP

04/21/2022

Dear Gina Hooper and Cañada College Colleagues,

A few years back, the announcement that Cañada College is developing a Funeral Service Education Program was some of the most exciting news in Bay Area mortuaries. This is the long-awaited fix to a growing gap in our industry. Since the closure of the San Francisco College of Mortuary Sciences over 20 years ago, it has become increasingly difficult to find and retain licensed staff. The nearest mortuary schools are in Sacramento and near Anaheim, in Cypress, California. Many of the professionals who graduated from the San Francisco College of Mortuary Sciences have retired or are near retirement age. This has resulted in more vacancies than any of us are prepared for.

One might argue that perhaps education is not necessary for these careers. Nationally, it appears that we are realizing that educational requirements for many positions are often unnecessary and that practical skills are a better indicator of a person's success in a position. However, part of this realization includes a renewed interest in trade school, vocational programs, and 2 year degrees that offer practical skills, a direct route to jobs, and a debt-free license. Funeral Service Education falls under this category.

In a Funeral Service Education Program, students learn practical skills and gain exposure to the historical context of their work. Most importantly, they learn laws and a code of ethics that we cannot trust the industry to impart on employees. We need an institution outside of the funeral industry to train our employees to do this important and sensitive work. Allowing untrained, unprofessional staff to run our industry generates opportunities for malfeasance, corruption, and disrespect to our community and our dead. Often, laws are broken due to ignorance. An uneducated employee learns to do something unethical from another uneducated employee and this transgressional behavior becomes a standardized protocol, just the norm. Having a set of educated employees at every site, people who feel like they are a part of a long tradition and who take pride in their profession, is essential to maintaining high standards in the funeral industry. The best way to police our industry is from the inside.

I entered the funeral industry after a career change. I earned a bachelors from UC Santa Cruz and fell in love with working in the anatomy lab there. After graduation, I meandered for a while and went on to work in social work for several years. It wasn't for me, so I decided to pursue a degree in mortuary science. I live in San Francisco. I commuted twice a week to the nearest school, American River College, in Sacramento. I quickly found an apprenticeship in Daly City and went to work – hard work – the five days that I was not in school. The experience was draining, but character building. At work, I was treated like a bit of a unicorn, and it quickly became evident why. Most people talked about going to mortuary school, but never did. Making the commute was impossible for people with children, aging parents, or aging vehicles. There were so many staff members who dreamed of becoming embalmers, but never did. They were relegated to secondary roles and low paying work. These people are the reason we need Cañada College to have a Funeral Service Education Program. This is a way for single mothers, people with few resources, and people who cannot afford to take out any more debt, to earn something that can act as a springboard to something better. That is the mission of all community colleges, as I understand it.

I worked in the funeral industry for roughly four years. My intention in going to mortuary school was always to get back into an anatomy lab and I was offered the opportunity to do that through UCSF. I am now an Anatomical Services Professional with the UCSF Willed Body Program and I have held this position for approximately seven years. This is my dream job. I work with families, I work directly with donors both dead and alive, I prepare cadaveric specimens for research and education, and I know that all the work that we do here benefits humanity and medical science both immediately and in the long term. The research and development that happens with cadavers here today, or this week, will result in a better, life-saving surgery for someone in six months. I could not do this work without the degree I received from a Funeral Service Education Program at a community college, which is why I am in full support of an accredited Funeral Service Education Program at Cañada College.

Sincerely,

Claudette Delva

UCSF Willed Body Program

Claudette.delvablanco@ucsf.edu

(415) 476-2419

Dear Gina Hooper and Canada College Colleagues,

My name is Megan Nguyen, and I attended the Mortuary Science program at Cypress College from 2018 to 2019. I was born and raised in Santa Cruz County. After high school I felt lost on what I wanted to do for a career and decided to attend Acadia University in Wolfville, Nova Scotia where I graduated with a BA in Business Administration with a minor in Marketing. After graduation, I began to work on the marketing program for a family run funeral home in Santa Cruz. I began to take more interest in the day-to-day operations, and soon found that I had an unexpected passion for serving families during the darkest times in their lives. After much thought, I decided I wanted to further my education so I could become an embalmer as well as a funeral director.

I did not like the online school option as I am a student who needs to be in a classroom setting to properly focus. I also did not like the idea of having to fly out to complete the lab requirement section as I felt like that was too much of an inconvenience. Therefore, I decided to research the two mortuary programs that offered in person attendance in California. I ended up selecting Cypress because they had a higher board pass rate, they were accredited by the American Board Funeral Service Education, offered in school lab, and the program only required a year and a half of time instead of two years.

With that being said, I certainly wish that we had had an accredited school in the Bay Area. It would have allowed me to keep my job at the family run funeral home while I attended school. Instead, I had to pack up and move to Southern California and find another job that would allow flexibility. It was certainly a stressful time.

Having a school with the ABFSE Accreditation is so important, because students then know that there is a set standard recognized throughout the country for funeral service. My close friend and fellow cohort ended up moving to Oregon to work at a funeral home there. It was a relief to her to know that she had a general education of the expectations and standards due to our time at Cypress College. Each State, as we all know, operates a little differently, but the ethics and regulations remain the same; handle each family and their loved one with the utmost respect and dignity that they deserve.

Now that I am part of upper management in the same funeral home that opened my eyes to my passion, it is important to me to see that students come from an ABFSE Accredited school. I find comfort in knowing that they have been taught the same practices I have even if their education is from a different accredited school.

We recently hired an employee who wanted to be sure they were interested in this field before going to the Sacramento school. They were experiencing the similar hardships I had. They wanted in-person teaching but the distance of both schools required a move and having to find work that would allow flexibility with their schedule was causing them a lot of stress. Many times they would make a comment saying that they wish they didn't have to go so far for school.

Therefore, I find it very important that we get not only a school but an ABFSE Accredited school in the Bay Area. I believe our industry is missing out on so many potential funeral

professionals, because interested students either can't afford the move or are simply not willing to make that sacrifice. When I attended Cypress College, we had students from all over California attend, and I was not the only one who had traveled far to attend the program. Several other members of my cohort had even come from Central California.

I know that fellow upper management and I take a great interest in those funeral professionals who have attended a mortuary science program. Right now, there is a limited supply of Mortuary Science graduates. It means that hiring has become quite a daunting task. We must teach many applicants the most basic principles such as proper terminology and explain the death certificate filing process. It would be such an incredible asset to be able to hire students or Mortuary Science graduates and it would save us a lot of time in the training process.

Please know that we would be willing to support students should the program need us. We would love to be a part of the journey and the program would have our full support. Thank you for taking the time to read about my personal journey and opinions on the importance and value of having an accredited school closer to home.

Sincerely,
Megan

[EXTERNAL] Accreditation Letter

Ed Cox <ECox@auroracasket.com>

Tue 4/18/2023 11:58 AM

To: Hooper, Gina <hooperg@smccd.edu>

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Dear Gina Hooper and Cañada College Colleagues:

I hope this letter finds you well. I wanted to share my background in the Funeral Industry in the Bay Area as well as share with you the importance of having an accredited Funeral Service Education program in the Bay Area.

I have been working for Matthews Aurora Funeral Solutions in the Bay Area for the past 24 years. Matthews International is the largest funeral products manufacturer in the world focusing on Caskets, Bronze Markers, and cremation products for Funeral Homes and Cemeteries. My job is to provide caskets and urns to all Funeral Homes and Cemeteries in the Bay Area. As a Sales Consultant, I meet with 4-5 Funeral Homes and Cemeteries on a daily basis and provide them with product knowledge, merchandise training, arrangement training, technology support, as well as arranger mentoring. I have working knowledge of many funeral homes and consult them on business planning to help grow their market share.

When I first started in this industry in 1999, there was San Francisco College of Mortuary Science. Since that college was closed down and American River College opened up, I have seen a major employee issue in the Bay Area. The majority of the funeral homes that I speak to in the Bay Area are looking to hire, yet that can't seem to find the right people. They often get frustrated with trying to hire someone within the industry, but find that there are not many candidates. It is nearly impossible to convince a funeral director to relocate to the Bay Area. I would say that we are almost in crisis mode as funeral homes struggle to hire. I see that there is a need for an accredited Funeral Service Education program as most students in the Bay Area will not commute to American River College.

I am willing to support the college with my expertise. I would be happy to volunteer my time and be a guest speaker for the program. Willing have discussions regarding product knowledge, merchandizing, and introducing new ways to promote product using technology.

If we do not have an accredited Funeral Service Education program in the Bay Area, I can see that in the near future we will have a shortage of employees which will then lead more family owned funeral homes to sell their business to a larger corporation.

Sincerely,

~Ed Cox

ED COX

Funeral Service Consultant



Customer Service (800)457-1111

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[EXTERNAL]Canada College and Funeral Service**Bob Gordon** <bgordon@cypresslawn.com>

Wed 4/26/2023 5:58 PM

To: Hooper, Gina <hooperg@smccd.edu>

Cc: Bob Gordon <bgordon@cypresslawn.com>;Serena Bockelman <sbockelman@cypresslawn.com>;Jack Jensen <jjensen@cypresslawn.com>

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Dear Ms. Hooper,

Thank you for your efforts thus far to provide a source of next gen employees for our industry.

I am a fourth generation cemeterian and funeral director and serve on boards of our industry on the state and national association level. The last few years have reinforced my belief that our industry is not only necessary, but desired by the public. Cypress Lawn has served the Bay area for over 130 years. We have over 11,000 Funerals purchased before need and over 100 advisors adding to that number every day. We are just one location, so you can see that this trend is going one way. This growth can be multiplied across the state and nation.

As we have discussed our success going forward is dependent on ensuring we have capacity to serve these families in various capacities across our brands. The ability to bring new associates into our locations and help them jump start their careers is very important. We are ready and willing to support your efforts and look forward to opportunities to ensure your success. Whether it be sponsorship of your programs, naming rights of your classroom, agreeing on hiring a minimum of 5 candidates per year over the next 5 years or any other form of support that can get this moving we are here and prepared to help.

We would be happy to meet with your board or any decision makers to assist in moving this forward.

Please reach out at your earliest convenience and let me know.

Bob

Robert A. Gordon Jr.
President and CEO
www.cypresslawn.com
Direct 650-533-2933
Celebrating Life Since 1892

[EXTERNAL]Cañada College

Richard McCown <richard.mccown@skylawn.com>

Tue 4/25/2023 8:18 PM

To: McVean, Aaron <mcveana@smccd.edu>

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Mr. McVean,

I have been working with colleagues, industry professionals, Gina Hooper, and others excited to get the Cañada College funeral program going. I oversee three large locations in the Bay Area - Skylawn, Chapel of the Chimes Oakland, and Chapel of the Chimes Hayward, as well as locations in Los Angeles, Sacramento, and San Diego. Combined, we employ over 300 funeral and cemetery professionals.

There is an unfulfilled need for well-educated mortuary professionals across the state, but even more so here in our Bay Area community. Currently, we have several positions open that have remained open for months and have the capacity for several apprenticeships. We also have tuition reimbursement programs, but no students or applicants to take advantage of these career opportunities. I believe having a mortuary college back in the Bay Area is not a luxury, it's a necessity. Commuting from the existing colleges in LA or Sacramento is not something most people are willing to do.

I understand there are conversations around abandoning this program. I am respectfully requesting a meeting with you to discuss our options and offer what resources I can to get this program off the ground. We need this program. I look forward to your response.

Regards,

Richard

Richard McCown
Vice President of Operations
Western Region
NorthStar Memorial Group
C: 808.518.7163

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Regarding the desire for an accredited ABFSE program in the Bay Area, I cannot stress how beneficial this sort of program would be for not only our location (Chapel of the Chimes Hayward), but others like it. As a large service provider in the Bay Area, Chapel of the Chimes Hayward has the ability to provide employment opportunities to a wide variety of funeral professionals. We seek out applicants who have made funeral service their career and are looking for long term growth opportunities. We believe that this starts with a Funeral Service Program that sets students up for success. An accredited program lends legitimacy to the hard work put into a program's development and encourages trust from those within the program that their own hard work will lead to opportunities in the work force. The employee pool in the Bay Area is shockingly small. So small that this year I have gone to a Career Fair at Cypress College in the hopes of encouraging students to transition to the northern part of the state during their job hunt. The difficulty in finding suitable candidates has led to some of our job postings being open in excess of 6 months with one of them being open for nearly a year. The program in Sacramento is simply not robust enough to support both that area as well as the Bay Area, and additional resources are needed. Chapel of the Chimes Hayward is willing and able to provide a variety of its own resources to encourage the development of this much needed program. We also have a number of employees here who would be interested in joining such a program but who have held off due to American River's distance from us. Please let us know if there is anything Chapel of the Chimes may do to assist in getting this program on its feet. Having graduated from Cypress College's Mortuary Science program, I can attest to the value of coming out of a well respected and accredited program. It is my hope that the Bay Area may once again be able to offer this opportunity to those who may be interested in this career path.

Jody Herrington
General Manager, FDR# 4521

Chapel of the Chimes Hayward FD#1240

main: 510.471.3363 |
office: 510.441.5587 |
cell: 323.316.6748

32992 Mission
Boulevard, Hayward,
California 94544

[https://hayward.chapeloft
hechimes.com](https://hayward.chapeloft
hechimes.com)

Gina Hooper and Canada College Administration,

I am thrilled to hear that you will be offering a Mortuary Science Program to Canada College. This, I know, will be of great interest and benefit to those, in the Bay Area, that find the commute to Sacramento to far to attend American River's program. We, at Chapel of the Chimes - Oakland, are excited to work hand in hand with your program, to promote meaningful careers in the funeral industry.

That being said, the certification of the American Board Funeral Service Education will be vital to the success of your program. The ABFSE is the pinnacle accrediting organization in our industry. The ABFSE serves as the national academic accreditation agency for college and university programs in Funeral Service and Mortuary Science Education.

This accreditation will also serve you as a marketing tool in your quest for premium students. The ABFSE accreditation is reciprocal within the majority of the states, allowing for easier licensing from one state to another.

Again, I'm truly looking forward to working with Gina to help make your Mortuary Science Program the best in the State!

Please let me know if I can answer any further questions or can help in any other way.

Ed Brail

Edward Brail

CA Funeral Director 3787/CA Embalmer 9388

Location Manager, Chapel of the Chimes - Oakland

4499 Piedmont Avenue

Oakland, CA 94611

510-228-3212/ Fax: 510-654-6098

- Why you see value in the program being accredited by the American Board Funeral Service Education
 - It has huge value. Possibly more value that I fully understand. However, knowing how much money and power are in the Bay Area, it would seem that having this school would and could really do wonders for the Funeral Industry – only for the best.
- The importance of the Bay Area having accessible Funeral Service Education
 - You may highlight your own education experience/ difficulties that you have gone through or recognize your staff experiences
 - This is SO important. Bay Area does not have accessible Funeral Service education, and a lot of funeral locations either do not provide education, or do not accept you into their locations without said education. As a young 20-something with a BA in Religion, it was a dream of mine to be a Funeral Director and/or embalmer and due to the lack of Funeral Service education I had [in the prep-room], the furthest I could get was clerk who then made friends with the prep-room. I was able to learn a lot more than most, thankfully. However, had CAN FSE been around 10 years ago, life would have been a lot different for me, today.
 - This education program is going to serve so many individuals who are on the same life-path as I was. This program will not only teach practicality, but hospitality – which is incredibly lacking due to low paying facilities, lack of staff and high volume of decedents, burnout, etc. – the understanding of why / how families grieve, and create friendships along the way. All of these things will boost the industry around the Bay Area like we have never seen it before.
- Your willingness to support the program's development and goal to bring Accredited Funeral Service Education to the Bay Area and online education that can reach Northern California, Central Coastal Cities and Central Valley.
 - You have my 100% support in this program. Could not be happier that this is happening. Everything happens for a reason 😊

Nina Pineda

Operations Manager of Aquatics

College of San Mateo Athletic Center | Canada College Athletic Center

comfit.smccd.edu | comfit.canadacollege.edu

[EXTERNAL]Partnership with NorthStar Memorial Group

Carl Anderson <Carl.Anderson@nsmg.com>

Thu 4/27/2023 9:22 AM

To: Hooper, Gina <hooper@smccd.edu>

Cc: Elisabeth Gonzalez <Elisabeth.Gonzalez@nsmg.com>; Ed Brail <Edward.Brail@chapelofthechimes.com>

You don't often get email from carl.anderson@nsmg.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

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Hello Ms. Hooper,

I am Carl Anderson, Recruiting Coordinator with Northstar Memorial Group. We are currently looking forward to building a relationship with Cañada College in the hopes of assisting the new generation of Funeral Directors and Embalmers with career placement opportunities, internships/apprenticeships, and providing scholarships/tuition reimbursement to mortuary science students as well.

Do you all have any career fairs or other opportunities for us to interact with the students whether it be a campus visit or virtually?

I would love your feedback as to when would be a good time for us to share more information about Northstar Memorial Group with the hopes of building a relationship with Cañada College.

Please let me know what works best for you all. Thank you so much for your assistance and I look forward to hearing back from you soon.

Thank you,

Carl Anderson | Recruiting Coordinator, Talent Acquisition
NorthStar Memorial Group, LLC | Carl.Anderson@NSMG.com
O: 832-308-2724 |

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To Whom This May Concern,

I wanted to reach out because I have some concerns with my current enrollment in the Funeral Service Education Program at Cañada College. Recently, it has been brought to my attention that our program is being questioned as if it is to be canceled or not. This is very disappointing that this is even an idea, as this program is important to all of us students. Throughout my whole life, I have had to fight and work extremely hard for not only my education, but my personal life as well. Nothing has ever been handed to me. Making a very long story short, I was raised in a single parent household with drug and alcohol abuse. My mother was always in and out of jail, and I was constantly house hopping. I was also homeless at one point. At an incredibly young age I had to learn how to fend for myself. My whole life has been a struggle.

Fast forward to the last 7 years, I've come to love the funeral industry. I started as a receptionist right before the COVID-19 pandemic and had to learn rather quickly. After about four months, my manager could not succeed in meeting with 100% of the families, and I stepped up and became a funeral arranger. Learning how to serve grieving families during a pandemic would scare anyone, but it did not alarm me. If anything, it taught me such a valuable lesson, which is to cherish life itself and the people we have. While I was continuing my employment in the industry, I had been chatting with fellow funeral industry employees, and was seeking ways to further my career. I just knew I needed to root myself a little deeper. I had lost five people I loved dearly, all within about 1.5 years. The feelings I had during these times; I did not want anyone else to feel the same way. With that being said, I started working at my current location, and that is where I heard about Cañada College starting the Funeral Service Education Program.

I was nervous at first but took a leap and reached out to Ms. Gina Hooper, which was truly the best decision of my life. While enrolled in the FSE program I was able to obtain my Funeral Directors License, start my embalmers apprenticeship, and I even got my crematory certificate! This program means a lot to me, it would change so much for me and my peers if this were to end. Prior to knowing about Cañada College, I was accepted to Cal State Fullerton to be in their bachelor's Program. I made the executive decision to decline this acceptance and pursue the online Funeral Service Education program through Cañada College. This judgment call was made because studying something that I am passionate about, the mortuary science field, is much

more significant to me. Even though I already have two associate degrees, I yearned for one in funeral service education.

I never thought it would be an option since Cypress College does not have an online/hybrid format. This is also the only program that I can 1. Continue to work to support myself, 2. Financially afford due to me being 100% independent, and 3. Learn and further my education without it interfering with personal wellbeing. There are so many people that deserve to have this program be successful. The industry desperately needs it. It would be devastating if we had to find a new program because most of us would not be able to due to our work/life schedules. Please reconsider hindering our education and keep in mind our hunger for the industry/education. Your decision can either help us be successful in serving grieving families, or it can deter us from why we fell in love with it to begin with. Put yourself in the shoes of these hurting families, wouldn't you want to have someone that is knowledgeable and has passion for what they do in helping you and your family during one of the most challenging times of your life? Our future and many others are in your hands.

Thank you for taking the time to read this, I hope you think hard about discontinuing this program.

Guadalupe J. Vasquez

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Guadalupe Vasquez". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping flourish at the end.

Student ID: G01340924

Aryssa Montano
San Diego, CA

May 1, 2024.

Hello All. I am currently a student at Cañada College studying funeral directing and embalming. I previously worked as an ad ops manager at a marketing company and wanted to work in a collaborative and empathetic environment that works with bereaving families. Marketing to funeral service is not a common shift, but I have a Bachelor of Science in Biology and a Bachelor of Science in Information Technology (Business), so I wanted to use my science background to shift to a career that helps people. Advertising is a very niche industry and many of the skills I possess are very technical or administrative, such as server communications or processing returns. I know I don't have the same skills as people who started in adjacent or other similar service careers since I served clients and not individuals. I will work diligently to develop the skills required to help families process their grief and provide families the opportunity to grieve together with their loved ones in meaningful ways.

I have not followed the traditional student path and took 10 years off from school. The FSE department and all your staff have been extremely kind and helpful. I am currently working in marketing and the FSE program is one of the few in the country that allows lower-income students to enter such a service field.

I hope to work towards a career in Funeral Service. I am looking forward to meeting you in the future. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Aryssa Montano

Wednesday May 01, 2024

To the Education Board of Canada College and San Mateo County,

The first time I heard about the new Funeral Services program at Canada College was while attending an information session via Zoom at Cypress College. I felt my heart race and a flush of excitement come over me that I had not had in a very long time. Such good news could not be real, but if it came from Cypress College it had to be true. I quickly looked through the Canada College catalog and sure enough found the Funeral Services program listed. For two years I had been trying to get into a Funeral Services program. Every semester was a disappointment as my reality of having to work full time was not a luxury I could give up. For a moment I felt this was meant to be, that despite the delays it was all to arrive at this moment. I was so relieved and excited to know that I could keep working and actually attend a Funeral Services program at the same time and finally get back on track with my education; the education I had put off for so many years. For the first time in a while I was sure that things were going to go well for me and that things were going to work out. In just a matter of a couple weeks this sense of security was taken from me.

My gut dropped when I heard the Funeral Services program may be canceled at Canada College before it even had the chance to gain some real momentum. I felt betrayed, misled and lied to. Despite my hesitation and fear, I was already on track to possibly attend American River College. I was taking care of my pre-requisites, I was getting the work done, and looking for work within the funeral services industry. I was doing what was expected of me. I was afraid that I would have to move and possibly lose my job if I decided to go to American River College, but I was willing to take that risk just so I could stay on track and move forward instead of back like I had done so many times before. Then the Funeral Services program at Canada College came along right on time and I felt I had been saved from making a move that I was not financially ready for. I abandoned my track at American River College and transferred to Canada College, a college that was closer to home and that offered online classes. It was the perfect set up I thought and I was thankful that despite all my previous failures, they were all meant to lead me to this moment where I could actually have a balanced work-school life. For the first time in a really long time I was hopeful for my future.

I am not a person to explode in anger or voice my frustrations openly because I believe everything has a reasonable explanation, but I can honestly say that in the last two weeks the Canada College administration has been able to push me overboard to feel and express feelings that I was not accustomed to. I work full time and I do not have the luxury of getting financial aid to pay for my education. With great sacrifice, my education comes out of my pocket. I funded a school that had no real intention of funding my education and I feel robbed and cheated. I made sure to keep my grades up, do my work, attend classes and push myself out of my own comfort zone because I felt that I owed it to Canada College for starting up a Funeral Services program just for us. I felt I owed it to my classmates, to my instructor, to the entire support system of the Funeral Services program to do well and show up for the Funeral Services program. In just a matter of days, the unjustifiable decision of a few has brought to a grinding halt the future of myself and my classmates.

In just a matter of days more than 30 students have been unjustly left in the dark and told to go somewhere else. Where are we supposed to go, and are we that disposable to be told to just walk away from our goals and dreams? We were all led to believe that Canada College had our best interests in mind and were taking all the steps necessary to ensure our success as the first graduating Funeral Services program class. The Funeral Services industry for so many years has been led by men. This class is made up of mostly women, and most of us are women of color. By cutting out the Funeral Services program you are also cutting out 30 women of color from positions of leadership within the Funeral Services industry. The sudden decision of Canada College to cancel the Funeral Services program is one of great malice and lack of sympathy for those of us whose journey has been cut short without a fair warning.

Every person in this room will need a capable and fully trained Funeral Service professional at some point in their life; if they have not already needed one, and you will not find one because you cut off 30 students from filling those essential roles. It takes a special kind of person to want to help people during the most difficult time in their life, and by cutting the Funeral Services program from Canada College you are doing a disservice to us as students, the greater community of the Bay Area and the entire state. The actions of Canada College do not speak to the values and promises that we as students were told the college aimed to fulfill. The decision to remove the Funeral Services program from Canada College will surely reveal to its

students that their interests are not at the forefront of making decisive and important decisions for the well-being of the college, but money. The decision of removing the Funeral Services program will surely have irrevocable consequences for Canada College and I hope you can understand the great mistake you will be making now if the Funeral Services program is indeed removed before it is too late.

Sincerely,

Teresa Robles

Hello Advisory Board at San Mateo College. My name is Alexxa Gomez and I am currently a mortuary science student there at cañada college. With not to many options available for these types of studies other then one college that offers very limited space and very little room for flexibility it makes it very hard for one to pursue their dreams and goals to be in the funeral industry. Here at San Mateo the program has been a true blessing for my class mates and I. The education and guidance that Mrs Gina cooper and Professor Chase Mirassou have given me so far have not only pushed me far along in my mortuary career so far but has given me the support that I would not be able to get at my local college. With this program I am not only able to pursue my career goals but also take care of my family. My mother is ill with cancer and it is very hard to find colleges that are equipped to be able to handle the different schedules of so many students all over California. However here at San Mateo it has made life a lot less chaotic. I have many colleagues at work and friends who are looking into the mortuary program because of the lack of available colleges for people to go to. San Mateo is a great for front to speak up for how important it is to encourage people to join this work force. As we all just experienced a very overwhelming shift in our society after the pandemic we realize that Last responders are more needed then ever. It is evident that like the healthcare industry there is no such thing as to many people especially in times of crisis. I hope in these words you may see that this program although it may just be starting, is one that will continue on for years to come and will be a top competitor for the biggest school in California for mortuary science. We as students are in dire need of this program as there is truly not one like it.

Kind Regards,
Alexxa Gomez

Dear Board members of Cañana College,

My name is Anel Rubilar and I am currently enrolled in the Funeral Service Education program that is currently in jeopardy of being eliminated. Growing up I was always interested in working in funeral service but had no idea how to go about doing so. As you may guess there are not very many schools that offer this field if study. Actually, there are only 2 in the entire state of California. Well with Cañada College, 3.

After working in a job that had no future for 20 years, I found myself finally going back to school to try to achieve my dreams of working in a funeral home. I was ready to make a change and make an impact on the families I was going to help. I applied to the mortuary science program in Cypress College, a school 40 minutes away from my home 4 times in total, only to be rejected twice and accepted as an "alternate" twice. I would get my hopes up going to orientation and meeting all the instructors, only to then get let down by the counselor. I was told I still need to take art and PE in order to be able to reapply. I was also told during orientation that classes were twice a week all day and on top of that, clinical hours needed to be performed at a funeral home. As a single mother of two, working two jobs to make ends meet, I worried I would not be able to do it as classes at

Cypress would take up too much of my time. If only there was an online option.

One day on a social media post I found out about a new program starting in a school in Northern California and it was online! I emailed Gina Hooper and set up a meeting with her as soon as I could. I did everything she asked me to do in order to start the program on time. This program has literally changed my life. Its online curriculum allows me not only to continue to work my two jobs, but also gives me time to spend with my kids. The students and instructors are in constant communication with each other and I was even able to find job placement through one of our student forums in a funeral home 10 minutes away from my home. This is a mortuary I drove by many times and is now where I have my dream job. Had it not been for this program and Gina especially rallying behind her students, I would have given up on my dreams.

This is the only program being cut from our school although student enrollment is great and we know that the school has the funds to take it on as well. Funeral service workers are in high demand, embalmers especially and this program especially is designed not only for those already working in the industry full time, but working students in general. What Cañada needs to do with the Funeral Service Education Program is expand it not

cut it as there are many students who are ready and willing to sign up today all over California and with online learning, out of state students as well. Out of state students means out of state tuition. Losing this program will mean losing money towards Cañada and it leaves many students in the program feeling lost.

My name is Olga Matveeva, I'm a Canada college student in the Funeral Service Educational Program.

I came to the USA in September 2022. When I came here I understood that my salary was not enough to live in the Bay Area. Unfortunately, at the same time, I was diagnosed with cancer, and during my first year here my time was shared between work and hospitals.

When all the treatments were over, I got the energy for more than my current work. I decided to go to college, to involve myself in the local life, get better with the language, and explore the new way to establish myself here.

I studied the catalog and found the Funeral Service Education. I have never been involved in this industry, but it caught my eye. I met with the supervisor of the program, Ms. Gina Hooper. She told me about the program, what will be learned, and what outcome the students will get. She also connected me with one of the Funeral homes in the area to visit, and now I'm working there part-time.

So, as I am working now on 2 jobs: one almost full-time and one part-time, I need to have the opportunity to study online. I am thankful to Canada College for the program offering online education. It gives a possibility for people like me, who work full time and sometimes multiple jobs to find the time to study and learn new things.

I'm falling in love with the Funeral Service industry with every new working day and class. I hope I will be able to continue studying in this program in Canada College, to pursue my new career. It is important for me to study here, I can't relocate because I have a full-time job. These programs in other colleges in California are offline, and I can't afford the off-state tuition of online programs in the other states.

I hope our Funeral Service Education Program will move forward and get finally certified, and I, as well as my classmates, will be able to finish our education successfully.

My name is Taylor Villet. I am a student in the funeral program at Canada College, and I came here to study because I am currently disabled and unable to walk without aid.

When I saw that there was an accessible program for me to start my journey to becoming a mortician, I was relieved. FSE 200 helped me get through my surgery and most of my recovery. Instead of having to sit and wait for a year, I started bettering my life immediately.

I am currently without a permanent residence, going through a separation, and attending physical therapy to walk again. Without an online program like the one at Cañada College, I would not be able to begin or continue this process at all. My quality of life is dependent upon finding a career that will not only provide enough financial support for me to get through my separation, but also help me contribute something to the world that betters it.

To me, death work and grief work are critically important. I will do whatever it takes to join this field. Cañada's online program made that possible during a time in my life when I needed it most and had no way of attending a physical school.

There are so many others in situations like mine who may see a way through challenging times because of accessible programs like this. Not everyone can squeeze through narrow windows, and with so few programs like this in California, the barrier for entry feels insurmountable. Some of us need doors. Cañada opened one for me. I'm writing this testimonial now in the hopes that this door stays open: not only for me, but every other student who deserves a chance to take hold of their life and make it better than well.

Thank you.

Hello my name is Ediali Crow and I'm a student in the funeral service program at Cañada college. I have personally seen how important the funeral industry is for grieving families. During the pandemic I lost my uncle to cancer. The loss shook the foundations of my family and that time was incredibly difficult for my family. Anyone who has lost a loved one knows how overwhelming it can be to handle the arrangements after death. The funeral directors we worked with were passionate about their work, caring, patient, and helpful in their suggestions. That is when I knew I wanted to help people in the same way.

This program gave me a newfound purpose and I feel like I can finally be a productive member of my community. I want to serve others in the time they need it most. I want to help people and this program is the only way I **will** be able to get into the funeral industry. I do not have the means to move to Sacramento or LA to their programs or an online program. Cañada offers financial aid, free college support, textbook resources and learning center tutoring have been crucial to my success in my classes. I have access to the textbooks and materials I need for a low cost or free of charge. This has allowed me to spend that money on necessities like food and housing. I can focus on my classes and even during the tougher coursework, I feel confident to learn the material.

I know this work is not easy. Not everyone can handle the things one has to see in the industry. But there are many of us who are ready for that challenge. We are ready to carry the burdens others may not. All we need is that chance to have the classes available so we can enter the industry well prepared and knowledgeable to help people through their loss.

I hope you understand how valuable the funeral service program is for the students as well as the community, and I cannot think of a better college to host it than Cañada College.

Thank you for your time.

My Testimonial

Dear, Board members of Canada Community College my name is Brandon Cadena and I just enrolled in your school to join the Funeral Education Program. I tried to search up the classes for the fall semester, but it seems like they were wiped clean from the class search catalog. I truly hope this program remains on school campus for the purpose of student flexibility and to continue my education in the funeral industry, especially online. I have heard that this program maybe shutting down and if that happens it will ruin the process of my success and there is not many schools that offer the same amount of flexibility and the requirements are different that this program is offering can allow me to move forward in my career. When it comes to the cost of this program is more affordable than most schools and that is another reason that could help students get into the program. I currently live in Long Beach CA so the distance to these schools is very complicated and online courses is the future of modern-day students trying to succeed and having the capabilities at home to learn from the funeral education. I truly hope that this program can continue to exist, and I hope that you take this testimonial into consideration.

Sincerely, Brandon Cadena

Hello,

My name is Markisha Gutierrez, and I am currently enrolled in the Funeral Service Education program- and a full time Apprentice Embalmer at a mortuary in the Bay area with a commute from the Valley. I was thrilled to learn that I could complete my apprenticeship at work; and do school at the same time with options within the vicinity of Northern California- as there aren't many options here compared to Southern California. The launch of this program has helped me stay on an efficient course to becoming the Embalmer I intend to be one day. It has also helped me continue working to sustain basic living needs. The idea that this school is becoming even more well-rounded in their curriculum and offering the Funeral Industry more educational options seemed ideal. There are so many people in the diverse Bay Area region that are interested in pursuing this career pathway and it would be devastating to have that opportunity taken and made more of a hardship for many to continue. This comes especially disappointing to consider the program being phased out- as I have put in much work since last year in class- along with my classmates- and spent much time committed to my studies, all the while working as a full time Apprentice Embalmer and commuting nearly 4 hours a day. I strongly believe that not giving a chance for something to flourish before such abrupt judgement without statistics to correlate sound reason to- defeats the purpose of the initiation of the program for its intended purposes. I graciously ask there be reconsideration regarding considering the program's continuation.

My name is Carly Russell and I am currently in the La Canada Funeral Education program. I am so very thankful for the opportunity of pursuing an education. I am going to school late in life, which has its own challenges. However, this program is changing my life for the better.

I find mortuary science fascinating and it holds my interest. The program has even made it possible to get a better position at the mortuary, where I work. My supervisor has said that I can start my apprenticeship as soon as I complete the program. I study a lot, putting everything into my education, and it is paying off, which in turn helps my self-esteem.

A few years ago, I applied at Cypress College, but Cypress was unwilling to even consider me as a student, due to my educational history of attending high school in Central America. La Canada has allowed me to better myself through education, whereas other colleges are inflexible. I see La Canada as **my last** opportunity to receive an education. I am forty years old, autistic, and have a learning disability; I will not get this chance of receiving an education at other colleges: An education of pursuing something that I genuinely enjoy doing as a career.

I know that not only myself, but my fellow students, will be devastated by the loss of this program. What can we, as students, do to save the Funeral education degree?

The discontinuing of the funeral science degree creates somewhat of a hardship for me and honestly, I am sure others. There are only two programs in all of California, which require in-person attendance. This completely limits opportunities for skilled workers such as myself to pursue a career. I also know it is creating huge problems in funeral service for employers because no qualified AND licensed individuals are to be found to fill positions. I am currently watching my employer stress over no new candidates.

I have completely finished my apprenticeship in embalming and hold a BA from SJSU but cannot sit for the embalming licensing exam. Not only does this create hardship for my employer who desperately needs a licensed embalmer, but it prevents me from receiving a livable wage. I am a single mom of two teenage girls, and I perform a job as well, and to be frank, sometimes better than a licensed embalmer but get paid significantly lower. I cannot just move and attend classes at the two programs because I must work, and my children shouldn't be uprooted. This program provided me the opportunity to do both; I was able to work and continue my education requirement.

Now, I am forced to apply to Arapahoe where the tuition is all but affordable and I must fly there for two weeks for lab work. I gasped at the tuition for one semester, I am paying more than I was at SJSU for my Bachelor's degree. I am also getting the runaround to transfer my credits to their school, while also not being able to include my full-time job at a funeral home as an internship. Frustratingly enough, it was easier to get into grad school for a paid PhD position!

This program closing will close the door entirely for me, and other skilled individuals.

Undoubtedly, I will be forced to pivot my career elsewhere. It is a hard pill to swallow knowing all that hard work and money I put in will literally go down the drain with the program. Money I could have spent elsewhere.

Respectfully,
Hayley Hoey

May 15, 2024

To whom it may concern,

My name is Tiffany Estrellado, and I am a student in the funeral service program at Cañada College. Reasons why the program is important to me is because this will further my understanding of funeral education and the program broadens the uniqueness it provides for future curiosities that students may inquire about.

It will negatively impact my life if the program gets cut by setting myself and my fellow colleagues back educationally. For myself this will setback all the hopes and wishes of developing the knowledge I could have with the community that understands one another.

Though this may seem less to the reader. The Funeral Service Education program is necessary because there isn't enough light shining on the topic of loss and grief. Its impact on what it means the student is life changing because of the availability of classes online are an absolute blessing. Let alone existing in a community college. If this major had been apparent a decade and a half ago I would most likely be in this industry after high school. Though it never was an option because of how far the school was and how limited the enrollment was to others. It would be a huge loss if this program was shut down way before it was provided the chance to see the day of light.

Thank you for your time and consideration for continuing the funeral service program at Cañada College.

Sincerely,
Tiffany Estrellado

To whom it may concern,

My name is Stephany Muro. I am a student at Cypress College, currently working on finishing up my second semester of the Mortuary Science Program. It is through my educational path and my position as a Funeral Attendant at Melrose Abbey Memorial Park & Mortuary that I meet fellow mortuary science students at other schools as well as funeral service professionals to look up to and learn from. It has come to my attention that students at Cañada's Funeral Service Education Program, currently enrolled and newcomers alike, haven't been able to register for their upcoming classes. No solution has been offered nor have the questions of whether the program is being discontinued been answered directly in the advisory meetings. This is a major concern for all students of Cañada's Funeral Service Program; this will set back their careers or maybe even deter them entirely.

Many students I know of in attendance at Cypress College, including myself, make a minimum 1hr commute to attend school, work, study, all on top of other commitments that come up. The students who are enrolled in the online program have had to restructure everything to make their dream happen, they've put in valuable time and effort into their education just like those of us attending American River College or Cypress College and it would be incredibly unwise to push them to succeed while simultaneously pulling the rug out from under them.

Our instructors, fellow students ahead of us, our coworkers and mentors alike have preached the importance of having a support system. To have someone to rely on and to provide guidance. What about our peers at Cañada, why are they so easily dismissed? Their education is just as important as ours.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Stephany Muro', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Stephany Muro

Dear to whom it may concern,

My name is Sheila Zamora and I am a recent graduate of cypress college and have attained my CA funeral directors license. News has spread that a new mortuary program is facing the possibility of closure, that being the Cañada online mortuary program. This is a great injustice to many students entering an already difficult profession. There are so many reasons why Cañada offers opportunities that other programs in California cannot such as American River college and Cypress college. Those reasons include that the cost of living in California continues to increase in cost, more accessibility and simply more opportunities.

One of the most visual reasons is how the state of California continues to increase in cost. Not many people can afford to drop everything and move closer to cypress. If anyone knows California Orange County is one of if not the most expensive county to live in. Let alone expect students to be able to pay for college and pay rent in Orange County. Same can be said for students who live in Southern California and are told to go to American River College up north in Sacramento. That's an expensive move and a rather costly one if one did not pass the difficult programs. Cañada provides a safety net for those who may not have the means to pay for school and move to a new location.

Cañada is really the only option for students in California to have accessibility to a mortuary program. I was fortunate enough to live less than an hour away from cypress but the hours were crazy. We would have school from 8 am to 6pm. I don't live in the safest area to be waking alone at night but I didn't have any other option. I think I should mention that I'm from Santa Ana to give you an idea of how safe our city really is. This paragraph really is for me to emphasize how grateful I would have been if I had an online school like Cañada where I would not have to worry about getting harassed or feel in danger. Really school is my only way out of this city so I had to but this world is only getting worse. Students shouldn't have to risk their safety for school in this manner especially for anyone who considers themselves a female.

Cañada offers students who want to pursue a mortuary degree where cypress or ACC cannot. Students who can't physically drive a long commute from home to school everyday is draining. I've had classmates who had commutes from San Diego to Cypress or from Yucaipa to Cypress. These students had to wake up extremely early and drive which left them in a disadvantage in the classroom because they were already mentally drained from simply their own commute to school. I can guarantee you Cañada would be their first choice of school if it was available but it was either cypress or ACC which is even farther. Students can also work with their jobs, including those who work in mortuaries to be able to balance work and school. I know students who couldn't get a

job in their profession or in general because in person school for a program as demanding as the mortuary program made it difficult to maintain a flexible schedule availability. I hope you reconsider your thought of shutting down the Cañada online program. You are removing many opportunities and accessibilities from students who simply are entering a profession meant to help people so why can't we help them succeed if they choose Cañada?

Best,

Sheila Zamora

To whomever it may concern,

In recent news from what I have heard from my colleagues regarding the registration window, there has been confusion on whether your school will be accepting students. I have colleagues and coworkers who are in this field of work that would greatly benefit from this program, and they have been left wondering if they will be able to move forward with their education. Cañada has many benefits for my colleagues due to their line of work, and the distance that they would have to travel for school can be very far, making Cañada's online structure to be a fit that they appreciate, especially when they have tried to enroll into other mortuary programs with close chances of enrolling but being unable to in the end.

I would like to hear news of this predicament, soon hopefully, regarding what my colleagues should be planning to do should the program fail to address any concerns or fail to follow through with all services.

Thank you,

Alana

Silvia Aceves
Stanton CA 90680
aceves_silvia@yahoo.com
7144728053
05/10/2024

To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing to express my strong desire to join an online Mortuary Science education program if it was made available, due to the immense advantages it would provide me as a single mother. As someone who is constantly on the go and keeps a tight schedule, transferring to online education would allow me to successfully balance my responsibilities. I used to live in LA County and relocated to Orange County to be closer to Cypress College where I am currently enrolled in the Mortuary Science program. The recent move from Los Angeles County to Orange County has been a significant adjustment. Juggling the responsibilities of family and work while transitioning to an unfamiliar environment has been difficult. Attending an online school would not only allow me to improve my education, but it would also allow me to keep working outside of the home, increasing my chances of providing a nurturing and stable environment for my children. The flexibility of online learning would allow me to establish a schedule that would fit my responsibilities as a mother and an employee. By reducing the limits of traditional classrooms, I believe that online education will not only improve my academic achievements but also contribute to my personal growth and development. I sincerely ask that you look into my circumstances and support my ambition to pursue online education as a means to achieve a better work-life balance to provide for my family and excel. Thank you for taking the time to take into account my request.

Sincerely,
Silvia Aceves

Richard J. McCown

Vice President of Operations, Western Region

NorthStar Memorial Group, LLC

PO Box 5070

San Mateo, CA 94402

July 11, 2024

Board of Trustees

San Mateo County Community College District

3401 CSM Drive

San Mateo, CA 94402

Dear San Mateo Community College District Board of Trustees,

Thank you for taking an interest in keeping the Funeral Service Education (FSE) Program at Cañada College. I am writing in response to your request for additional information regarding the funeral profession in the San Francisco Bay Area, specifically employment and job openings, pay and whether or not it is a livable wage, and what private industry may be willing to contribute to keep the program going. I appreciate the opportunity to present this data for your review and look forward to the support of this program at Cañada College by the Board of Trustees.

Employment and Job Openings:

There are several current job openings that illustrate the need for funeral professionals in the San Francisco Bay Area. Positions include, but are not limited to: Funeral Service Assistants, Funeral Arrangers, Funeral Directors, Apprentice Embalmers, Embalmers, and Mortuary Managers, with varying levels of experience required. There is no question that a high current demand exists with a simple online search. Quite often these roles, in my own personal experience and observation sit open for months, and some up to a year due to a serious lack of qualified, educated candidates. Importantly, the need extends far beyond today, with annual demand for funeral professionals exceeding current supply from American River and Cypress, exacerbated by a declining population of Funeral Director's and Embalmers in the state, and not enough cohorts being accepted in the state to keep up with the increase in apprentice embalmers needing an ABFSE certified degree.

With regard to annual demand for licensed funeral professionals, you were presented data by staff in the last Board Meeting that defies common sense, contradicts state specific research, and contrasts with my own personal experience having worked in California in this profession over the past 10 years. As presented, staff would lead you to believe that in 50 states, we only have 136 embalmer jobs opening per year – less than 3 per state, per year. According to the Centers for Excellence (COE) for Labor Market Research Occupational Projections Demand Tool, formulated specifically for community college decision making in California, there are 202 annual job openings projected for “Morticians, Undertakers, and Funeral Directors” in the state of California requiring an associate

degree, and 30 of those are in the Bay Area. The demand for licensed funeral professionals is high and projected to increase in the foreseeable future.

The way to licensure includes graduation from an American Board of Funeral Service Education (ABFSE) accredited program in most states. California requires an associate degree for licensure as embalmers and funeral directors; specifically an ABFSE-accredited degree, National Board of Education (NBE) examination, and two year apprenticeship for embalmers. Accordingly, we have 202 licensed funeral professional job openings projected by the COE where a degree is required by the state of California.

The two current FSE Programs in California at Cypress College in Los Angeles, and American River College in Sacramento, cannot supply enough graduates to meet the projected demand for licensed funeral professionals. According to the ABFSE, these two programs only graduate about 50 students per year between the two. Note that American River in Sacramento only accepts one cohort per year of about 30 students (with 2 full time faculty). This is not nearly enough graduates to keep up with the demand for licensed funeral professionals in California and doesn't account for the increasing number of apprentice embalmers in the state that would need an ABFSE accredited program to become licensed (332 in 2023).

It should also be noted we have a declining population of both licensed funeral directors, and embalmers in California. According to the California Cemetery & Funeral Bureau (CFB) 2024 Sunset Report, in 2018, there were 2,281 active licensed funeral directors in the state, and that number has reduced by 70 in 2023 to 2,211. That same report shows 1,543 active licensed embalmers in the state in 2018, which has decreased 121 to 1,422 in 2023 (7.8% decrease). For reference, according to CalHHS, total deaths in California have increased from 268,818 in 2018, to 340,526 in 2023 (27% increase).

When one considers the number of projected job opening for licensed funeral professionals in California, the educational requirements to be licensed in California, the current amount of graduates supplied by the existing programs ,the declining amount of licensees in the state, increasing amount of apprentices, and increasing death rates, it is imperative we keep the Cañada College Funeral Service Education going. This is particularly impactful to our San Mateo community and the greater Bay Area since the next closest programs are 123 miles away in Sacramento, and 385 miles away in Los Angeles.

Average Pay:

The average salary for a Funeral Director in San Francisco, CA is \$84,673 as of January 26, 2024. However, there are variations in this figure. For instance, Indeed reports an average salary of \$49,517 per year, while SalaryExpert reports an average salary of \$126,028 or an equivalent hourly rate of \$61. These variations could be due to differences in job responsibilities, years of experience, and other factors.

Livable Wage:

A livable wage in the Bay Area is a subjective term and highly variable depending on where you are located. It can cost much less to live in parts of the East Bay than it does in parts of the Peninsula – think Richmond vs Atherton. Many employees in this profession and others choose to live in lower cost areas and commute in. That being said, San Francisco is estimated to be around \$28.74 per hour for a single adult, according to the MIT living wage calculator. For a more local reference, The San Mateo County Board of Supervisors on Tuesday approved a resolution that increases the base wage for regular County employees to \$30 an hour, after a task force performed a "livable wage" analysis. ZipRecruiter estimates average Funeral Director pay in San Francisco to be \$32/hr. ZipRecruiter estimates average Embalmer pay in San Francisco to be \$28.79/hr. Current open positions for embalmers in the Bay Area advertise \$35-\$40/hr, plus benefits. A current Care Center Manager position in the Bay Area is advertised for \$120,000 per year, plus fully paid benefits. Comparing estimates of livable wages to average salaries and currently open positions, the profession provides a livable wage in the San Francisco Bay Area.

Private Industry Contributions:

While it's challenging to quantify the exact amounts that private industry would be willing to contribute, it's clear that many local funeral homes and related businesses are committed to supporting their employees, the FSE Program at Cañada, and the broader community. This support can take various forms, including competitive salaries, comprehensive training programs, use of facilities for students, paid internships, and other benefits. I am actively working on gathering other industry leaders to see what donations can be made to a trust or similar instrument to support the accreditation requirement of two full time faculty, but will need more time to get a number.

I hope this information is helpful as you consider the future of funeral service education at Cañada College. Please feel free to reach out if you have any further questions or need additional information.

Best regards,

Richard J. McCown

Vice President of Operations, Western Region

NOTE: California Funeral Directors Association has agreed to help find funeral home locations for students to complete practicums if the student does not live in the Bay Area. There are more locations willing to work with Cañada College, these are the locations that have been toured.

Location Name	City	How many students the location will host for practicums each semester	How many students the location will interview for hire
Cypress Lawn Memorial Park	Colma	As many as needed	As many that apply
Sky Lawn Memorial Park	San Mateo	As many as needed	As many that apply
Chapel of the Chimes	Oakland	3	As many that apply
Chapel of the Chimes	Hayward	As many as needed	As many that apply
Darling and Fischer Chapel	San Jose	As many as needed	As many that apply
Duggan's Serra Mortuary	Daly City	7	7
CFCS- Oakland Archdiocese	Oakland	10	10
Santa Cruz Memorial	Santa Cruz	2	2
CFCS-Hayward Archdiocese, Sorensen Chapel	Hayward	3	3
St. Joseph Cemetery & Funeral Center	San Pablo	3	At least one at this location, but there are other locations to refer students to
Queen of Heaven Cemetery & Funeral Center	Lafayette	As many as needed	As many that apply
Holy Cross Cemetery & Funeral Center	Antioch	As many as needed	As many that apply
Grissom's Chapel and Mortuary	San Lorenzo	As many as needed	As many that apply
Sacred Space Funeral Home & Cremation Services	San Jose	3	As many that apply
Crippen and Flynn Mortuary	Redwood City	Still to be determined on exact number.	Still to be determined on exact number.
Crippen and Flynn Mortuary	Belmont	Still to be determined on exact number.	Still to be determined on exact number.
SCI Trident Society	San Francisco Bay Area	As many as needed	As many that apply
Alameda Family Funeral & Cremation	Saratoga	3	As many that apply

Below is a map of Funeral Establishments that have been toured and confirmed to host students for their practicums and create an affiliation agreement with Cañada College.

