

## I. SCHOOL INFORMATION

Name of School:

***American Academy McAllister Institute of Funeral Service, Inc.  
(AAMI)***

## II. INSTITUTIONAL PLAN ELEMENTS

- A. **MISSION.** Describe your school's mission and vision, which identifies its purpose and its core values.

The mission of American Academy McAllister Institute of Funeral Service is to educate students so that they may reach their full potential and achieve their goal to enter the funeral service profession. AAMI is committed to creating a learning environment that supports educational excellence, encourages academic innovations and promotes the steadfastness and integrity of the funeral profession. As a leader in funeral service education for over 92 years, AAMI provides and supports the educational needs of the funeral industry.

AAMI is an urban, not-for-profit, private, single-purpose academic institution that offers a campus and online associate degree program dedicated to the educational needs of the funeral industry. AAMI provides educational leadership through learning opportunities that anticipate, prepare for and meet the challenges of educating a socially and economically diverse population. AAMI provides opportunities for students, faculty and staff to study, research and observe the culture, customs and changing dynamics of the funeral profession.

A learning community has a unique set of values that support the growth and development of its students, faculty and staff. These values emerge from and support the traditions of the institution and the profession it serves. By focusing on these values, AAMI empowers its entire community to respond to a changing world.

1. **TRUST.** AAMI believes that trust is at the center of all learning experiences and is the key to faculty and staff relationships with each other and with students.
2. **MUTUAL RESPECT and CONCERN for OTHERS.** For a learning community to be successful there must be respect among all of its members. Differences are prized and respected and disagreement is not meant or understood as personal animosity. In a learning community, members care about their colleagues and students, encourage their achievements and

support them when they need assistance.

3. **SHARED RESPONSIBILITY for the COMMUNITY.** A learning community requires honesty, high integrity and personal responsibility of its members and expect that they will hold one another accountable for living up to these values. Members of such a community learn to collaborate with one another in solving community problems through consultation and teamwork.

- B. **MARKET.** Discuss the nature of your school and the business in which it is engaged. Describe who your existing and/or potential customers are and what motivates them to enroll in your school. Explain how you let these customers know you are in business. Finally, identify who your competitors are and how you are different from them.

American Academy McAllister Institute of Funeral Service, Inc. (AAMI) was established in 1964 by the merger of the McAllister School of Embalming, founded in 1926, and the American Academy of Embalming and Mortuary Research, founded in 1933. AAMI continues to be dedicated to the ideals these institutions advocated, namely the careful preparation of its graduates for the obligations and responsibilities of contemporary funeral service.

As a single purpose institution preparing students for the career of funeral service, AAMI only admits students who have chosen funeral service as a profession.

AAMI offers students the option of attending part-time or full-time either on-campus or online. Both programs are identical in terms of the curriculum and the requirements; both are fully accredited.

In 2017, AAMI implemented a Memorandum of Understand (MOU) with the Department of Defense (DOD) that enables AAMI to provide its associate degree to all branches of the military—worldwide—at special tuition rates for active duty service members, retired military personnel, those serving in the National Guard, Reserves and military spouses. AAMI also has a working relationship with the military's network of Education Centers of which there are 250 in the U.S. and 70 internationally.

AAMI advertises in major funeral service trade journals, exhibits at the National Funeral Directors Conference (NFDA) and several state conferences and has a comprehensive website.

AAMI has only one significant competitor offering an online funeral service program—Pittsburgh Institute of Mortuary Science (PIMS). However, state authorization requirements have apparently caused PIMS to reconsider the number of states to which it will apply to offer its online program. In addition, PIMS has an enrollment limit on the number of students they will admit in any entering class. Finally, the major difference between PIMS and AAMI is that AAMI has no limits on the size of cohort admissions and it offers all of its 31 online courses every semester. This separates AAMI not only from PIMS but every other funeral service program in the U.S. The traditional Mortuary School programs, permits students



to participate programs where courses are only offered sequentially.

We believe AAMI's flexibility to offer all courses each semester, either online or on campus, permits greater accessibility to students to complete their program at their own pace. The availability to repeat a course the following semester, as opposed to sitting out a 6 months or a year - depending on the school - until it is available again, allows students to remain in the program, without having to repeat the entire program – which is required by many other Mortuary Schools.

**C. MANAGEMENT.** Describe your management team and how it functions to lead, administer and position the school. If your school has advisory boards, describe how the school uses them for program and school improvement.

AAMI's senior management consists of the President, the Executive Vice President, the Vice President of Operations and Student Services, the Director of Student Service and Coordinator of Clinical Embalming, the 3 Academic Division Chairs and the Registrar. This group, along with the Online Consultant, forms the Academic Council that meets bi-weekly to discuss a wide variety of issues related to operations and planning. The Executive Vice President, with input from the other members of the Council, develops the agenda for the meetings based on operational and planning issues that need to be addressed. Action Minutes of each meeting are distributed within several days of each meeting and the Minutes list tasks to be addressed as well as the individual assigned with the responsibility for the task.

AAMI does not have a specific advisory committee although it does seek input on the preparation of its graduates through an annual survey of both graduates and employers.

**D. SWOT ANALYSIS.** Identify your school's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT). Based on the results of this SWOT analysis, provide the following:

- 3 to 5 goals for strengths/weaknesses and how they will be addressed by your school.
- 3 to 5 goals for opportunities/threats and how they will be addressed by your school.

The goals should have specific objectives, defined results, a timeline for completion and metrics (some type of evaluation or measurement) by which the institution can evaluate/measure their success. In developing its goals, the school may wish to refer to the Elements of Effective Institutions graphic that is included on the back page of this form.

**STRENGTHS.** AAMI has a long list of strengths. It is difficult to choose among them because all aspects of the school were carefully planned and redesigned for the launch of the online program in 2006. Twelve years later, it is still the synergy

that ties it all together. That being said, here is a list of what we consider to be key strengths:

1. **VISION.** AAMI captured a vision for the future that included the use of technology to provide high quality access to its funeral service program at reasonable cost to the student and the institution.
  - a. AAMI holds bi-weekly meetings with senior staff reminding everyone of the overall vision for the school.
  - b. The vision is shared with all of the staff and faculty through email from the President at least annually.
  - c. Expanding access to military personnel and their families is part of this initiative. The military can complete their course work while in the military, and when they exit the military, enter the work force with a degree that leads to licensure.
2. **LEADERSHIP.** AAMI is fortunate to have a President and a Board of Trustees that embraced the new vision and invested the financial and human resources to develop and implement the vision.
  - a. AAMI leadership discusses the need for faculty and administrative staffing at each Academic Council meeting and the President, Executive Vice President and Vice President of Operations and Student Services discuss these issues on a weekly basis.
  - b. The Executive Vice President routinely prepares planning documents forecasting enrollment changes and watching trends in retention, graduation and NBE passage rates. This data is used to determine levels of administrative and faculty staffing.
3. **QUALITY.** The ultimate test of the quality of a program in funeral service is both the retention/graduation percentage of the students it admits and also the passage rate on the National Board Exam (NBE). AAMI's retention/graduation percentage from 2014 through 2017 was 76%. Although there are no comparable figures for associate degree graduates nationally, AAMI is retaining and/or graduating students at a rate of 5% above the national baccalaureate percentage, according to the National Center for Education Statistics.
4. Of the 59 accredited programs for the years 2015 through 2017, AAMI was above the average passing rate. On the Arts section, AAMI's passage rate was 75% and for the other schools it was 72%. On the Science section, AAMI's passage rate was 82 and the other schools were 76%.
  - a. AAMI works on providing high-quality student services from the point of initial contact by students through enrollment and the provision of student services. Current students and graduates are surveyed each semester to determine levels of overall satisfaction



and areas that need attention.

- b. Students evaluate faculty each semester in each course and then by the appropriate Division Chair. Faculty receives feedback to ensure that they have an opportunity to benefit from both positive and negative feedback.
5. **CURRICULUM.** AAMI has invested heavily in the design and development of each of its campus and online courses. The campus courses are used as the basic template for the online courses and each of the multiple online sections uses the same template. Moreover, the same faculty who teach the courses on-campus generally teach most of the online courses. This ensures quality and consistency in the curriculum.
  - a. AAMI's Instructional Designer, in consultation with faculty, reviews and revises approximately 10 entire courses per year. This allows the entire curriculum to be revised over a 3-year time span. AAMI believes that technology and software changes dictate that courses must be revised at least on this timetable. In addition, various updates to courses are made when warranted each year.
  - b. AAMI reviews all courses on the basis of the revisions of Curriculum Outlines approved annually by the American Board of Funeral Service Education, the accrediting body for all 59 accredited funeral education programs.
  - c. To this endeavor, AAMI has formed a Teaching and Learning Taskforce consisting of educators and administration personnel. The Taskforce meets monthly via Blackboard Collaborate, and is empowered to review course curriculum and access learning objectives and outcomes.
6. **CAPSTONE.** The CAPSTONE is a two-week experience at the end of the student's final semester. During the CAPSTONE the student's must pass AAMI's comprehensive exam, complete the clinical experiences in Restorative Art and Embalming and finally, participate in the comprehensive review of the curriculum in preparation for the National Board Exam.
  - a. AAMI continues to enhance those aspects of the overall program that are having an important impact on student success, especially the role of the CAPSTONE to bring all parts of the student experience together.
  - b. Graduating students are surveyed about the value of the CAPSTONE to their overall educational experience. The relevant comments of students are used to revise and improve the program.

**CHALLENGES.** Rather than weaknesses to correct, we believe that AAMI has challenges to be addressed in this rapidly changing world. Here are several that are at the top of our current planning agenda:



1. **SCALE and SCOPE of CHANGE.** Throughout U.S. society there are enormous economic, social, political and educational changes underway. We recognize that the only constant is change itself. We have put together a three-year planning model, now in its third year in regard to growth. Since the inception of the online program 12 years ago, we are very close to being 4-times the size of the next largest funeral service program. We are consistently analyzing admissions and enrollments carefully to ensure the quality of the program always supersedes that of the growth.
  - a. AAMI is constantly taking advantage of mobile and wireless technologies and maximize its capabilities. iPads and iPhones, and various learning apps have revolutionized education, as to its execution, delivery, and performance. Blackboard improvements, as well as e-signature and e-fax for admissions documents, online proctor sites, ect – have all changed the world of education as we see it today and going forward.
    - i. E-Signature & E-Fax have had the most dramatic effect on the Admissions process. Applications are closing faster, and permitting students register for courses in a more timely manner. Student transcripts remain an issue, in which we have no control.
  - b. The scope of change is demanding that higher education change with it. What we know from our children and grandchildren is that people, especially those under the age of 30 (i.e., the primary student population of higher education), live, work, communicate and entertain themselves (e.g., play games, watch TV or movies, etc.) almost exclusively on their mobile and wireless devices. Email is an old technology for those who text and communicate instantly and routinely in small chunks of information. Students of all ages are increasingly less patient with static instructional settings that only transmit information and do not have interactive components. Interaction is critical for the future. Facebook, twitter, constant contact, Go-To-Meeting are all useful tools in education.
2. **STAFFING.** It is difficult to identify and employ highly skilled higher education administrators. As a small school, we have re-organized the administrative offices to ensure that there is always sufficient backup for each position. This has been a challenge but so far AAMI has been successful in attracting and retaining first-rate staff. Several of the administration staff also teach.
  - a. Our goal is to use staff development on a routine basis to assist all of our staff in understanding the changes that are occurring and engage them in the process of conceptualizing and implementing needed change in the structure and operation of the organization.



No one has the answers to all of the questions, but it is critical for the future that we continue to try to ask the right questions.

- b. AAMI is focused on ensuring that all new staff and faculty hiring are a good fit for the institution and also that they understand the vision and are comfortable working at a school that is in the midst of leading change in a very traditional industry.

**E. FUTURE THINK.** Describe your school 5 years from now. What will it look like and how it will be positioned in the market place.

2017 marked a 8.62% decrease in total enrollments in mortuary science schools nationwide since 2015, the lowest since 2008. In 2022, it is likely that perhaps 7 to 9 of the existing accredited funeral education programs will have lost their accreditation or closed. Several new schools are always entering, but their duration depends on support from their sponsor, or state if they are a community school. Many community school programs are limited by staff, and have only one director who also serves as the instructor of all the required mortuary courses. Full online education is generally not an option for most Community Mortuary/Funeral Service schools.

In 2017, annual new AAMI enrollees represented 11.53% of total new enrollment among the 59 accredited schools. As a result of the decline in the number of schools to perhaps 52 as well as AAMI's continued growth in both campus and online enrollment, AAMI is projected to have 25% of the new enrollees, not counting the estimated growth through the military initiative – which could easily increase the school's in the next five years. The increasing size of the school will require AAMI to continue to focus on planning for growth and school expansion while retaining its high quality. Moreover, the school is, and continues to be recognized, as the innovative leader in the use of both administrative and instructional technology. We are extremely optimistic and see a bright future in the next 5 years and beyond as consider it very exciting.

In the year 2016 – 2017 AAMI saw a slight decline in online enrollment from 235 in 2016 to 224 in 2017. However, the 59 schools, in aggregate, are down 506 students from 2011, a decline of over 17%. We continue to see increasing interest in the school's online program. In May 2013, AAMI went through its periodic seven-year reaccreditation process by its national accreditor, the American Board of Funeral Education. In October 2013, AAMI was informed it was reaccredited for seven years with no deficiencies identified.

In 2017 AAMI entered into a Memorandum of Understanding with the Independent Funeral Directors Association Educational Trust to provide access for students to their employment registry database. Students may register their resume and interests and gain access to association members who are looking to hire recent graduates. This is a win-win-win, for the Student, Employer, and the School for job placement.

AAMI also expects the military program to be a substantial. AAMI will be in the

forefront of educating M92's in Grief and Bereavement as part of their basic training. The M92 is the new designation for the Military Graves Registration Units. There are approximately 8000 M-92's worldwide, and 260 new trainees each year. In addition, the program is offered to all active and retired military personnel, and their families. AAMI is considered a "Military Friendly School."

### III. SUBMISSION

I hereby certify that the information contained on this form and any attachments to the form is true and correct to the best of my knowledge.



\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Authorized School Official:

Meg Dunn, President

August 17, 2018

\_\_\_\_\_  
Print or Type Name and Title:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date