**II. Institutional Plan Elements**

**A. Mission**

Mission Statement

The Salon Professional Academy’s mission is to produce highly trained and well prepared graduates to be successful in a professional environment. We are committed to excellence in cosmetology arts and sciences and massage therapy and bodywork education.

**B. Market.**

The Salon Professional Academy strives to seek out and provide the resources and support our students need in order to successfully attend school, graduate, and find employment in a professional salon environment. We are committed to providing the resources and support which are in the best interest of our students.

Although the majority of our students/potential students are only a few years out of high school, we also have students who have attended technical colleges or universities, as well as older students who are looking to retrain in a new career. Most of our students are from within a ninety mile radius of the school. Admissions criteria require students to have a high school diploma/G.E.D. certificate or transcript with proof of graduation before beginning classes. A student must be eighteen years old or have contractual permission from their parent or guardian. In addition, students must complete all of the required admission documentation in order to enroll.

We utilize our website as our main marketing tool to inform potential students about our programs, but we have found that word of mouth referrals from both graduates and the community have been our greatest marketing tool. In addition to these methods, we also utilize social media, in-house advertising and community events as forms of advertising.

There are two schools locally that were offering a Massage Therapy program. One is a local technical college and the other is a Globe University. However, the program at the local technical college is currently not enrolling students, and Globe University recently closed its doors. We have found our program differs from the technical schools in several ways. There is a huge price difference between the program cost at the technical college. The local technical college’s program was a cost of around $8,000 when it last enrolled students. Our program cost is $13,550 including all books, supplies and fees. Another difference is the academic and attendance requirements our students must meet in order to graduate are higher than the other program. We require our students to maintain a minimum of 75% GPA and 85% attendance, whereas the other local program only requires 67%. We have found that setting this higher standard improves the quality of education our students are able to obtain in our program. Finally, the most significant difference with our program is the number of hours a student must complete in order to graduate. The other local program requires the minimum set by the State of Wisconsin (600 hours), while our students must complete 750 hours. When we first developed this program, we met with practicing therapists, massage therapy educators, and others in the educational profession and based on their advice, we determined 600 hours was not sufficient for the students to feel comfortable entering the employment field. We added the additional hours based on their recommendations and have determined our graduates are confident when they are entering the job market.

**C. Management**

Our management team consists of the following structure-

Sue Kolve-Feehan, Owner/Director oversees the following:

* Administrative Team (Admissions, Recruiting, Financial Aid, Marketing, Compliance, and Accounting)
* Penny Nelson, Director of Education
  + Oversees the Instructors and the Support Staff.

The Administrative Team works closely with the Owner/Director in order to ensure all aspects of the school are managed properly. In addition, our administration has a strong belief in cross-training so that we are able to not only ensure we are able to assist each other, but also to give everyone a better understanding of how the entire school operates as a whole rather than as individual positions.

Our accreditation company requires that we have a Program Advisory Committee which oversees our programs. This committee meets two to three times each year to evaluate our programs (objectives, length, curriculum, etc.), equipment, learning resources, graduation and employment rates, and more. Members of this committee include practicing Massage Therapists, employers, and industry and education specialists.

**D. SWOT Analysis**

Strength- One of our greatest strengths is that we have three instructors, which brings variety, but more so, all three of our instructors are also practicing massage therapists. We feel that having an instructor who is currently working in the field allows the instructor to bring a more real world perspective to what our students will encounter upon graduation. Although it is not a requirement for the position, we will continue striving to ensure that all of our instructors are currently practicing massage therapists.

**UPDATE 08/2016**: Our experienced instructors continue to be one of our program’s greatest strengths. We currently employ three part-time massage therapy instructors. Each instructor has a minimum of three years of prior work experience in the field of massage therapy with diverse specialties. The instructors’ real world experience allows them to teach not only basic massage techniques to students, but also, to mentor students in the area of being successful professionals in the field.

**UPDATE 08/2017**: Our team of experienced instructors continues to be a source of strength in our program. We currently employ one full time instructor and two part time instructors. Two of the three instructors practice massage therapy outside of their teaching responsibilities. All instructors work to instill a level of professionalism that is necessary to be successful in the massage business. All three instructors have at least three years of prior practical work experience per out accrediting body’s standards.

**UPDATE 08/2018**: We continue to seek out practicing massage therapists to teach in our program. Currently, all three of our instructors practice massage when not teaching. As stated previously, ACCSC requires that each instructor have three or more years of experience. Our instructors easily meet that standard. Another strength related to our instructors is their tenure with our school. We have very little turn over in our teaching staff which provides continuity to our program and allows us to continue to improve the program without out having to train in new instructors.

Strength- We have a high demand for our massage appointments rather than some schools where the students get little experience with the public. As a school already established in cosmetology arts and sciences, our guests immediately noticed when we began advertising that our massage therapy students were going to be taking appointments. In fact, they noticed almost too quickly, filling up every appointment available within the first 48 hours of opening the books. This was a slight weakness as well, as it prevented our students from booking follow up appointments with their guests. Since then we have decided to only open a portion of the books in the future, allowing the students to have sections of time blocked so they are able to take referrals or follow up appointments (rebooks).

**UPDATE 08/2016**: The demand for our massage appointments remains consistently high. The direct client/massage therapist relationships our students begin building while in school remains a great asset to our program. We rectified the slight weakness of having immediately full books by only opening portions of the books at a time. This allows our students to take follow up appointments and referrals which may lead to establishing a client base when the student graduates and becomes licensed.

**UPDATE 08/2016:** Our students continue to see a wide range of clients with their appointment slots filling quickly. Our clinical setting allows students the hands-on practice they need in order to be ready and comfortable entering a career in massage therapy. We continue to get regular inquiries about our graduates and their need for employment.

**UPDATE 08/2018:** Our massage students continue to be in demand both while here in school and upon graduation. We continue to have a high demand for student massage appointments with many people booking appointments as soon as the books open up. We are working on improving out scheduling by determining the best way to handle waitlists. Local salons have expressed a need for massage therapists and are willing to hire them directly out of school. This is supported by a high employment rate for our graduates.

Weakness- Upon surveying our first class of graduates, students felt that the instructors could be answering questions in a more understandable way (i.e. other students would answer rather than the instructor answering) and at times they felt certain instructors were not as prepared as others. In order to resolve these concerns, instructors will be given a “Control the Classroom” training which will strengthen these skills. In addition, the course outline has been amended with more detailed outlines including preplanned activities.

**UPDATE 08/2016:** We continue to strive to give our students the best classroom experience possible. To do this, we have recently put together a survey that will be disseminated to all our students. The survey asks about the students’ level of satisfaction with the educators, the facilities, the tools they are given in the classroom, and their experience with departments like financial aid and admissions. Once the results are tabulated, we will be able to capitalize on areas we excel at and develop an action plan for areas that need improvement. One of the benefits of being a small school is the ability to respond quickly to student needs. Once areas for improvement are identified, we’ll be able to work quickly to resolve any issues.

**UPDATE 08/2017**: We recently underwent our accreditation visit and scored lower than we would have like on instructor fairness and instructor ability to make class interesting. We are currently launching a professionalism task force aimed at students. It is our hope that if students become more professional in the classroom environment, instructors will suffer less burn-out and be better capable of making the class fair and interesting.

**UPDATE 08/2017**: We recently received our reaccreditation from ACCSC for a term of five years. As part of this we had to demonstrate that the students were happy with instructors. In addition to our all campus survey which is now administered at regular intervals, we have also begun using classroom surveys so that students can provide feedback on their instructors at key points in the programs. While generally these surveys are positive, students consistently let us know what they wish the program were longer so they could learn even more and certain topics didn’t feel “rushed.”

Opportunity- We’ve found that the awareness of the benefits of massage therapy has increased which has increased the demand for quality massage therapists with continual projected growth over the next twenty years. Although there are several factors that contribute to this, we have found that as the baby boomer generation continues to age, their ailments increase which leads to a greater demand for massage.

**UPDATE 08/2016**: The awareness of the benefits of massage therapy continues to increase. Locally, both major medical facilities employ massage therapists and regularly use them as part of treatment plans. At our most recent program advisory committee meeting, one of our massage therapists discussed how she is seeing an increased demand for therapeutic massage to treat aliments as opposed to massage for relaxation. As massage becomes more commonplace, awareness of the benefits will only continue to grow.

**UPDATE 08/2017:** Every year the awareness of the benefits of massage therapy grows. Not only are our local healthcare institutions taking a more holistic approach to healthcare including providing massage therapy, many local chiropractors are seeing the benefits of massage therapy and hiring at least one massage therapist. It continue to be brought up at our Program Advisory Committee meetings how massage therapy is shifting to a more therapeutic need than a relaxation technique.

**UPDATE 08/2018**: The demand for massage continues to grow. Our massage therapy classes continue to fill quickly, and our graduates continue to get jobs promptly upon graduation. Massage therapy is becoming a more mainstream form of treatment for various ailments. Students have opened up their own businesses, gotten jobs, with chiropractors, and in a more traditional salon environment.

Opportunity- There is an increased demand for high quality massage therapists. Many local employers have often expressed to us that this is a position they are almost always hiring. This is one of the reasons we discussed when we first considered offering the program, and we have continued to hear the same feedback throughout the past year while the program has been in session. Employers are excited to meet our graduates and fill those massage therapy positions.

**UPDATE 08/2016:** There remains a high demand for quality massage therapists. Our school regularly gets calls from business owners inquiring about the availability of our graduates. In order to take advantage of this demand, we are working to grow our program. We have seen a steady increase in inquiries and enrollments in our massage therapy program.

**UPDATE 08/2017:** Our school still receives regular inquiries about available massage therapy students and graduates. In fact, it’s a little challenging to keep up with the demand. We continue to work towards growing our programs. As of our last annual report for our accreditor, ACCSC, we had 100% graduation rates and 100% employment rates.

**UPDATE 08/2018**: Regular inquires from employers still come in often. Recently, our lead massage therapy instructor has worked to build in a massage therapy business week in which students tour various types of employers, and then, some employers come into the classroom to make presentations about their businesses. This serves a an informative activity for the students, but it also creates some excitement with the employers who are always hoping to fill massage therapy positions.

Threat- Although we do not see this as a threat at this time, having two other local schools that offer the same program is a constant threat to our program. We recognize the importance of remaining abreast of the programs they offer in order to stay competitive in the market.

**UPDATE 08/2016**: We continue to monitor the programs at other local schools. We’ve recently learned that the local technical college has put its massage therapy program on hiatus. We see this as an opportunity to communicate to potential students about the availability and advantages of our program.

**UPDATE 08/2017:** Competition from other local schools has become much less of a threat. With the local technical college’s program on hiatus and Globe university unfortunate closure, we are not the only active massage therapy program in town. We will continue to reach out to potential students regarding the benefits of our program.

**UPDATE 08/2018:** The local technical college’s massage therapy program is still not active. There hasn’t been a date announced for tis return. With that, we are the only massage therapy school in the area. This, coupled with the growth in the profession as a whole, generally allows us to fill out massage therapy classes. We will continue to reach out to potential students.

Threat- Ensuring we are compliant is always a threat as well. We regularly attend trainings for several organizations, including our accreditation company and the Department of Education to ensure we are aware of any changes that may affect our programs. Our administrative team also regularly participates in webinars and seminars as well as work closely with membership organizations. We strive to maintain a strong relationship with these organizations and our regulators to ensure compliance is not a threat to any of our programs.

**UPDATE 08/2016:** Compliance always remains a threat. We continue to attend trainings and work closely with our accreditation company, the Department of Education, and other relevant organizations. We are facing reaccreditation with ACCSC this year which presents additional challenges in compliance, but also, the opportunity to identify areas for improvement. We’ve recently hired a compliance specialist to help ensure that we are up to date on changes and to help us navigate through the reaccreditation process.

**UPDATE 08/2017:** Compliance issues are always at the forefront of our concern list. We recently had our on-site accreditation visit which helped us identify a few areas that we can improve on. In addition to our accreditors compliance standards, we regularly attend trainings hosted by financial aid groups, the Department of Education, and other related training to help ensure we are aware of any changes.

**UPDATE 08/2018:** Compliance is very important at the Salon Professional Academy. Our staff works to create a culture of compliance so that compliance efforts are built into daily activities. Staff continues to monitor federal and state laws and accreditation standards to make sure we’re up-to-date with necessary rules. The staff also tries to develop best practices when it comes to following standards, rules, and laws.

**E. Future Think.**

As a newer program, one of our main goals is to increase class sizes and/or offer the program more frequently throughout the year. We strive to fill the demand in our market for high quality massage therapists. We feel by offering a longer program with stricter requirements than other local massage therapy programs, our graduates will be able to enter the workforce with more confidence and less training on behalf of the employer. We strive to continue to evaluate the program and make changes necessary to continuously improve it so our students are able to obtain the highest quality of education available in our area. Our word of mouth referrals are one of the best forms of advertising for our school, and we endeavor to continue to provide satisfied graduates who will continue to share their experience after leaving our school.

**UPDATE 08/2016**: As our program becomes more established, we continue to focus on increasing class sizes and offering our program more often. We have recently seen some growth in our class size, and we’re working to maintain this positive trend by analyzing the current educational options for future massage therapists and positioning our program as competitive. Because we have graduates now, we look forward to connecting with them and their employers to assess their preparedness for the field of massage therapy. This will allow us to work to continuously improve our program and better prepare our students for the workforce.

We also have an active Program Advisory Committee with several massage therapists and employers of massage therapists who attend our meetings regularly. Not only do these members provide valuable input on our curriculum, but they also provide insight into current trends in the field of massage therapy. At our most recent meeting, we discussed the increasing frequency of being able to work with insurance companies and electronic medical records. We are working on developing a strategy to infuse our program with information on some of these trends.

**UPDATE 08/2017:** We are still working towards growing our programs and increasing class sizes and frequency in which the program is offered. This is necessary to keep up with demand from employers for skilled graduates. Currently one of our Massage Therapy graduates sits on our Program Advisory Committee, and her input on how what she learned in school and how it transitions to the “real world” has been invaluable.

We are still working to determine the best way to work insurance and electronic medical records into our training and have looked at increasing our program length from 750 hours to 900 hours. This would allow students more time on tough subjects like anatomy and physiology, as well as, the opportunity to work with electronic medical records. After discussing this with our Program Advisory Committee, it seems like a worthwhile idea to investigate further.

**UPDATE 08/2018**: Our massage therapy program continues to garner interest, and we generally have a full class of eight students the two times the program is offered each year. This is not enough to keep up with the demand in the industry as salon owners who sit on our Program Advisory Committee say they cannot hire massage therapists fast enough to keep up with client demand. The Salon Professional Academy will need to look at ways to help meet this employment demand and whether it’s possible to offer the program more than twice a year.

The Salon Professional Academy continues to discuss increases the length of the program though it has not been a recent priority. Students, instructors, Program Advisory Committee members, and administrators believe that this is still a viable option. This will continue to be a topic of discussion going forward.

Finally, The Salon Professional Academy would like to become more involved in lobbying efforts as it impacts the massage therapy sector. The American Massage Therapy Association (AMTA) offers a lobby day and we would love to give students and alumni the tools to participate in this if they would like. Not only is it an opportunity to advocate for one’s profession, but it’s also a great opportunity for students to begin to meet those involved in the massage therapy world. m