

Institutional Planning

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 needed by our students to successfully attend school, graduate, and find entry level employment in the professional environment they were trained for. We are committed to providing the resources and support which are in the best interest of our students.

Although most 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, transcript with proof of graduation, or transcripts from a post-secondary institution before beginning classes. In addition, students must complete all the required admission documentation 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.

Our program differs from other schools in the state in several ways. For years, there have been no other massage programs available in this area. However, when the local technical school did offer one, the average cost of its program was around half of our current tuition. Our program cost is \$16,721.00 including all books, supplies, and fees. Another difference is the academic and attendance requirements that our students must meet to graduate are higher than the state requirements and other programs. We require our students to maintain a minimum of 75% GPA and 90% attendance. 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 to graduate. The State of Wisconsin requires 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 be prepared and feel confident entering the employment field. The 750-hour program provides them 95 student clinic hours, instead of 20 hours to have instructor supervised hands on practice on a variety of clients. As an educational institution we opted for the 750-hour program based on their recommendations and to better serve our students' educational goals giving our graduates experience, confidence and practical skill set to enter the job market with minimal to no employer gap training required.

During 2020, student enrollment went down significantly. This has created a deficit between employment needs and licensed therapists available to meet those needs, which we continue to struggle with. According to O*Net a licensed massage therapist earns \$55,950 annually in Wisconsin and \$55,310 annually in the US as reported by the Bureau of Labor and Statistics 2023 wage data. The projected growth from 2019-2029 is 21%.

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 to ensure all aspects of the school are managed properly. In addition, our administration has a strong belief in cross-training so that we can not only ensure we are able to assist each other, but also, give everyone a better understanding of how the school operates rather than compartmentalizing individual positions.

Our accrediting body requires that we have a Program Advisory Committee whose members share their opinions, perspectives and recommend improvements for 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 provide feedback and recommendations for improvements. Members of this committee include practicing Massage Therapists, employers, industry, and education specialists. The owner and director of education review, discuss, consider and research their recommendations. They Implement the recommendations based on what is in the best interest of preparing our students through their education to have successful careers in the industry.

SWOT Analysis

Historical Strengths:

8/2020: Two instructors, both licensed, are practicing massage therapists bringing a variety of teaching styles and current real-world experiences. High demand for our massage appointments allows students to get a lot of experience with the public. We advertise that our massage therapy students are going to be taking appointments in advance and almost every appointment available is filled prior to the first day of clinic, and we often have a waiting list if anyone cancels.

08/2021: Our team consists of two experienced educators that continue to be a source of strength in our program. They both practice massage therapy outside of their teaching responsibilities and share industry practices and trends to enrich learning. These instructors strive to instill a level of professionalism in the students that is necessary to be successful in the massage business. The duo has far exceeded the three years of prior practical work experience required by our accrediting standards.

08/2022: We continue to seek out professional massage therapists to teach in our program. The Accrediting Commission of Career Schools and Colleges requires that each instructor have three or more years of experience. Our instructors easily meet that standard.

8/2023: We have had a staffing change. Our seasoned senior massage therapists were able to extensively train and co-teach with our new educators. Effectively removing the learning curve while maintaining the quality education and experience our team has provided to previous graduates. High demand for our massage appointments allows students to get a lot of experience with the public. We advertise that our massage therapy students are going to be taking appointments in advance and almost every appointment available is filled prior to the first day of clinic, and we often have a waiting list.

Historical Weaknesses

8/2020: With most appointment slots filled in advance of clinic beginning there was no availability for students to book follow up appointments which diminishes the opportunity for them to plan ongoing therapy goals and track progress outcomes of the massage therapy guests.

08/2021: 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 to be ready and comfortable entering a career in massage therapy. We continue to get regular inquiries about our graduates from employers in need of massage therapists.

08/2022: 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 they are available. We have utilized our booking system waitlist function as best practice for managing appointment demands. Local employers have expressed a need for massage therapists and would hire them directly out of school as they become licensed.

08/2023: The popularity of our massage therapy student appointments and demand for our graduates continues to be a very positive aspect of this program. After some conversations with our instructors and our Program Advisory Committee, we're looking at ways for students to be able to give more messages back-to-back. The reasoning behind this is it will increase the students' endurance when they enter the professional world. Currently, students are limited by their attendance schedule as to how many messages they can provide in a day.

Current Strengths/Weaknesses

- The relationship our school has built with the area employers is a great strength. They have been very vocal about their need to hire and the quality of our graduates. They are very proactive in the process of student development through participation in school events and hosting recruiting events for the students.
- Working with the salons and spas that value their employees allows our graduates to earn higher wages.
- Our newer educators have compiled additional study guides and practice test materials from the textbook resources to help the students decrease stress and optimize their studies in preparation for the MBLEx exam.

- Increasing class sizes to our capacity of 16 per year and finding/ hiring additional highly qualified educators to prepare students to pass and become licensed continues to be challenging.
- Program Advisory Committee input – The number of graduates from the program has not met the current and future needs of their businesses.
- Almost every available appointment is filled in advance of clinic beginning. This is a weakness because if massage therapy guests schedule in advance but come late, don't come, or cancels the day of the appointment with no notice it makes it difficult to utilize a wait list efficiently, therefore the student doesn't get as much practical experience.

Historical Opportunities

8/2020: The Salon Professional Academy is the only school offering a massage therapy program in the area.

8/2021 We are currently undergoing accreditation renewal which has highlighted the importance of class size.

08/2022: Through various surveys that have been administered we learned our students were overall satisfied with the program but wish it was a little longer so they could dive deeper into the topics and have more time mentored by their educators in the hands-on practical environment.

08/2023: The Salon Professional Academy continues to gather feedback from massage therapy students with campus surveys, classroom surveys, conversations and exit surveys. Once feedback is obtained, it is tabulated and shared with the Owner/Director, the Director of Education, and the instructor. Changes are tracked through our Institutional Assessment and Improvement Plan (IAIP) process where we assess through tools like surveys, make changes, and monitor the progress of those changes.

The input from our Program Advisory Committee in addition to the surveys our students complete are a valuable tool and continue to be a valuable resource in identifying our strengths and weaknesses. They identify areas we excel at that can be capitalized on and areas that need improvement we can develop an action plan for. 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.

Historical Threats (Other massage programs, compliance)

Other massage programs.

8/2020: The Salon Professional Academy is the only school offering a massage therapy program in the area.

8/2021: The Salon Professional Academy continues to be the only school offering a massage therapy program in the area.

08/2022: We are the only massage therapy school in the area. This, coupled with the growth in the profession, generally helps encourage interest in massage therapy classes. We will continue to reach out to potential students with the goal of filling all available slots.

8/2023: Although we do not see this as a competitive threat at this time, two other local schools previously offered the same program. We recognize the importance of remaining abreast of the programs they offer to stay competitive in the market.

Compliance

8/2020: We are currently the only active massage program in the area. The awareness of the benefits of massage therapy has increased as the demand for quality massage therapists with continual projected growth over the next twenty years. We are continuing to review and amend our policies and procedures to ensure we are compliant with the new rules and regulations of all governing agencies to ensure the educational success of all our students. We are consistently updating and establishing best practices for operational procedures that balance high quality clinical experience and improve safety standards for our students and guests in a pandemic environment.

08/2021: Compliance issues are always at the forefront of our concern list. We are currently going through accreditation renewal which helps us review and identify areas that we can improve on. In addition to our accreditor's compliance standards, we attend training hosted by financial aid groups, the Department of Education, and other related training to help ensure we are aware of any changes. This year was particularly focused on the policy and procedures associated with Title IX.

08/2022: Our staff works to create a culture of compliance that is built into daily activities. Staff continue to monitor any changes in federal and state laws and accreditation standards to make sure we're up to date and compliant with all rules and regulations. The staff also tries to develop best practices when it comes to following standards, rules, and laws. Compliance is a priority at the Salon Professional Academy.

8/2023: The Department of Education restricting the hours of a massage therapy program to meet but not exceed state of Wisconsin program requirements of 600 hours reducing our program by 150 hours is a threat to the preparedness of the students in our program.

Current Opportunities/Threats

- There are no pending issues with compliance regulations. We continue to monitor for changes and updates that may impact the massage therapy students or destabilize the industry such as deregulating the profession.
- The potential of a reoccurring widespread public health and safety threat gives us the platform to ramp up our best safety and sanitation practices. This will help us all stay vigilant and current with our knowledge and tools so we can continue to stay safe and stay employed. Additionally, growing our class sizes will allow us to meet the growing demand for entry level massage therapists which has been communicated to us by the industry employers.
- We are launching a new booking/POS system which will offer students and clients more booking options with a streamline cancellation waiting list function that will reduce no shows and increase rebooking with real-time mobile updates and forms that can be filled out online saving time and allowing for advanced planning and preparation.
- We launched a new student information and management system to give students real time access to their records and hours so they can have full transparency of their status concerning course work, clock hours, financial aid, and grades in the program, with full and private access to communicate with all administrators and educators at any time.

- Program Length Restrictions for Gainful Employment (GE) Programs significantly reduces our students mentored hands-on practical experience making them less prepared and confident to enter the industry.
- The transition of massage therapy educational staff could potentially cause a threat to consistency and continuity.

Previous and Ongoing Goals (Historical Future Think)

One of our main ongoing 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 offer a longer program with stricter requirements than are required by the state, to enable our graduates to enter the workforce prepared and confident with minimal to no transitional 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 can obtain the highest quality of education. 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.

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 which greatly contributes to our students' preparedness.

We are reviewing the option of adding introductions to 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 and more hands-on practice. After discussing this with our Program Advisory Committee, it seems like a worthwhile idea to investigate further.

While lengthening the program remains a consideration, it is not something that The Salon Professional Academy is actively considering. Massage Therapy continues to be more accepted by different types of employers, a knowledge base in insurance and electronic medical records will be very useful to students and The Salon Professional Academy will continue to investigate ways of working these topics into the curriculum.

Connecting students to lobbying efforts in the Massage Therapy world remains an active goal. Previously, The Salon Professional Academy was able to host a continuing education course presented by an AMTA representative. Not only did this presenter demonstrate cupping techniques, but he followed that with a presentation on legislation and laws. This gave our students an opportunity to learn about issues that impact the massage therapy world and connect with professionals. We will continue to seek out opportunities to be involved with massage therapy as a profession.

8/2020: Revisiting the addition of a 900-hour massage program by extending hours of instruction and training from 30 hours to 35 hours a week and subsequently adding more educators as the classes fill and hours lengthen was not supported by the enrollment. The development of online interactive content to supplement and enhance the curriculum remains an ongoing goal.

08/2021: Growing our programs and increasing class sizes and frequency in which the program is offered is top of mind. The deficit is widening and demand from employers is growing for skilled entry level employees. Program Advisory Committee, input on transitions to the “real world” prompted the creation of salon events for the students to experience different business for a day and introduce them to future work environments.

08/2022: Our massage therapy program continues to garner interest, and we continue to fall short of full classes of eight students the two times the program is offered each year. Even at full capacity it 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.

8/2023: The Salon Professional Academy continues to discuss the length of the program as it relates to compliance and our student’s success.

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.

E. Future Think

The 5-year goals will include:

Offer continuing education options that would broaden employment versatility and readiness in a variety of settings.

Growing the massage therapy program:

- A) Recruiting is the top priority. Currently we are brainstorming ways to enhance availability and attract more attention to the massage therapy program.
- B) Building interest in the school as a resource for employers to refer interested candidates they already employ in support roles to our industry.
- C) A few of our large franchise employers offer tuition reimbursement as well as guaranteed job opportunities to grow their current employees. We are exploring the opportunity of doing workshops, brainstorming and round table discussions to help prospective students explore a career plan in massage therapy.
- D) Successful recruitment efforts prompt looking at restructuring the way the program is offered and potentially repurposing space in the building to accommodate larger classes.
- E) Compiling more Mblex online study content to enhance the curriculum and add variety for different student learning styles.

Achieving these goals would position our school at the top of our market by supplying more of the high quality, versatile and well-rounded graduates that the employers desperately need for many types of work environments such as but not limited to hospitals, chiropractic offices, physical therapy offices, salons, spas, and resorts.