

FUNERAL SERVICES

2019-2020 PROGRAM REVIEW



1 UNIT PROFILE

1.1 Briefly describe the program-level planning unit. What is the unit's purpose and function?

The Funeral Service Program is one of 57 accredited Funeral Service Education programs in the nation. It is a two year associate of science degree that prepares students for entry-level positions in funeral service. The program is committed to student success through the program and as professionals in the field by providing appropriate knowledge and skillsets to function as competent practitioners. The program maintains strong connections with many niches of the funeral industry, including funeral directors, funeral homes, tissue recovery agencies, vendors (caskets, etc.), and state agencies and professional associations. The department also maintains ties with the funeral industry on a national level through involvement with the National Funeral Director's Association and the American Board of Funeral Service Education. These connections allow the development of curriculum, and collaboration between faculty, students, alumni, and the funeral service community at large. In spring 2018, the FSE program began a program in conjunction with the Sacramento County Coroner's Office as well as Affordable/NorCal Cremation in which we provide viewings and services to families in Sacramento County that are vetted as indigent by the Coroner's office. The program encourages students to strive for a four-year degree by providing courses that transfer to four-year institutions and encourage academic research throughout the program.

1.2 How does the unit contribute to achievement of the [mission of American River College](#)?

The mission of the Funeral Service Education program at American River College is committed to student success through the program and as professionals in the field. Our aim is to provide each student with the appropriate knowledge and skills to practice as competent funeral service professionals. We support and encourage collaboration between faculty, staff, students, alumni, advisory committee, and the funeral service community at large. The program encourages students to strive for a four-year degree by providing courses that transfer to four-year institutions and encourage academic research throughout the program. As with the college, the Funeral Service Education program is dedicated to providing an academically rich, inclusive environment that inspires critical thinking, learning and achievement, and responsive participation in the community. With this being said, the Funeral Service Education program created the Indigent Embalming program in conjunction with the Sacramento County Coroner's Office and Affordable/NorCal Cremation. This program has provided viewings and funeral services to the indigent of Sacramento County, something that was not possible previously. This program, while providing these services, provides the opportunity for the students to meet with families in real-world arrangement situations, complete embalming of the deceased, dress and cosmetize the deceased, and provide a viewing or funeral service for the indigent deceased, all at no cost to the deceased's families. Through the generosity of Affordable/Norcal Cremations, the student can work in an actual embalming room rather than at the Coroner's Office and then provide the followup services of viewing and funeral services. This has given the student's a higher level of hands-on training that was not previously provided through the program. Students are given the opportunity to work with indigent families and be part of a community service that was not available before. They learn to complete all of the tasks that would be associated with a career in funeral service, starting in the first weeks of the program and graduate the program far better prepared than in previous years where students were only completing internships in their last semester.

2 ASSESSMENT AND ANALYSIS

The program review process asks units to reflect on the progress they've made towards achieving the goals they identified in each of the Annual Unit Plans they submitted since their last Program Review. Follow [this link](#) to access your previous EMP submissions. For Faculty support, please contact Veronica Lopez at lopezv@arc.losrios.edu. For Administration support, please contact Jennifer Laflam at LaflamJ@arc.losrios.edu.

2.1 Consider the progress that has been made towards the unit's objectives over the last six years. Based on how the unit intended to measure progress towards achieving these objectives, did the unit's prior planned action steps (last six years of annual unit plans) result in the intended effect or the goal(s) being achieved?

The requests for the classroom audiovisual station, mandatory mock emergency station setting, and additional classroom seating that were requested have been met. We had requested a lab facility for the students to be able to practice embalming in conjunction with the lectures on the subject. We were able to provide this partially through our Indigent Embalming program in conjunction with the Sacramento County Coroner's Offices Indigent

Program and also with the help of the Affordable/NorCal Cremation. They have provided us with a small area within their mortuary so that we can provide embalming training to the students. This is only provided on limited days and times and cannot replace the need for an embalming lab that can be utilized at all times. We have requested to have an onsite mortuary for the students to work in daily. This request has been approved and is in the planning process, but is not yet finalized. The mortuary will provide an embalming lab, a restorative art lab, a chapel, a display room, an arrangement office, and a classroom. These new spaces will provide a dignified environment for students to meet with and make funeral arrangements with indigent families from the Sacramento community. The embalming and restorative art labs will provide ideal teaching facilities for the students to receive hands-on learning experiences in the science courses associated with mortuary science education. These have been teaching tools that were lacking but have been considered critical by the funeral service community as well as the advisory committee to the program. There are currently no other mortuary science schools offering such an extensive hands-on opportunity for students and will create increased demand for the graduates of the program. Students once again take the National Board examination in the final semester of the program, and we anticipate a rise in student test scores based on them completing the National Board Examinations sooner rather than later. Students are active in community service, the program has expanded the advisory board to include more than 30 members throughout Northern California. Students are active in state and national organizations. The program realizes the need for practitioners in all communities and strives to support people to serve in every community.

The standard data set is intended to provide data that may be useful in promoting equity and informing departmental dialogue, planning, decision making, and resource allocation.

Recent updates include (1) better integration with ARC's Data on Demand system to provide users with more sophisticated and nuanced ways of exploring their unit's data and (2) greater emphasis and access to disproportionate impact data (*how student achievement outcomes vary by gender, race/ethnicity, veteran, foster youth, disability, and income/poverty level status*) to enable users to engage in more advanced *student-centered* and *equity-centered* analysis, reflection, and planning.

To access the Enrollment or Disproportionate Impact data reports, you may be prompted to log in to ARC's Data on Demand system. If so, click on "Log in with ARC Portal" and enter your Los Rios single sign-on credentials (same as Canvas or Intranet).

(To streamline the standard data set, the productivity data element has been removed, as has the green-yellow-red light icon system for all data elements except for department set standards.)

Enrollment

Fall

Spring

The two data sets show 5 years of fall or spring duplicated enrollment, disaggregated by gender and ethnicity. Note that ARC's data-on-demand tool will soon provide considerably more sophisticated ways of viewing and analyzing your planning unit's headcount and enrollment trends.

Green

current fall/spring semester enrollment is equal to or exceeds the prior year's fall/spring enrollment.

Yellow

current fall/spring semester enrollment reflects a decline of less than 10% from the prior year's fall/spring enrollment.

Red

current fall/spring semester enrollment reflects a decline of 10% or more from the prior year's fall/spring enrollment.

Productivity

Fall

Spring

The two data sets show 5 years of fall or spring productivity (WSCH per FTEF: the enrollment activity for which we receive funding divided by the cost of instruction). Note that ARC's data-on-demand tool will soon provide considerably more sophisticated ways of viewing and analyzing your planning unit's productivity trends.

Green

current fall/spring semester productivity is equal to or exceeds the prior year's fall/spring productivity.

Yellow

current fall/spring semester productivity reflects a decline of less than 10% from the prior year's fall/spring productivity.

Red

current fall/spring semester productivity reflects a decline of 10% or more from the prior year's fall/spring productivity.

Precision Campus Report Links

Disproportionate Impact

[Success Rate DI](#) ●[A B Rate DI](#) ●[Drop Rate DI](#) ●

The disproportionate impact (DI) links now direct you to your unit's DI data in ARC Data on Demand. The DI data will show which student groups are experiencing disproportionate impact for course success rates (A, B, C, Cr, P), A-B rates, and course completion rates (students who did not withdraw) at the course level.

In addition, a new report on intersectional DI (e.g., ethnicity/race by gender) is available for assessing intersectional Di for course success rates. The intersection DI report defaults to the subject code level (e.g., all ENGWR courses). Use the org tree in the side bar to filter to individual courses (click on the right arrow next to American River College, right arrow next to your division, right arrow next to your department/discipline, then select the specific course to view).

If prompted to log in, click on "Log in with ARC Portal" and enter your Los Rios single-sign on credentials (same as Canvas or Intranet).

Department Set Standards

[Most Recent Academic Year](#) ●

Shows course success rates (# of A, B, C, Cr, and P grades expressed as a % of total grade notations) compared to lower and upper thresholds. Thresholds are derived using a 95% confidence interval (click the report link for details). The lower threshold is referred to as the Department Set Standard. The upper threshold is referred to as the Stretch Goal.

Green

Most recent academic year exceeds the upper threshold

Yellow

Most recent academic year falls between the lower and upper threshold

Red

Most recent academic year falls below the lower threshold

SLO Data Set

[Funeral Services AARR Summary](#)[Funeral Services AARR Results by SLO](#)

The faculty's continuous review of student achievement of course SLOs is documented using the **Authentic Assessment Review Record (AARR)**, which involves a review of student work demonstrating achievement of the course SLO. Faculty record student achievement for a randomly assigned course SLO based on one or more authentic assessments that they regularly perform in their classes. The aggregated results are then reviewed annually as part of Annual Unit Planning, in which the results may serve as the basis for actions and, if applicable, resource allocation, and are aligned with college goals and objectives.

The **AARR summary** link provides an aggregate of the results of the most recent AARR implementation. The **AARR results by SLO** link provides a more detailed view, including the specific ratings assigned by faculty to each randomly assigned course SLO, and what, if any, actions were taken.

Note: Established thresholds (i.e., green/yellow/red indicators) have yet to be developed for SLO data.

[Email Standard Data Set link](#) ✉

In addition to reflecting on the metrics shown above, it may prove useful to analyze other program-level data to assess the effectiveness of your unit. For instructional units, [ARC's Data on Demand system](#) can be used to provide program and course level information regarding equitable outcomes, such as program access or enrollment, successful course completion, and degree or certificate achievement (up to 30+ demographic or course filters are available).

You might also consider pursuing other lines of inquiry appropriate to your unit type ([instructional](#), [student support](#), [institutional/administrative support](#)). Refer to the Program Review Inquiry Guide under the resources tab for specific lines of inquiry.

2.2 What were the findings? Please identify program strengths, opportunities, challenges, equity gaps, influencing factors (e.g., program environment), data limitations, areas for further research, and/or other items of interest.

The strengths of the program include the use of hands-on learning opportunities that are often not provided in other mortuary science programs. We have two experienced full-time faculty and one adjunct faculty member with more than 50 years of combined experience in the industry and who still work within the local funeral service community. All faculty are active in community organizations that help us to better service the needs of the local mortuaries. Among the finding for the Funeral Service Education Program, we determined that we must include more outreach to students throughout Northern California. We currently have many local students, as well as students from the San Francisco Bay area within the program, but have limited students from the Central California Valley or the very far reaches of Northern California, Ukiah, to the Oregon border. This often means that we are missing the opportunity to have a more diverse classroom. We are concentrating many of the efforts of the Bakersfield to Stockton student population to provide a more inclusive program that services the needs of all Californians. We have begun the process of providing an online section of many of the mortuary science courses and will seek approval of our accrediting body (American Board of Funeral Service Education) before moving many of the courses to this format. We believe that providing this opportunity to students, we can better serve those students who have either have to move to Sacramento or are commuting for classes to your campus. Challenges for the program include not currently having our own lab facilities on site. We currently have limited space in our classroom and must use outside sources to provide any other lab experiences for the students. We would also like to be able to start the program every spring and fall instead of the current spring only start. WE would also like to provide online courses to ease the burden on the student who either commutes or move to Sacramento to participate in the program. This will require that we have consent from the American Board of Funeral Service Education as well as the addition of one to two more staff members to teach the new sections. The equity gap for our program is somewhat related to the limited area we service in California. AS we expand our outreach as well as add the online coursework, we will be able to reach out to more students who are unable to move or commute to the area for classes, thereby unable to fulfill their goals of joining the funeral industry as licensed professionals will training.

3 REFLECTION AND DIALOG

3.1 Discuss how the findings relate to the unit's effectiveness. What did your unit learn from the analysis and how might the relevant findings inform future action?

The program could be more effective through the offering of a distance education section of the program. We believe that we lose a certain number of students to online programs based on the locations that they live in within California. Students are not always able to commute or move to Sacramento to attend the program, and we feel that by offering an online section of the courses, we could capture an underrepresented group of students who do not have the means to attend the program in person. We also believe that based on the input from the advisory committee and the funeral community, it is essential to provide the students with the hands-on experience that mimic real-world situations within the mortuary. We believe that the addition of the onsite working mortuary will benefit the students as well as the Sacramento indigent community. Although students may take courses through an online format, they will be required to spend a certain number of hours every semester working in the mortuary to complete their lab hours while gaining experience in all facets of the funeral service industry. We recently brought all courses through the college curriculum committee and successfully added a 100% distance education component to the courses. We will need approval from the college as well as our accrediting body (American Board of Funeral Service Education) to implement this change, but feel confident that this will improve the offerings to all students throughout Northern California.

3.2 What is the unit's ideal future and why is it desirable to ARC? How will the unit's aspirations support accomplishment of the mission, improve institutional effectiveness, and/or increase academic quality?

The ideal future of the Funeral Service Education program would be to have a working mortuary that serves the indigent community of Sacramento. The working mortuary would not only help to serve the part of the community that is often neglected, but it would also serve to help the students understand community needs while gaining real-world, hands-on experience in running every facet of the funeral service business. This would increase academic quality not only through the hands-on experiences but also afford the students the chance to think critically about how to complete tasks that will be everyday challenges when they enter the work world after graduation. In general, over the six years, the enrollment number has increased relative to campus enrollment. One of the goals of the Funeral Service Education Program is to expand the enrollment rates of the nontraditional student. We have seen increased enrollment in the Asian American, Filipino, Latino/Hispanic, other Nonwhite, White and unknown, although these have not been consistent over the years. There was, however, a decrease in African American, Pacific Islander, and Native American student enrollment. There was an increase in all age groups, the most significant being the 21-24, 25-29, and the 50 plus age group. We have experienced growth across these age groups relative to campus-wide enrollment. To compensate for increased enrollment, expanded resources such as faculty and facilities may be needed. Currently, we accept applications once a year for a two-year program; we maintain two cohorts at any one time. If enrollment continues to grow, it may be necessary to add an additional application period, increasing our cohort number to four. This would require the addition of class sections, faculty, and facilities.

4.1 Identify/define one or more program-level objectives which enhance the unit's effectiveness. What does your unit intend to do to work towards its ideal future? How will success be measured?

Increasing student enrollment and improving student retention are two objectives the FSE program is focusing on. The multi-pronged approach in achieving this is built upon the already realized goal of increasing student professional knowledge of funeral service. The unit has done this primarily with the creation of the above-mentioned Indigent Program coordinated with the Sacramento County Coroner. We are better suited to attract more students by offering them practical application immediately at the onset of their enrollment in the FSE program. We do this by offering students hands-on technical/lab/prep room experience coupled with participating in a real-world funeral service setting they are better prepared for the more advanced courses within the program where we have seen a decline in retention and mastery (FSE320, FSE340, FSE 297). With the addition of onsite lab space, chapel and arrangement office students will be actively participating in the practical application of the elements of funeral service necessary to professionally and competently serve families. In the past students were left to experience firsthand, the stressful and demanding role of meeting with grieving families with no actual experience prior to graduation. By exposing students to these intricate parts of the profession early on, they are better equipped to succeed. There will be immediate feedback from the industry in the student's final semester when they undertake an internship in a funeral home. Having better-prepared students before they reach this class, we expect an increased success of completing their internship, as well as positive corroboration from the participating funeral homes. Success will be measured by increased enrollment, retention and job placement upon graduation.

4.2 How will the unit's intended enhancements support ARC's commitment to social justice and equity?

The core of funeral service is based on the equitable foundation of reverence for the dead. By committing to a social justice framework within the FSE program we can empower students to achieve educational, professional as well as personal goals. As our indigent program brings more engagement in the greater Sacramento area, we are able to increase our exposure to reach those disproportionately affected groups we see in our enrollment and retention. Showcasing the plethora of contributions the FSE program brings to the community will inspire and empower individuals to take up the sacred role of the funeral director. Once enrolled we provide an immediate avenue for students to engage in serving the same communities where they live and thrive. Moving more classes to an online format coupled with on-site lab experience will provide greater access to those students who commute or live in distant cities. With the addition of the new FSE classroom, we will be able to schedule all classes and labs around the schedule of the FSE faculty and students respectively. This will not only assist in more continuity between lecture and lab but also provide the FSE program with greater oversight to ensure our classes remain equitable to all students attending.