Funeral Service Education

Degree: A.S. - Funeral Service Education
Area: Health & Education
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Your Career in Funeral Service

Funeral personnel are caring professionals who show others, by example, how to respect the deceased and maintain proper dignity, compassion, and efficiency in serving people of all ages and backgrounds. There are many opportunities for professionals in every aspect of funeral service. In fact, according to the U.S. Department of Labor, career prospects in the field are excellent. Practitioners become an important part of the community, as they facilitate the social, legal, psychological, religious, and public health issues associated with death. These include removal of the deceased to a mortuary, preparation of the remains (embalming), performance of a ceremony that honors the deceased and addresses the spiritual needs of the family, and the burial or disposition of the remains. Funeral directors and embalmers must be licensed to work in their profession; most funeral directors are trained, licensed, and practicing embalmers.

Funeral Service Education Program

Aims and Purposes

The Funeral Service Education program at American River College is a two-year Associate of Science degree program. The objectives of the program are to prepare students for entry-level positions in the funeral service industry by maintaining and exceeding standards set forth by the American Board of Funeral Service Education (38 Florida Avenue, Portland, ME 04103, [207] 878-6530), and to provide a strong theory based curriculum and related clinical experience. Courses are designed to meet the prerequisites for licensure and employment in the funeral service industry as funeral directors or embalmers through courses that include but not limited to: anatomy and physiology, microbiology, chemistry, funeral service management, embalming, restorative art, funeral directing, counseling, accounting and funeral service law and ethics.

In order for a student to graduate from the Funeral Service Education program, the student must maintain a grade of “C” or better in all courses including general education courses. Failure to maintain a grade of “C” or better will result in the student repeating the course(s). Students will only be readmitted to the Funeral Service Education program once. In order to be eligible for graduation, all students are required to take the National Board Examination. Upon successful completion of the program and meeting the requirements of the State of California’s Cemetery and Funeral Bureau, the student is eligible to take the California Board Examination to become a licensed embalmer.

Note: A person convicted of any offense other than a minor traffic violation will be required to declare this on the application to take the licensing exam. If there are any questions regarding this matter, please contact the Department of Consumer Affairs at (800) 952-5210. In addition, as a student in the clinical component of the funeral service program, you will be required to undergo a background check that may affect your ability to complete the program.

Requirements for Pre-Enrollment to the Program

1. Graduation from an accredited high school in the United States, or successful completion of GED or CHSPE
2. A grade of “C” or better in the following courses: BIOL 102 and FSE 100
3. A minimum cumulative college GPA of 2.0
4. A completed pre-enrollment application
5. Current curriculum planning summary sheet (within the semester in which the pre-enrollment packet is being submitted)

Pre-enrollment Deadlines

Pre-enrollment applications to the program may be obtained from the Health and Education Division Office in Rm. 701, the Coordinator of the Funeral Service Education program, or at www.arc-losrios.edu/fse. Applications for Spring admission will be available mid September and must be submitted to the division office no later than the second Friday in December by 4:00 p.m. Application for the Fall semester will be available mid April and must be received no later that the second Friday in July by 4:00 p.m.
Selection Process
1. Only students who meet the pre-enrollment requirements and follow the pre-enrollment procedures will be considered for the program.
2. Selection is based on a random selection process should the number of applicants exceed available space in the program.
3. Students admitted to the Funeral Service Education program are required to have a physical examination, required inoculations, drug screen, and background check by the completion of the first semester of the program. Students are responsible for any costs incurred related to meeting the health requirements.

Requirements for Degree Major 57.5 units

Courses Required Units
ACCT 101 3
BIOL 102 4
BIOL 130 3
BUS 310 or ENGWR 103 or ENGWR 300 or ESLW 340 3
CHEM 130 4
CISC 300 1
FSE 100 2
FSE 110 2
FSE 111 2
FSE 120 3
FSE 121 2
FSE 130 3.5
FSE 140 2
FSE 150 3
FSE 155 3
FSE 160 3
FSE 170 3
FSE 297 5
FSYC 390 3
SPEECH 301 or 331 3

General Education Graduation Requirements: In addition to completing the degree requirements, students must also complete the general education graduation requirements for an A.A./A.S. degree. See ARC graduation requirements.

FSE 100 Introduction to Funeral Service Education 2 Units
Prerequisite: None
Advisory: BUS 310 or ENGWR 103; or placement through the assessment process.
Hours: 36 hours LEC
This course is a survey of the history of the funeral service industry. A comprehensive overview of the field of funeral service is covered. Emphasis is on the role and skills of the funeral service practitioner. The course provides insight into the funeral service industry and the career opportunities available.

FSE 110 Funeral Directing I 2 Units
Prerequisite: None
Advisory: BUS 310 or ENGWR 103; or placement through the assessment process.
Enrollment Limitation: Acceptance into the Funeral Service Education program.
Hours: 36 hours LEC
This course is designed to introduce the general practices of funeral directing. It introduces the sociological phenomena that affect all the elements of funeral service including cultural differences, family structures, and factors of change that relate to funeralization. It also includes notification of death, transfer and disposition of bodies, arrangement conferences, pre-planned funerals and post-arrangement follow-up.

FSE 111 Funeral Directing II 2 Units
Formerly: FSE 62
Prerequisite: FSE 110 with a grade of “C” or better.
Hours: 36 hours LEC
This course introduces the basic philosophies of a cross-section of religious and ethnic funeral practices and the role of the funeral practitioner in directing each type. Also included are procedures for fraternal, military, and celebrity funerals.

FSE 120 Embalming I 3 Units
Prerequisite: Acceptance into the Funeral Service Education Program.
Corequisite: FSE 130.
Hours: 54 hours LEC
This course is an introduction to the phenomenon of death in the human body. It includes the processes of preservation, restoration and sanitation in treating the dead human body.

FSE 121 Embalming II 2 Units
Formerly: FSE 61
Prerequisite: FSE 120 and 130 with a grade of “C” or better.
Hours: 36 hours LEC
This course is a continuation of Embalming I. It is the study of vascular anatomy, case analysis, the selection and injection of embalming fluids, and treatment of specific conditions requiring special attention.

FSE 130 Restorative Art 3.5 Units
Prerequisite: FSE 140 with a grade of “C” or better.
Corequisite: FSE 120.
Hours: 54 hours LEC, 27 hours LAB
This course introduces the techniques of creating an acceptable physical appearance of the deceased for the benefit of the survivors. Included are the study of facial features, cosmetics, and restorative treatment for a variety of situations faced by the practitioner.

FSE 140 Pathology 2 Units
Prerequisite: CHEM 130 with a grade of “C” or better.
Corequisite: BIOL 130.
Enrollment Limitation: Acceptance into the Funeral Service Education program.
Hours: 36 hours LEC
This course offers a study of pathological disease conditions and how they affect various parts of the body. Particular conditions that relate to or affect the embalming or restorative art process are emphasized.

FSE 150 Funeral Service Management 3 Units
Formerly: FSE 72
Prerequisite: FSE 111 with a grade of “C” or better.
Corequisite: FSE 130.
Hours: 36 hours LEC
This course introduces the basic principles of management as they apply to the practice of the funeral profession. The role and function of an effective manager are explored. Emphasis is placed on the management functions of planning, organizing, motivating, directing, and controlling. Specific areas of funeral service practice and managerial guidelines for those areas are covered. Additionally, theory as it relates to funeral service practice is addressed.

FSE 155 Merchandising in the Funeral Service Industry 3 Units
Formerly: FSE 63
Prerequisite: FSE 110 with a grade of “C” or better.
Corequisite: FSE 111.
Hours: 54 hours LEC
This course introduces the student to merchandising as it applies to the funeral profession. The curriculum is divided into two main sections. The first covers construction and features of caskets, outer burial containers, and other funeral related products. The second section examines methods of pricing, display, presentation, and control of funeral merchandise.
FSE 160  Funeral Service Law and Ethics  3 Units
Prerequisite: None
Corequisite: FSE 110.
Advisory: BUS 310 or ENGWR 103; or placement through the assessment process.
Enrollment Limitation: Acceptance into the Funeral Service Education program.
Hours: 54 hours LEC
Enrollment Limitation: Acceptance into the Funeral Service Education program.*This course introduces law and the judicial system as they pertain to the funeral industry. Further, this course covers personal and professional ethics that guide decisions and actions in the proper treatment of the dead.

FSE 170  Funeral Services Counseling  3 Units
Formerly: FSE 71
Prerequisite: FSE 111 with a grade of "C" or better.
Corequisite: PSYC 390.
Hours: 54 hours LEC
This course examines communication skills and the role of the funeral director as facilitator, counselor, and caregiver. Included are specific communications and counseling techniques as they are applied in funeral service practice.

FSE 297  Internship in Funeral Service Education  5 Units
Prerequisite: None
Corequisite: FSE 121, FSE 170, and PSYC 390.
Hours: 18 hours LEC; 216 hours LAB
This course provides an opportunity to apply classroom instruction in funeral service education to real-world practice in the community. Interns participate in a on-site lab experience program at an approved off-campus preceptor site.