

Funeral Services Education PIV Task Force Report

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1. Executive Summary

Cañada College's Funeral Service Education (FSE) program is at a critical juncture, facing significant challenges that necessitate decisive action. The Program Improvement and Viability (PIV) Task Force has evaluated the program's three programs of study (the A.S. degree and two Certificates of Specialization).

1.1 Recommendations

The Task Force unanimously recommends discontinuance of the A.S. Funeral Services Education (FSE) degree. Members of the Task Force had differing viewpoints over whether to continue offering the two Certificates of Specialization. Three of seven members supported continuing the Certificates in order to help people in the industry upskill and to better gauge long-term student interest in Funeral Services without being subject to the onerous ABFSE-accreditation requirements. For the same reasons, two of seven members supported exploring the creation of an A.A. Funeral Services degree. By contrast, four of seven Task Force members opposed continuing the Certificates of Specialization because of the cost of continuing to run the program, the entry-level jobs in the Funeral Services industry don't require certification and don't provide a living wage for the Bay Area, the potential confusion for students if the College continues to offer the Certificates of Specialization but not the A.S. degree, and the challenge of developing a program that lacks a full-time faculty member.

1.2 Key Issues

1. **Loss of Accreditation:** The FSE program lost its candidacy for accreditation by the American Board of Funeral Service Education (ABFSE), jeopardizing the College's opportunity to offer an ABFSE-accredited A.S. degree for embalmers. The College must now either comply with accreditation standards and reapply for candidacy or discontinue its A.S. degree.
2. **Enrollment and Completion:** The program has not had a long-enough record of enrollments to show a sustained interest for annual cohorts of students for the A.S. degree. No students have yet completed the A.S. degree or either of the certificates.
3. **Financial Constraints:** The program relies heavily on temporary Strong Workforce Program (SWP) funding. Overall SWP funding is being reduced by the State by approximately 30%. The College's general fund currently pays for one adjunct instructor and the College has made no commitment for hiring full-time faculty.

4. **Low Labor Market Demand:** Embalmers are the only funeral service occupation requiring an A.S. degree from an ABFSE-accredited program. Funeral service occupations that require a license issued by the California Cemetery and Funeral Bureau, other than Embalmer, only require sixty units of college education or a high school diploma. Demand for embalmers is low and on a declining trend. Demand for other occupations, such as Funeral directors, is low but an educational gap may exist between the annual number of mortuary science graduates from the CCC programs and the annual number of hires.
5. **Community Impact:** Stakeholders, including local funeral home owners, managers, former students, and faculty from sister funeral service programs emphasize the importance of accessible, high-quality funeral service education and the need for more degree-holding and licensed graduates. However, they also raised concerns about the adequacy of the current certificate program in preparing students for real-world responsibilities.
6. **SWOT Analysis:** In the appendix below, there is a SWOT analysis of the program, which details its strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats.

2. Funeral Services Education PIV Task Force

The Task Force operated according to Cañada College's [Program Improvement and Viability Process](#) as approved by Academic Senate.

2.1 Task Force Membership

Task Force membership was approved by [Academic Senate](#). Members included:

- Task Force Chair: Doug Hirzel, *Professor of Biology*
- Counselor: Sandra Mendez, *Counselor*
- Tenured Faculty Member: David Eck, *Professor of Philosophy*
- Tenured Faculty Member: Candice Nance, *Professor of Business and CTE Liaison*
- Gina Hooper, *Program Supervisor, Funeral Service Education*
- Division Dean: Ameer Thompson, *Dean of Science and Technology*
- Dean of PRIE: Karen Engel, *Dean of Planning, Research, Innovation, and Effectiveness*

2.2 Task Force Meetings

The PIV Task Force met collegially multiple times throughout the 2024 – 2025 academic year to ensure that the PIV process was data-informed, inclusive, and comprehensive.

The Task Force created the public [Funeral Services Program Improvement and Viability Committee website](#) and [Public Comment and Feedback Google Form](#) in order to keep all constituencies informed of their work and for receiving feedback and public comment. Many of the Task Force meetings focused on teaching members about the funeral services industry, both locally and nationally, and analyzing qualitative and quantitative data.

Task Force meeting details can be found on the [Funeral Services Program Improvement and Viability Committee webpage](#).

2.3 Participatory Governance

Per [Cañada's PIV process](#), the PIV Task Force's report will be presented to the Instructional Planning Council, Academic Senate and Planning and Budgeting Council. This report is intended to assist these Participatory Governance Bodies with considering the best path forward for the Funeral Services Education program.

When making decisions about the future of our programs, we considered our [College's mission, vision, and values](#).

3. Funeral Service Education (FSE) Programs of Study

An educational program is defined in Title 5, § 55000(m) as “an organized sequence of courses leading to a defined objective, a degree, a certificate, a diploma, a license, or transfer to another institution of higher education.”

3.1 Curriculum

3.1.1 Programs of Study

Cañada College’s [Funeral Service Education \(FSE\) program](#) consists of three (3) academic programs:

1. [Associates of Science Degree in Funeral Service Education](#) (60 units)
2. [Certificate of Specialization in Funeral Service Attendant](#) (8 units, not transcript reported)
3. [Certificate of Specialization in Funeral Service Arranger](#) (9 units, not transcript reported)

3.1.2 Courses

Cañada College’s Funeral Service Education (FSE) program consists of thirteen (13) for-credit courses:

- | | |
|--|-----------|
| 1. FSE 200 – Introduction to Funeral Services | (2 units) |
| 2. FSE 210 – Funeral Directing I | (3 units) |
| 3. FSE 212 – Funeral Service Science | (5 units) |
| 4. FSE 215 – Funeral Directing II | (3 units) |
| 5. FSE 220 – Funeral Service Law and Ethics | (3 units) |
| 6. FSE 225 – Psychology of Death and Dying | (3 units) |
| 7. FSE 230 – Merchandising in the Funeral Service Industry | (3 units) |
| 8. FSE 235 – Funeral Service Management | (3 units) |
| 9. FSE 250 – Restorative Art | (5 units) |
| 10. FSE 260 – Embalming I | (4 units) |
| 11. FSE 265 – Embalming II | (2 units) |
| 12. FSE 270 – Funeral Services Counseling | (3 units) |
| 13. FSE 280 – Funeral Service Education Practicum | (5 units) |

3.2 Historical Context

The Funeral Service Education (FSE) program at Cañada College was conceptualized in 2018, driven by Career Education (CE) funding from the Strong Workforce Program (SWP). The program's development involved collaboration among key stakeholders, including the College's Director of Workforce Development, the Vice President of Instruction, local biology faculty, and consulting adjunct faculty from Cypress College's Mortuary Sciences program.

For additional information about the FSE program, please refer to the [historical context section](#) of the FSE PIV website.

3.3 Educational Context

In California, there are two California Community College funeral service education programs:

1. [American River College](#) in Sacramento
 - a. Associate of Science in Funeral Service Education
2. [Cypress College](#) in Orange County
 - a. Associate of Science in Mortuary Science
 - b. Bachelor of Science in Funeral Service

Both programs are fully accredited by the American Board of Funeral Service Education (ABFSE). Neither program offers Certificates of Achievement nor Certificates of Specialization. Neither program currently offers an option for online asynchronous course offerings.

3.4 Program Accreditation

Substantive Changes to Accreditation Requirements & Denied Candidacy

The [American Board of Funeral Service Education \(ABFSE\)](#) is the national academic accrediting agency. ABFSE accreditation is required for programs that prepare students to become licensed embalmers.

To fulfill its purpose of preparing students to become licensed embalmers and funeral directors with proficiency in embalming, Cañada College's FSE AS degree requires accreditation from the ABFSE. Cañada College FSE program submitted an [ABFSE candidacy application](#) on July 31, 2023.

In a [letter dated on April 25, 2025](#), ABFSE's Committee on Accreditation (COA) denied Cañada College's application for candidacy.

The following references from the ABFSE Accreditation and Policy Manual were cited as issues to address:

Chapter IV.C.3 No enrollment projections provided.

Chapter IV.C.9.a Show evidence that ABFSE Program Learning Outcomes are being addressed.

Chapter IV.C.9.d Must demonstrate that at least one program is in place; we can do this, or we can do that is not sufficient.

Chapter IV.C.9.f Provide course syllabi for all courses offered in the program. This should also address any lab components. Off-campus clinicals require affiliation agreements, site inspections and preceptor training. A list of student/clinical assignments would be useful.

If indeed the program has no geographic boundaries, the clinical status for out-of-state students should be addressed. Will information be provided regarding housing options for students who live out of commuting range?

Chapter IV.C.9.g Evidence must be provided that facilities will meet ABFSE standards before accreditation is awarded.

Chapter IV.C.10. Plans for additional faculty and facilities to accompany program growth. There is no evidence that this item has been addressed.

Related to Chapter IV.C.10, ABFSE will require all accredited programs to have two (2) full-time faculty members by 2027 per the new [ABFSE Accreditation Standard 6.8](#). The implementation of Standard 6.8 requires a thorough re-evaluation of the financial feasibility of an FSE program at Cañada College.

- Original standards, upon which Cañada's program was developed, did not include a requirement for a full-time faculty member. Given the program's reliance on SWP funding (which is not available to fund full-time faculty), the College had anticipated staffing the program with one full-time (FT) program director along with additional adjunct faculty.

Without this accreditation, students are not eligible to take the National Board Examination (NBE) licensing exam for embalmers. It is important to note that ABFSE accreditation is *not* required to prepare students for other careers in funeral services, such as Funeral Director.

4. PIV Analysis of the ABFSE-Accredited FSE A.S. Degree

The Program Improvement and Viability process must investigate whether a program is viable and how it might be improved in order to increase its viability. For the Funeral Services Education program, the primary factor affecting its viability is the newly adopted ABFSE Accreditation Standard 6.8 that, by January 2027, all accredited programs must have at least two full time faculty members, one of whom may serve as the program director. ABFSE's requirements for faculty and program directors differ substantially from the CCC minimum qualifications for mortuary science faculty. Most saliently, (a) ABFSE does not expect or require that a faculty member within the program be qualified to teach all courses within the program, and (b) ABFSE has course-specific requirements. Given these facts, the Task Force set out to determine whether and how the college can, in theory, meet this accreditation requirement.

4.1 Analysis of Staffing Options for an ABFSE-Accredited A.S. Degree Program

The Task Force verified that if the college were to implement the full schedule of course offerings over a 2-year cycle and accepted one new cohort of students annually, the program would require a minimum staffing level of 3.58 FTEF per year for instruction in addition to 0.4-1.0 FTEF of reassigned time for the administrative and coordination duties of the program director-faculty. Combined, this workload meets contractual obligations for two full time faculty.

The Task Force considered three options for staffing the program in order to reapply for accreditation candidacy:

Option 1: Mortuary Science Faculty

Hire two full-time tenure-track faculty who meet CCC minimum qualifications in mortuary sciences discipline and who also meet the ABFSE requirements: a master's degree, a graduate from an ABFSE-accredited program, and licensed as a funeral services professional. FSE program faculty would need to submit and justify this request through the college's annual New Position Proposal process. This option would cost the college:

- Two full-time faculty salary and benefits for 10 months: \$364,000
- Additional ~\$48,000 if they work over the summer
- A total of approximately \$400,000 per year

Option 2: Mixed Status Mortuary Science Faculty

Hire two full-time faculty who meet CCC minimum qualifications and ABFSE requirements but with one of those positions being a non-tenure track faculty position on a temporary contract funded by SWP. This option, however, conflicts with District Academic Senate [2019 Resolution: Full-Time Non-Tenure Track Faculty Positions](#) that calls for limiting the use of this type of position. This option would reduce the cost to Fund 1 to approximately \$200,000 per year and require an equal amount of funding by SWP.

Option 3: Mixed Discipline Faculty

Hire one full-time faculty who meets CCC minimum qualifications for mortuary science and ABFSE requirements. Assign an existing full time District faculty member in a social science or biological science discipline to teach selected courses within the funeral services program. For example, there are 6 units of course work in the FSE program that could reasonably be reassigned or cross-listed to the social sciences discipline, or 5 units of course work that fit within the biological sciences discipline. A full-time faculty member with a FSA in either of these disciplines would be considered by ABFSE to be full time faculty in the program. This option would cost the college approximately \$200,000 for the new hire and increase in spending on adjunct faculty to replace part of the load for the existing social science or science faculty.

The Task Force evaluated these options in light of the following quantitative and qualitative data analyses in order to determine whether the data justify the required investment of resources. The conclusions and recommendations of the Task Force can be found following the analysis of data.

5. Quantitative Factors with Analysis by PIV Task Force

5.1 Frequency of Course Offerings

The College has offered and successfully enrolled 6 of the 13 FSE courses that are required for the A.S. degree. Half of these 6 courses have only been offered once. The other half has been offered 2-4 times. The following 7 courses have not been offered as of Spring 2025: FSE 212, FSE 215, FSE 235, FSE 250, FSE 260, FSE 265, and FSE 280, preventing students from being able to complete the A.S. degree.

Of courses that have been offered, they have only been offered in an online asynchronous modality.

The PIV Task Force considered data from the [FSE program review course enrollment](#) report as well as [course enrollment data from spring 2025](#). The FSE courses that have been offered are listed in the table below.

Sections Run by Course	FA22	FA23	SP24	FA24	SP25	Total Number of Sections Offered
FSE.-200	1	1	1		1	4
FSE.-210			1	1		2
FSE.-220					1	1
FSE.-225			1	1		2
FSE.-230					1	1
FSE.-270					1	1
Total # of Sections	1	1	3	1	4	11

5.2 Enrollment Trends

On average, FSE course enrollments have been lower than the college average (25 per section), and only slightly lower than the average Career Technology Education (CTE) course (20 per section).

Enrollment by Course	FA22	FA23	SP24	FA24	SP25	Average FSE enrollment per section in 2022-2025	Average CTE enrollment per section in 2022-2025	Average college enrollment per section in 2022-2025
FSE. -200	2	23	24		26	18.75	20	25.3
FSE. -210			25	13		19	20	25.3

FSE. -220					19	19	20	25.3
FSE. -225			25	13		19	20	25.3
FSE. -230					18	18	20	25.3
FSE. -270					14	14	20	25.3

Spring 2025

According to the Cañada Daily Enrollment Report as of census (2/3/25), FSE course enrollment consisted of the following:

FUNERAL SERVICE EDUCATION

Course	CRN	PTC	Modality	FTEF	Load	Max Enroll	Actual Enroll	Seats Remain	Census Enrolled	Attrition (Census - Actual)	% Fill	% Completion	Waitlist Max	Waitlist Actual
FSE.-200-OLH	48210	Full Term	ONLINE	0.13	360	30	26	4	26	0	87%	100%	10	0
FSE.-220-OLH	48602	Full Term	ONLINE	0.20	285	30	19	11	19	0	63%	100%	10	0
FSE.-230-OLH	48603	Full Term	ONLINE	0.20	270	30	18	12	18	0	60%	100%	10	0
FSE.-270-OLH	48604	Full Term	ONLINE	0.20	210	30	14	16	14	0	47%	100%	10	0
4 SECTIONS				0.73	280	120	77	43	77	0				0

As of February 26, 2025, of the 47 students currently enrolled in FSE courses, 55 percent have the FSE A.S. degree as their primary program of study. None of these students are currently seeking either of the FSE certificates as their primary or secondary program of study.

Fall 2024

According to the post-census Cañada Daily Enrollment Report (9/9/24), FSE course enrollment consisted of the following:

FUNERAL SERVICE EDUCATION

Course	CRN	PTC	Modality	FTEF	Load	Max Enroll	Actual Enroll	Seats Remain	Census Enrolled	Attrition (Census - Actual)	% Fill	% Completion	Waitlist Max	Waitlist Actual
FSE.-200-OLH	97540	Full Term	ONLINE	0.00	—	40	0	40	0	0	0%		5	0
FSE.-210-OLH	98380	Full Term	ONLINE	0.00	—	30	0	30	0	0	0%		5	0
FSE.-210-OLH	98458	3rd Week	ONLINE	0.25	227	30	13	17	13	0	43%	100%	5	0
FSE.-225-OLH	98390	Full Term	ONLINE	0.20	195	30	13	17	13	0	43%	100%	5	0
4 SECTIONS				0.45	212	130	26	104	26	0				0

Two sections were cancelled (redline) but FSE 210 was added back to the course schedule as a late start class.

5.3 Student Success Data

Metric 2023-24 (AY)	FSE Students	College Overall
Fall to Spring Persistence	69%	64%

Course Success Rates	81%	73%
Course Retention Rates	95%	87%

Persistence Rate

The FSE program persistence rate of 69% Fall 2023 to Spring 2024 is comparable to the college overall rate of 64% for the same period and, more saliently, comparable to the 67% persistence of other Cañada Home Campus students.

Course Success Rate

The program's average course success rate of 81% in 2023-24 compares favorably to the overall college course success rate of 73.1% in the same period.

Course Retention Rates

The program's average course retention rate of 95% in 2023-24 compares favorably to the overall college retention rate of 87%.

Program Completion

To date, no students have received any of the three academic programs (A.S. degree or certificates) offered by the FSE department.

5.4 Projected Future Student Demand

According to [Hanover Research](#), future student demand is expected to be low and appears to be satisfied by the programs at American River College and Cypress College.

The PIV Task Force also considered data related [to where Cañada's FSE students reside](#). More than one fifth of Cañada FSE students live in southern California or in the Sacramento region, indicating that the college may lose enrollments to Cypress College or American River College if they begin to offer courses online as we do. If we attempt to continue with a program that is only online or almost-only online, it is uncertain how vulnerable Cañada's program would be to one of the existing California funeral services programs, if competing programs start adding or scaling their online offerings based on our enrollments.

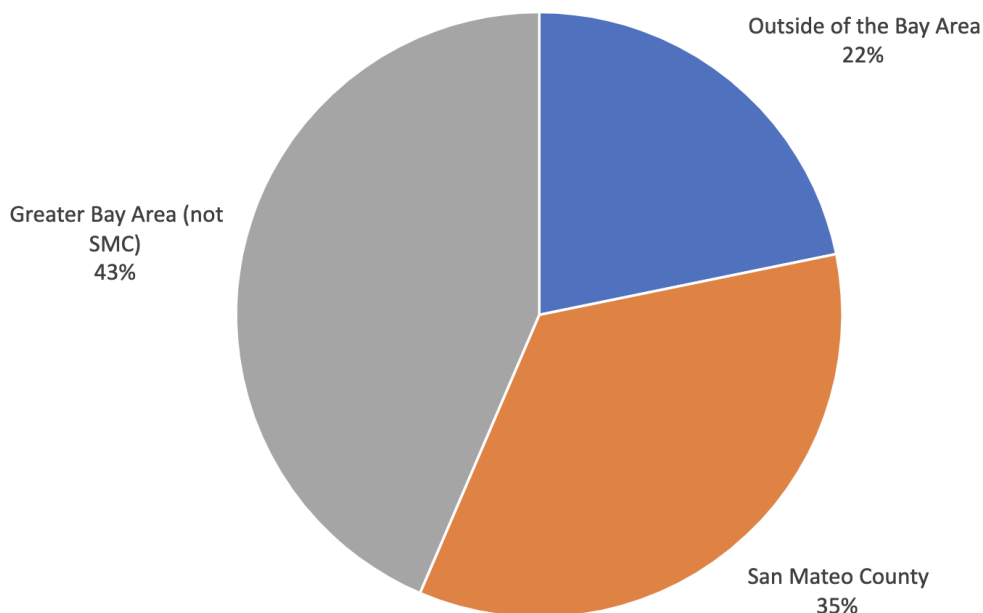
Additionally, it is uncertain how well our program would compete with existing out-of-state distance education [ABSFE-accredited funeral services programs](#). It is uncertain how much our lower cost would outweigh the lack of accreditation, at least until we were able to achieve accreditation. As shared in the January 30, 2025, Program Improvement and Viability Task Force meeting, there is already a significant proportion of individuals working in California funeral service businesses who completed an out-of-state program.

Furthermore, the sustainability of an ABFSE-accredited program at Cañada depends upon continuous renewal of an annual cohort of new students. We have no data to support long-term future student demand for this program and have very limited current enrollment data.

If the Funeral Services Education discipline continues without the A.S. Degree by offering certificates, then there might be a need to revise the curriculum. In particular, the Funeral Service Arranger Certificate of Specialization would need to be revised or eliminated. The Funeral Service Arranger Certificate of Specialization has nine units. However, this does not include three hidden prerequisites, including FSE 200 (3 units), FSE 210 (3 units), and FSE 225 (3 units). If the hidden prerequisites were added to the program for transparency and financial aid purposes, the certificate would be 17 units, not including the recommended prep of BUS 201 (3 units). Per Title 5, § 55070, any certificate programs of 16 or more semester units must be a Certificate of Achievement included on a student transcript.

Relevant to considering projected future student demand is the geographic locations of students who have enrolled in Cañada FSE courses. Student residency data supplied by the College Office of Planning, Research, and Institutional Effectiveness (PRIE) indicates that approximately one-third (35%) of Cañada College FSE students reside within San Mateo County. Nearly half (43%) of FSE students were from the greater Bay Area (not within San Mateo County) while approximately one-fifth (22%) of FSE students lived outside of the Bay Area.

Region where students who ever took an FSE course at CAN live



5.5 Projected Market/Industry Demand for Skill or Major

5.5.1 Data Sources

The PIV Task Force reviewed the following Labor Market Information (LMI) data:

1. [Lightcast Labor Market Reports](#)
 - a. 2018-2019 FSE Occupational Reports
 - b. 2018-2019 Job Posting Analytics Reports
 - c. 2023-2024 FSE Occupational Reports
 - d. 2023-2024 Job Posting Analytics Reports
2. [Hanover Research FSE program analysis](#) (February 2025)

Data Summary: Lightcast Labor Market Reports

The PIV Task Force considered occupational forecast data for the 10-county Bay Area from the [Bay Area Community College Consortium's Center of Excellence](#) (which relies on Lightcast data) as well as a [labor market analysis from the PRIE Office](#) which also used Lightcast job posting as well as occupational data.

Below are summaries of some of the most relevant labor market data for funeral services-related occupations. Occupations are presented below in order of increasing educational

requirements and earnings. The raw labor market data reports can be found in our [Data SharePoint folder](#).

Estimates for living wage data are for San Francisco County. Living wage data for other counties, including San Mateo, can be found [here](#). Detailed job information for multiple occupations can be found in the Appendix.

5.5.2 Educational Requirements and Earning Potential

[Appendix A: Labor Market Data](#) provides graphs related to this section.

Funeral Attendants and Arrangers are entry-level occupations that can be obtained with only a high school diploma and on-the-job training. These occupations earn around \$46,000–\$55,000 annually which is below a living wage in the Bay Area but an improvement over minimum wage work. Employment in these occupations does not require certification, so stand-alone certificates are unwarranted. This conclusion is supported by the fact that none of the current FSE students identify a certificate as their primary or secondary educational goal.

The Embalmer and Funeral Director occupations exemplify the strong link between educational attainment and earning potential. The Embalmer occupation in California requires discipline-specific coursework leading to a funeral services A.S. degree from an ABFSE-accredited program. Embalmers earn a median salary of \$78,000 which is above a living wage in the Bay Area. Funeral Directors/Managers earn a median salary of \$86,000. This occupation requires any associate's degree but discipline-specific knowledge, skills and abilities are required for state licensure. This discipline-specific training can be obtained either through an ABFSE-accredited program or through a non-ABFSE-accredited funeral services program.

In conclusion, the College's A.S. degree in Funeral Services Education is only required for Embalmers. The program's courses that are part of the Funeral Attendant and Funeral Arranger certificates can benefit those seeking these entry-level positions, in lieu of on-the-job training, but completion or certification is not a requirement for employment. These certificate-related courses, along with some of the existing higher-level courses could be redesigned and repackaged into an A.A. degree in Funeral Services Management. This specific degree, though not required for licensure as a Funeral Director, would better prepare prospective Directors and Managers than would a non-discipline specific associates degree.

5.5.3 Job Outlook

The long-term trends in total number of jobs available for funeral service workers show varying patterns across different roles:

- **Funeral attendant** positions have remained relatively stable over the past 23 years with around 300 jobs in the Bay Area.
- **Funeral arranger** jobs have seen significant growth over the past 23 years, increasing by over 200% to nearly 500 positions in the Bay Area. This trend mirrors national patterns, with projections indicating continued but more moderate growth.
- The **Embalmer** occupation has experienced a significant decline both nationally and in the Bay Area over the past 23 years. There has been a 31% decline in the number of Embalmer positions in the 10-county Bay Area between 2019 and 2024. [Trends in the Funeral Services industry](#) indicate a reduced need for Embalmers due to an increase in cremations, a growing interest in green burials and human composting, funerals becoming more celebratory services that do not require embalming, among other factors. [Hanover Research](#) forecasts a 1.1% decline in the number of Embalmers in California over the next 10 years.
- **Funeral director** positions in the Bay Area have increased from about 25 to over 80 between 2000 and 2021 years. However, while there's been overall growth, recent local trends since 2023 show a decline in the number of Funeral Directors in the Bay Area, contrasting with national trends.

5.5.4 Job Availability

Job postings and monthly hiring are indicators of job availability due either to the creation of new positions or turnover/retirements within existing positions. According to the LMI reports (and contrary to how SMCCCD posts positions) it appears that multiple hires can result from each posting. LMI reports the number of hires that occur in an average month (from 2010-2023). From this we can estimate the average number of annual hires and compare this to the number of total jobs (both new and replacement). These are summarized in the tables below.

FSE Occupations	Total Jobs in the Bay Area in 2023-24	Unique Job Postings in the Bay Area in 2023-24 (1 year)	Hires in 2023-24 (per year)	Annual Turnover Rate (Hires/Job Opening) in 2023-24
Funeral Attendants	327	51	204	63%
Morticians, Undertakers, and Funeral Arrangers	481	66	198	41%
Embalmer	70	13	36	51%
Funeral Home Managers	83	43	43	52%

Relative to the high hiring rates for other medically related occupations, such as Radiologic Technologists and Medical Assistants, the job outlook for Funeral Directors and Embalmers is extremely low. With 70 embalmers in the Bay Area, an average year sees 36 new hires

indicating a turnover rate of 51%. In an average year there are an equal number of new Funeral Director hires resulting in 83 Funeral Directors in the Bay Area. This suggests a 43% turnover rate. These high turnover rates may explain why our industry partners are asking for a greater number of licensed professionals than the labor market data indicate. This industry partner testimony is included in the qualitative feedback.

The Task Force considered the relative ratio between the number of students it might expect to graduate with an AS degree in Funeral Services compared to the number of job opportunities in the Bay Area for them each year. It also considered that ratio in comparison to the other medically related CTE programs the college offers:

Occupation	Associate Degree Completers from Cañada in 2023-24	Bay Area Job Openings 2023-24	Ratio of Completers to Job Opportunities
Embalmer	20 (projected)	13	1.5 completers per job
Funeral Director/Manager	20 (projected)	43	1 completer per 2 jobs
All FSE occupations	20 (projected)	173	1 completer per 9 jobs
Medical Assistant	11	5,375	1 completer per 489 jobs
Radiologic Technologist	12	2,200	1 completer per 183 jobs

5.6 Analysis and Conclusions

The student enrollment data is limited because of the program's brief history. The enrollment data is not adequate to show evidence for long-term student demand.

FSE occupations with the most labor market demand (Funeral Arranger and Funeral Attendant) do not pay a living wage and do not require more than a high school degree. The Funeral Director license requires sixty units of college education and to pass the State licensing exam. While it pays a moderately living wage, the number of licensed Directors and Managers has declined in the past 5 years in the Bay Area.

Future student demand is also uncertain because the A.S. degree is only required to become an Embalmer. PRIE's labor market analysis found a 31% decline in Embalmer positions in the 10-county Bay Area in between 2019 and 2024. It is also consistent with the labor market forecast prepared by [Hanover Research](#), which forecasts a 1.1% decline in the number of Embalmers in California over the next 10 years. Possible reasons for the decline in Embalmer positions include: an increase in cremations, a growing interest in green burials and human composting, funerals becoming more celebratory services that do not require embalming.

A counterargument to the data was shared by some local industry partners. There has been public comment from industry partners and professionals that this data does not provide an accurate representation of the true market conditions due to inconsistencies in how funeral service jobs are advertised, hired, classified, and reported to the State. Industry partners have stated that the lack of an Embalmer program has led funeral businesses to rely on apprentice embalmers rather than fully licensed Embalmers, thereby reducing the number of job postings for Embalmers. Industry partner comments are provided in the qualitative factors section below.

After considering labor market data and the College's limited FSE enrollment data, the PIV FSE Task Force does not see adequate quantitative evidence to support the continuance of the Funeral Services A.S. degree.

6. Qualitative Factors

6.1 How the Program is Perceived by Students, Articulating Institutions, Industry, and Community

Current FSE students, employers and Advisory Board members have written and spoken in support of the College's continuance of the FSE program. The public testimonials suggested that discontinuing the program would negatively impact students, the funeral industry, and the broader Bay Area community. Comments to the Boards of Trustees were made on [May 22, 2024](#) and [June 26, 2024](#). All public comment that were sent to the PIV Task Force were collected in [one file for the January 30, 2025 Task Force meeting](#). The PIV Task Force also considered [letters of support that have been sent to the Funeral Services program](#).

Themes from public comment included a perceived shortage of licensed funeral service professionals in the Bay Area and California, however, labor market data analysis from multiple independent sources counter this argument, as outlined in this report.

Public comment also expressed a need for the FSE programs shift to online education, providing an affordable and accessible option for students, especially for students who cannot commute to the FSE programs at American River College in Sacramento or Cypress College in Southern California.

In public comments to the Board and Task Force, local industry partners claim that there is a shortage of qualified licensed candidates for open positions resulting in some positions being left vacant for months and often requiring relocation assistance for out-of-area hires. These

industry members expressed their support of the program, with local funeral businesses offering to supply apprenticeships, practicums, and job opportunities to FSE program graduates.

During the [March 8, 2023 advisory board meeting](#), multiple advisory board members reported through an online poll that they have a need to recruit and retain the following entry-level professions: funeral arranger, removal technician, service attendant, crematory operator, and first call driver. Embalmer positions were not listed as a top priority.

6.2 Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs)

Cañada College's Academic Senate adopted a [three-year assessment cycle](#). Course-specific Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) must be assessed for all active courses. The [FSE program's 3-year assessment plan](#) includes FSE 200 but is missing all other active courses in the program. As of March 6, 2025, there has been no Student Learning Outcome assessment data collected for the FSE program in Nuventive.

7. PIV Task Force Recommendations

7.1 Key Issues

1. **Loss of Accreditation:** The FSE program lost its candidacy for accreditation by the American Board of Funeral Service Education (ABFSE), jeopardizing the college's opportunity to offer an ABFSE-accredited A.S. degree for embalmers. The college must now either comply with accreditation standards and reapply for candidacy or discontinue its A.S. degree.
2. **Enrollment and Completion:** The program has not had a long enough record of enrollments to show a sustained interest for annual cohorts of students for the A.S. degree. No students have yet completed the A.S. degree nor have either of the certificates been awarded.
3. **Financial Constraints:** The program relies heavily on temporary Strong Workforce Program (SWP) funding. Overall SWP funding is being reduced by the state by approximately 30%. The college's general fund currently pays for one adjunct instructor and has made no commitment for hiring full-time faculty.
4. **Low Labor Market Demand:** Embalmers are the only funeral service occupation requiring an A.S. degree from an ABFSE-accredited program. Funeral service occupations that require a license issued by the California Cemetery and Funeral Bureau, other than Embalmer, only require sixty units of college education or a high

school diploma. Demand for embalmers is low and on a declining trend. Demand for other occupations, such as Funeral directors, is low but an educational gap does exist between the annual number of mortuary science graduates from the CCC programs and the annual number of hires.

5. **Community Impact:** Stakeholders, including local funeral home owners, managers, former students, and faculty from sister funeral service programs emphasize the importance of accessible, high-quality funeral service education and the need for more degree-holding and licensed graduates. However, concerns were raised about the adequacy of the current certificate program in preparing students for real-world responsibilities.
6. **SWOT Analysis:** In the appendix below, there is a SWOT analysis of the program, which details its strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats.

7.2 Definitions

Per [Cañada College's Program Improvement and Viability \(PIV\) Process](#), the following possible recommendations are defined as the following:

- *Revitalization*: process of moving a program from a concern for its viability to a state of vitality
- *Continuance*: a program is accepted as-is with no stipulations
- *Suspension*: temporary discontinuance of a program for a set number of semesters, which is followed by re-evaluation of the program improvement and viability plan
- *Discontinuance*: termination of an existing program, discipline, or department

7.3 Recommendations

The FSE program's future hinges on addressing accreditation standards. While it is theoretically possible for the College to meet these standards, our analysis of the labor market trends, the unproven enrollment record, and potential threats to the viability of an online program persuade the Task Force that continuing to pursue ABFSE accreditation for the A.S. degree is not a prudent course of action. Consequently the Task Force recommends *discontinuance of the A.S. Funeral Services degree*.

The committee had differing viewpoints over whether to continue offering the two Certificates of Specialization. Three of seven members supported continuing the Certificates in order to help people in the industry upskill and to better gauge long-term student interest in Funeral Services without being subject to the onerous ABFSE-accreditation requirements. For the same reasons, two of seven members supported exploring the creation of an A.A. Funeral Services

Management degree, which would not require ABFSE accreditation. By contrast, four of seven committee members opposed continuing the Certificates of Specialization because of the cost of continuing to run the program, the entry-level jobs in the Funeral Services industry don't require certification and don't provide a living wage for the Bay Area, the potential confusions for students by continuing to offer the Certificates of Specialization but no longer the A.S. degree, and the challenge of developing a program that lacks a full-time faculty member.

8. Implications of A.S. Degree Discontinuance

8.1 Effect of Discontinuance on the Balance of College Curriculum and ILOs

The FSE program does not impact other degrees or programs at the college. Its discontinuance would have minimal impact on the overall balance of the College curriculum, allowing the institution to maintain its diverse academic offerings. Additionally, if the program is discontinued, Institutional Learning Outcomes (ILOs) will not be significantly impacted.

8.2 Effect of Discontinuance on Staffing

The FSE program currently employs 0 full-time faculty, 1 adjunct faculty and 1 program supervisor. The program supervisor is funded by the Strong Workforce Program funds.

8.3 Potential for a Disproportionate Impact on Diversity at Cañada College

The PIV Task Force considered FSE program demographics in the [FSE Program of Study Report](#) provided by PRIE. Because Cañada College's FSE program enrollments are relatively small and only slightly over-represented by Latina Female students, its discontinuance would have minimal impact on the overall diversity of the College.

8.4 Availability of Programs in the Surrounding Area

There are no other FSE programs in the Bay Area. As described previously, the nearest related programs are the Funeral Services Education program at [American River College](#) in Sacramento and the Mortuary Science program at [Cypress College](#) in Orange County. Currently neither college offers distance education/online offerings. Discontinuing Cañada's program would require the college's students to relocate out of the Bay Area or to seek online educational offerings through private or out-of-state institutions.

8.5 Effect of Discontinuance on Students

Discontinuing the A.S. degree will disrupt students' academic progress. Catalog Rights, Education Code and Board Policy require the development of a teach out plan for current students seeking the A.S. degree as their course of study. The College must adhere to [ACCJC Teach-Out Plan](#) requirements for the discontinued programs.

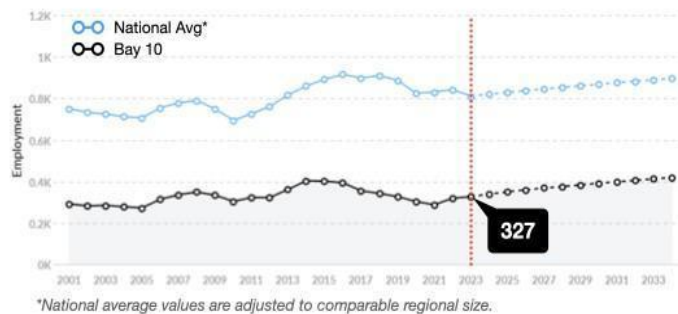
9. Appendix A – Labor Market Data

The following section includes labor market data for *funeral attendants* (39-4021), *mortician – funeral arrangers* (39-4031), *embalmers* (39-4011), and *funeral home manager/director* (11-9171).

Funeral Attendants 39-4021

Perform a variety of tasks during funeral, such as placing casket in parlor or chapel prior to service, arranging floral offerings or lights around casket, directing or escorting mourners, closing casket, and issuing and storing funeral equipment. Funeral attendants are unlicensed entry-level positions.

Total Jobs for Funeral Attendants 2001-2023



Education and Training

- ✓ High School diploma
- ✓ On-the-job training
- ✓ Cañada College certificate provides comparable training but certification is not required for employment.

Monthly Unique Job Postings and Hires 2010-2023



In an average month, there are 4 unique job postings for Funeral Attendants and 17 actual hires within the 10 county Bay region; that is approximately 4 hires per posting. There were 51 total unique job postings over the course of a year (9/2023-9/2024).

Living Wage Median Wage

\$28.74

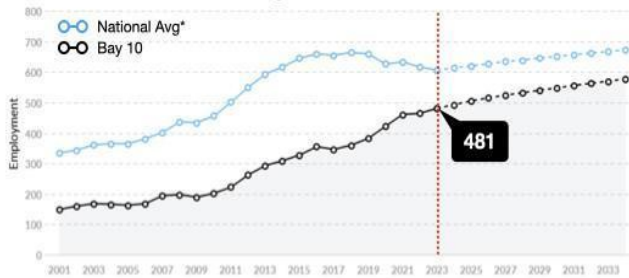
\$22.25

Local median annual salary \$46K is below the living wage of \$60K for a single working adult, but above the standard of \$40K per worker for a household of two working adults in SF County.

Mortician - Funeral Arrangers 39-4031

Perform various tasks to arrange and direct individual funeral services, such as coordinating transportation of body to mortuary, interviewing family or other authorized person to arrange details, selecting pallbearers, aiding with the selection of officials for religious rites, and providing transportation for mourners. This job classification may also include unlicensed Funeral Directors.

Total Jobs for Funeral Arrangers 2001-2023



Education and Training

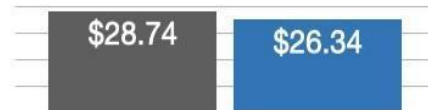
- ✓ High School diploma
- ✓ On-the-job training
- ✓ Cañada College certificate provides comparable training but certification is not required for employment.

Monthly Unique Job Postings and Hires 2010-2023



In an average month, there are 5 unique job postings for Funeral Arrangers and 15 actual hires within the 10 county Bay region; that is approximately 3 hires per posting. There were 66 total unique job postings over the course of a year (9/2023-9/2024).

Living Wage Median Wage

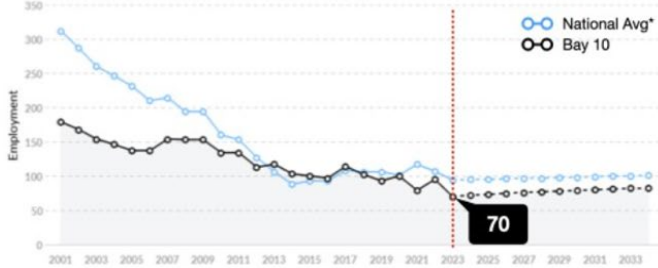


Local median annual salary \$55K is below the living wage of \$60K for a single working adult, but above the standard of \$42K per worker for a household of two working adults in SF County.

Embalmers 39-4011

Prepare bodies for interment in conformity with legal requirements. Embalmers must be licensed by the state of California. Due to the education and training they receive, embalmers may qualify to serve as Funeral Directors.

Total Jobs for Embalmers 2001-2023



In 2023 there were 132 Embalmer positions within a 40-county region inclusive of the 10-county Bay Area. 70 of those positions were within the 10-county Bay region.

Monthly Unique Job Postings and Hires 2010-2023



In an average month, there is 1 unique job posting for Embalmers and 3 actual hires within the 10 county Bay region. There were 13 total unique job postings over one year (9/2023-9/2024). Within a 40-county region including the Bay Area and Sacramento regions, in an average month, there is 1 unique job posting and 6 actual hires.



Education and Training

- ✓ Graduation from an ABFSE-accredited program
- ✓ Embalming licensure from California

Living Wage Median Wage

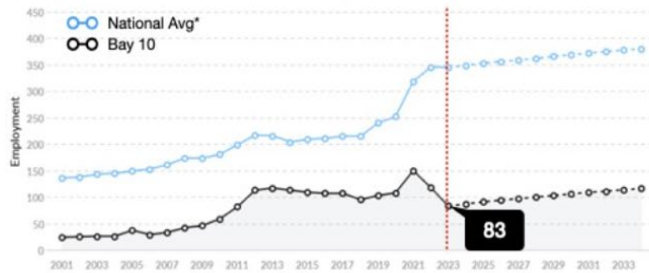


Local median annual salary of \$78K is above the living wage of \$60K for a single working adult in SF County.

Funeral Home Manager/Director¹¹⁻⁹¹⁷¹

Plan, direct, or coordinate the services or resources of funeral homes. Includes activities such as determining prices for services or merchandise and managing the facilities of funeral homes. It is common, but not required, for Funeral Directors to also have an embalming license.

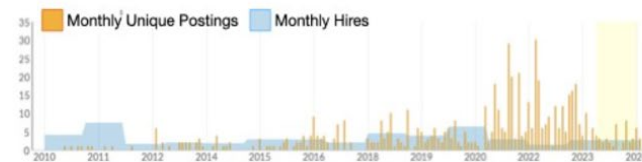
Total Jobs for Funeral Home Managers/Directors 2001-2023



Education and Training

- ✓ Any associate's degree
- ✓ Funeral Directing licensure from California

Monthly Unique Job Postings and Hires 2010-2023



In an average month, there are 3 job postings for Funeral Home Managers and 3 actual hires within the 10 county Bay region; that is 1 hire per posting. There were 43 total unique job postings over the course of one year (9/2023-9/2024).

■ Living Wage ■ Median Wage



Local median annual salary of \$86K is above the living wage of \$60K for a single working adult in SF County.

10. Appendix B - SWOT Analysis

As part of the [Program Improvement and Viability \(PIV\) process](#), a SWOT analysis is required if the committee recommends discontinuance per [AP 6.13.1 Curriculum Development, Program Review, and Program Viability](#).

A SWOT analysis is a strategic planning tool used to reflect on internal organizational strengths and weaknesses while also searching for external opportunities and threats available to all organizations within the industry.

The following strengths and weaknesses reflect the current state of Cañada College's Funeral Service Education program. Whereas the opportunities and threats are focused on the industry as a whole and apply to all Funeral Service Education/Mortuary Science programs.

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Cañada College's FSE program is the only program offered in the Bay Area● The program is well connected to funeral home industry partners● As a community college program, it offers a more affordable option compared to private institutions or universities● Public comment indicated a passionate response for an affordable FSE program● Online asynchronous FSE courses currently not being offered by the two other California Funeral Services programs, drawing a significant proportion of students from outside of San Mateo county	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● The program has been denied candidacy for accreditation by the American Board of Funeral Service Education (ABFSE), resulting in the inability to offer an embalming program● The current FSE A.S. degree is not required for the majority of jobs in the field● There are no full-time faculty members and only one part-time faculty● Ongoing budget constraints, including a reliance on temporary Strong Workforce Funding, are unsustainable as SWP funds will be reduced by 30% in the next round● The Program Director position is fully reliant on SWP funding, which is not intended to be a permanent source of funding for any program

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The FSE program has received nearly \$1.1 million in SWP funding • Student Learning Outcomes assessment is out of compliance • The program may suffer from low visibility due to lack of marketing strategy and support. None of the three academic programs have an Interest Area Program Mapper on the College website. • The two FSE certificates of specialization are not eligible for federal financial aid and cannot be recorded on a student's transcripts
Opportunities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student enrollment could increase with strategic marketing tools, such as regular program informational sessions, career fairs, and funeral home site visits • The demographic trends of an aging population suggest an increased need for funeral services • Potential for developing a non-accredited A.A. degree in Funeral Service Management can meet some labor market needs and serve as a bridge to education for students. 	Threats <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changing attitudes toward traditional funeral practices (i.e. preference for cremation or eco-friendly options) may require programs to adapt quickly to remain relevant • Labor market data from multiple reputable sources indicate that there is declining job growth for the embalmer and funeral home manager positions, which are the only two positions that earn a living wage for the Bay Area • Potential for future competition for enrollments if other institutions create online learning opportunities

1.