



AOBTA® Council of Schools and Programs Update

by Cindy Banker, AOBTA® Director of Education, AOBTA®-CI

As the COVID-19 crisis has ravaged our nation, challenging our ability to practice or lead our normal lives, the AOBTA® has made a lot of effort to step up and offer support to our members. This has included outreach to all of our current Council of Schools and Programs (COSP) members. Schools and programs have been hit especially hard. In response, we have held Zoom conference calls for all of our COSP members. We have had a great turn-out, including multiple people from some of our larger schools. In our first meeting Cari Johnson Pelava, our COSP Director, and Steve Rogne, owner of Zen Shiatsu Chicago, co-chaired a very organized and concise presentation on the kinds of financial aid which had recently been made available for businesses. Although much of this information had been public and available elsewhere it was very well received and helpful for the school representatives to hear first-hand experience and advice about their best options. This was a first priority for many of those attending that meeting. Interestingly, the second meeting shifted to different priorities, and in that meeting we had participation from different people as well.

So far our follow up Zoom meetings have continued monthly and the agenda for each has changed with the evolving situation on the ground. A round-robin reporting has emerged as an essential inclusion for all the meetings. Each of our schools checks in with what their current status has been and what responses and adaptations they have learned. We have all enjoyed learning from each other. When New York was the initial and drastic hot spot we learned a lot from Tom Banasiak, our AOBTA®-CI at the Swedish Institute, about their carefully thought out strategies for re-opening in the fall. As we have seen conditions shift across the country, all of our schools have had to stop in-person classes. There was a lot of discussion and discovery about how much we can teach virtually and the different kinds of learning opportunities this presents. For example, if students are trying to communicate with a virtual recipient who has to learn to find points on themselves, it is likely to present a more profound level of learning for the student.

We have gradually started discussing how to safely open schools and clinics. Unfortunately, all our schools have faced the disappointing reality that the COVID-19 crisis has not been adequately addressed on a national level - leaving the time table for safely re-opening indefinite. Initially, there has been a scramble at almost all of the schools to learn how to teach virtually and sort and front-load curriculum that can be taught virtually while in-person hands-on classes are on hold. Our Certified Instructors and other instructors have been pressed to make decisions about how much of their curriculum can be adequately taught using Zoom.

At our last meeting on July 9th, we started discussing how to make the best use of the AOBTA® website. The meeting began with Sarah West, our new Member Relations Coordinator, who introduced herself and shared information on the AOBTA's benefits for students and new grads.

- Student Liability Insurance. Our competitively-priced liability insurance comes with additional benefits like free continuing ed courses. Anyone studying Asian Bodywork Therapy is eligible to become a student member of the AOBTA® and we want to encourage all of our instructors to share this with their students!
- [Student Member Landing Page on Website](#). We discussed how we can stay in touch with students who are not in school right now.

- [AOBTA® Wellness Community Page](#). This page offers lots of information for self-care that can also be shared with families and clients, and special resources around [Racial Justice](#).
- [Student Membership Application](#)

In the next segment, our president Deborah Valentine Smith demonstrated how COSP members can use the AOBTA® website to communicate.

- This includes posting events on the community calendar. This is a great opportunity for advertising classes and events!
- We can also connect by signing in and choosing “Groups” in the profile list, and going to the COSP group to find updates and meeting announcements. The videos from all our COSP meetings are posted there along with the minutes.
- We can use the “Forums” feature in the COSP group to start a conversation in order to directly communicate with each other.

While everyone is able to use technology in varying degrees, we have all been immersed in needing to learn more new things all the time. In order to accommodate that we also continue to have written minutes from each meeting that get emailed to everyone.

Email cosp@aobta.org or director@aobta.org for information about becoming a COSP member.