



ICCFA UNIVERSITY

2025 College Program



JULY 18 – 23, 2025
EMORY CONFERENCE CENTER HOTEL | ATLANTA, GA

iccfa.com/university



Emory Conference Center Hotel at Emory University

1615 Clifton Road NE
Atlanta, GA 30329
Phone: 404.712.6000
Toll Free: 1.800.933.6679
Fax: 404.712.6025

Equipped with state-of-the-art technology, ample meeting space, conference dining facilities, and well-appointed guestrooms, the Emory Conference Center Hotel is an all-inclusive venue that will provide the perfect backdrop for learning from the best in deathcare, connecting with colleagues from every area of the cemetery, cremation, and funeral service profession, and making the lifetime friendships that are the hallmark of the ICCFA University experience.

Room rate: \$179/night

**Secure your spot and
reserve your hotel
room at the 2025 ICCFA
University today at
iccfa.com/university**



Chancellor's Letter

I have had the pleasure of seeing the University from all sides, first attending and graduating, then becoming a professor in several colleges, serving as dean of the College of Land Management & Grounds Operations for five years, and today I am honored to return as your ICCFA University Chancellor.

Why is the ICCFA University so life-changing and one of the most revered educational programs in our profession? The program is more than just a training seminar or conference—it is an EXPERIENCE. The experience starts from the moment you arrive and actually continues for the rest of your career. The professors and fellow students you share the week with will become lasting friends. The memorable conversations with fellow students during meals are enlightening. Everything you learn will alter the lens through which you view the profession from that point forward. This is a situation where the whole is much more than the sum of its parts.

ICCFA University boasts nine colleges in tune with our profession today:

- ▶ College of 21st Century Services – Dean Glenda Stansbury
- ▶ College of Cremation Services – Dean Clift Dempsey, CCrE, CCFE
- ▶ College of Hospitality & Customer Experience – Dean Lori Bolton, CSE, CXE
- ▶ College of Land Management & Grounds Operations – Dean Gino Merendino
- ▶ College of Leadership, Management & Administration – Dean Gary Freytag, CCFE
- ▶ College of Technology - Dean Nick Timpe, CSE
- ▶ J. Asher Neel College of Sales & Marketing – Dean Patrick Downey, CCE
- ▶ Todd Van Beck College of Funeral Home Management – Deans Mike Watkins & Mat Forastiere
- ▶ School of Graduate Studies - Dean Robbie Pape, CCFE

The ICCFA University returns to the Emory Conference Center Hotel at Emory University in Atlanta, Georgia. With state-of-the-art meeting rooms, excellent audio/visual technology, and fantastic dining spaces, the Emory Conference Center is a perfect location for the ICCFA University.

The ICCFA University is the ultimate educational opportunity in our profession. Everyone involved in the University is proud to continue this one-of-a-kind experience by which thousands have already enriched themselves, their firms, and ultimately their customers through superior, relevant and contemporary service. I encourage you to enroll in the 2025 session of the “U” to begin, or continue, your journey of professional development.

Jeff Kidwiler, CCE, CSE
ICCFA University Chancellor



All about the U

ICCFA University is a one-of-a-kind program designed by top experts in the cemetery, cremation, and funeral service profession. It offers a unique blend of intensive, practical classroom training and continual informal idea-sharing.

Quality Education

With on-campus housing and dining, ICCFAU offers a unique learning environment. Its eight colleges cover every area of management and operations, and classes are continually updated to include the latest innovations and techniques. Courses combine proven business theory with practical operational instruction, and the staff encourage ongoing participation and interaction.

Experienced Faculty

ICCFAU classes are led by top cemetery, cremation, and funeral service professionals. You'll receive practical, proven instruction from colleagues selected for their firsthand experience and knowledge of the daily challenges you face in your job. For a complete listing of faculty, see page 45.

Recreation & Networking

Students say one of the most valuable parts of ICCFAU is the opportunity to share ideas and fellowship with colleagues from every area of the cemetery, cremation, and funeral service profession.

Students from all nine colleges come together several times each day for breaks and to share. In the evenings, you can relax with fellow students in the lounge areas. Saturday is Student Night with an evening of fun and trivia.

At the Sports Night on Monday, you'll find a good-natured rivalry among the students from all eight of the colleges.

Registration Procedures & Fees

Class sizes are limited and are accepted on a first-come, first-served basis. Registrations must be received by July 9. After this date, registration will be on-site only. Students whose registrations are received by June 21 will have their names included in the student directory.

Fees include all classroom training, materials and three meals a day starting with dinner on Friday and ending with the Graduate Reception on Tuesday, as well as refreshments during breaks and at the Sports Night on Monday.

To register, go online to www.iccfa.com/university.

Accommodations

The ICCFA discounted room rate is just \$179 per night at the Emory Conference Center Hotel at Emory University. Students should make their own reservations. See page 2 for details.

Transportation

The closest airport to the Emory Conference Center Hotel at Emory University is Atlanta's Hartsfield-Jackson International Airport (ATL).

FAQs

Who is eligible to attend ICCFAU?

ICCFA University is open to employees of all cemeteries, funeral homes, crematories, supplier companies, and related businesses. Prior college attendance is not required. In general, it is designed for students who are:

- ▶ Company owners and chief executive officers
- ▶ Managers seeking to develop additional skills and knowledge in order to improve their techniques and operations
- ▶ Managers who are interested in moving into new areas of responsibility
- ▶ Managers new to the cemetery and funeral service profession
- ▶ Staff interested in advancing into management positions
- ▶ Staff interested in improving their skills to better serve their employers and their client families
- ▶ Suppliers who want to network and gain a better understanding of their clients' challenges

How does the four-year undergraduate curriculum work?

The ICCFA University is held for five days each July. Undergraduate students enroll in one of the University's eight colleges and spend the entire five days learning about that area of the profession. Students who complete four colleges become ICCFAU graduates.

Do I have to attend for four years?

No. Some students enroll for one or two years, attending just those colleges that are most relevant to their career. However, many students do choose to go on to study for four years or more to broaden the scope of their knowledge.

Can I earn CE credits and certification points at ICCFAU?

Yes. Funeral directors can earn up to 23.5 CE credits, pending individual state approval. Please note that due to onerous and/or expensive filing requirements, the ICCFA no longer applies for continuing education credits in Pennsylvania or Virginia. ICCFA members applying for the Certified Cemetery Executive, Certified Funeral Executive, Certified Cemetery Funeral Executive, Certified Cremation Executive and/or Certified Supplier Executive designations through the association's certification program will earn a total of 18 points toward certification upon completion of each college.

What is the School of Graduate Studies?

The School of Graduate Studies allows ICCFAU graduates to return to the University and attend a specially curated course designed for C-Suite leaders and senior executives who are ready to drive collaboration, innovation, and growth while reaching the highest levels of leadership. This course is limited to 12 participants and will require an application to attend. Please visit iccfa.com/university to apply.

ICCFA Educational Foundation Scholarships

108 scholarships were awarded to the 2024 ICCFA University! The ICCFA thanks the following individuals and companies who contributed to the ICCFA Educational Foundation scholarship funds from 2024–2025:

Argent Trust Company
ASD
Batesville Casket
Company Inc.
Carriage
Coldspring
Corient
Bob Gordon Jr
Gaffney Group
Greenwood Plastics

Hillside Memorial Park &
Mortuary
Homesteaders Life
Company
Leaf Cremation
Live Oak Bank
Matthews International
McComb Family
Foundation Inc.
Memorial Classic, Inc.

NorthStar Memorial
Group
Park Lawn Corporation
Regions Bank
SCI/Dignity Memorial
Fund
The Gardens Cemetery –
Gethsemane



College of 21st Century Services

Dean Glenda Stansbury

How do you respond to a family who says, “We don’t want a traditional funeral”? You’ll learn how to go beyond tradition with innovative offerings and become certified as a funeral celebrant trained to provide meaningful alternatives to clergy-led services.

Friday, July 18

2:00 PM–5:30 PM

Registration & Check-in

4:00 PM–5:00 PM

Student Orientation

5:00 PM–6:00 PM

Welcome Reception

6:00 PM–7:00 PM

Dinner

Saturday, July 19

8:00 AM–8:45 AM

Breakfast

8:45 AM–9:00 AM

Introductions

Glenda Stansbury; Kathy Burns

9:00 AM–10:30 AM

Celebrant Training

Glenda Stansbury; Kathy Burns

Celebrants offer an alternative to services provided by clergy for those families who are not affiliated with a church or who do not wish to have a traditional religious funeral service. They design services that are completely personal by incorporating those unique stories, songs, and experiences that defined the deceased. Celebrants schedule a special ‘family time’

meeting where the family can share memories, anecdotes and defining moments in the loved one’s life. They then base the essence of the service on the remembrances of the family and encourage family and friends to participate. Celebrants develop a library of resources available for readings, music, ceremonies, and personal touches. They consult with the family to help them choose elements of the service that reflect their loved one. They are bound by a Code of Ethics for complete confidentiality in all dealings with the family.

Becoming a Certified Celebrant

After completing this college, students will be certified as celebrants. The training for celebrants as established by the InSight Institute seeks to provide the most comprehensive and sensitive training available for people who wish to develop this as a profession or to add to their current job description. It is important that a family knows they are being served by someone who understands the process and is prepared to offer the very best funeral possible.

What Does This Service Cost Families?

The celebrant fee is usually higher than the fees charged by clergy. They can range widely across the country from \$200 to more than \$800, depending on type of service, location, travel and other expenses. A celebrant spends approximately 10 hours preparing for each service, as well as the expenses of training and maintaining a resource library.

What is The InSight Institute?

The InSight Institute has one mission: helping people help people. Over the years, it has expanded from grief care books and seminars to

include celebrant training and certification.

Founded by the late Doug Manning, a best-selling author, sought-after speaker, and respected grief expert, InSight has been a trusted resource for those navigating loss. Manning's influential works include *A Minister Speaks About Funerals* (1978), *Don't Take My Grief Away From Me* (1979), and *When Love Gets Tough: The Nursing Home Decision* (1983). With the success of his writing, he dedicated his career to grief education, establishing InSight Books as a publishing and seminar company.

Today, InSight Books continues to publish over 40 titles by Manning and other leading authors, while the InSight Institute serves as its training arm, carrying forward his legacy of compassionate education and support.

10:30 AM–11:00 AM

Break

11:00 AM–12:30 PM

Celebrant Training (continued)

Glenda Stansbury; Kathy Burns

12:30 PM–1:30 PM

Lunch

1:30 PM–3:00 PM

Celebrant Training (continued)

Glenda Stansbury; Kathy Burns

3:00 PM–3:30 PM

Break

3:30 PM–5:00 PM

Celebrant Training (continued)

Glenda Stansbury; Kathy Burns

5:30 PM–6:30 PM

Dinner

7:00 PM–10:00 PM

Student Night - Trivia

College vs. college! Join your classmates to see which College walks away with bragging rights as the 2025 Trivia Champions!

Sunday, July 20

8:00 AM–8:55 AM

Breakfast

9:00 AM–10:30 AM

Celebrant Training (continued)

Glenda Stansbury; Kathy Burns

10:30 AM–11:00 AM

Break

11:00 AM–12:30 PM

Celebrant Training (continued)

Glenda Stansbury; Kathy Burns

12:30 PM–1:30 PM

Lunch

1:30 PM–3:00 PM

Celebrant Training (continued)

Glenda Stansbury; Kathy Burns

3:00 PM–3:30 PM

Break

3:30 PM–5:00 PM

Celebrant Training (continued)

Glenda Stansbury; Kathy Burns

5:30 PM–6:30 PM

Dinner

Monday, July 21

8:00 AM–8:55 AM

Breakfast

9:00 AM–10:30 AM

Celebrant Training (continued)

Glenda Stansbury; Kathy Burns

10:30 AM–11:00 AM

Break

11:00 AM–12:30 PM

Celebrant Training (continued)

Glenda Stansbury; Kathy Burns

12:30 PM–1:30 PM

Lunch

1:30 PM–3:00 PM

Celebrant Training (continued)

Glenda Stansbury; Kathy Burns

3:00 PM–3:30 PM

Break

3:30 PM–5:00 PM

Celebrant Training (continued)

Glenda Stansbury; Kathy Burns

7:00 PM–10:00 PM

Sports Night

Join your ICCFAU colleagues for a friendly game of bowling or cornhole! Appetizers, salad, pizza, wings, and dessert will be served.

Tuesday, July 22

8:00 AM–8:55 AM

Breakfast

9:00 AM–10:30 AM

Essentials of Public Speaking Basics (Pt I)

Carol Little

- › What is a presentation?
- › Principles of liking

10:30 AM–11:00 AM

Break

11:00 AM–12:30 PM

Essentials of Public Speaking Basics (Pt II)

Carol Little

- › Principles of authenticity
- › Body talk

12:30 PM–1:30 PM

Lunch

1:30 PM–3:00 PM

Essentials of Public Speaking Basics (Pt III)

Carol Little

- › Vocal techniques
- › Group presentations and feedback

3:00 PM–3:30 PM

Break

3:30 PM–4:30 PM

Essentials of Public Speaking Basics (Pt IV)

Carol Little

- › Practice makes permanent

4:30 PM–5:15 PM

University Graduation

5:15 PM–6:00 PM

Classroom Wrap-up | Presentation of Certificate

Required to attend to receive certificate (certificates will not be mailed).

6:15 PM–7:30 PM

Graduate Reception

Heavy hors d'oeuvres will be served.

Wednesday, July 23

Travel Day



Save *the* Date



ICCFA Leadership Summit

REIMAGINE, REINVENT, REDEFINE

OCTOBER 21 - 23, 2025

MARRIOTT KNOXVILLE DOWNTOWN
KNOXVILLE, TN
[ICCFA.COM/FALL](https://iccfa.com/fall)



College of Cremation Services

Dean Clift Dempsey, CCrE, CCFe

Cremation doesn't have to mean "no service" or "no memorialization." Attendees will discover how to better serve families, improve cremation operations, and increase their company's cremation-related revenues. Attendees will also earn three types of certifications: operator, administrator, and arranger.

Friday, July 18

2:00 PM–5:30 PM

Registration & Check-in

4:00 PM–5:00 PM

Student Orientation

5:00 PM–6:00 PM

Welcome Reception

6:00 PM–7:00 PM

Dinner

Saturday, July 19

8:00 AM–8:45 AM

Breakfast

8:45 AM–9:00 AM

Introductions

Clift Dempsey, CCrE, CCFe

9:00 AM–10:30 AM

Operator Certification- All-Day

Poul Lemasters, Esq.; Larry Stuart, Jr.

In this training session, you'll learn how to operate a crematory retort properly and effectively and limit the liability for you and your company. This extensive training curriculum includes: · Explanation of professional &

incinerator terminology · Discussion on the principles of combustion and incinerator criteria & design · In-depth look at the basics of operating cremation equipment and their general maintenance and how to troubleshoot common problems · Overview of cremation and its impact on the environment · Examples of standard crematory forms and the importance of record keeping · Proper steps for identification · Exposure control, and liability concerns and risk management.

10:30 AM–11:00 PM

Break

11:00 AM–12:30 PM

Operator Curriculum (continued)

Larry Stuart, Jr.

12:30 PM–1:30 PM

Lunch

1:30 PM–3:00 PM

Operator Curriculum (continued)

Larry Stuart, Jr.

3:00 PM–3:30 PM

Break

3:30 PM–5:00 PM

Operator Curriculum (continued)

Poul Lemasters, Esq.; Larry Stuart, Jr.

5:30 PM–6:30 PM

Dinner

7:00 PM–10:00 PM

Student Night - Trivia

College vs. college! Join your classmates to see which College walks away with bragging rights as the 2025 Trivia Champions!

Sunday, July 20

8:00 AM–8:55 AM

Breakfast

9:00 AM–10:30 AM

Crematory Management

Lauren Blevins Hogan, CCFE, CPLP

This session will present proven policies, procedures, and practices to assure safe and prudent crematory management. This Course will cover topic from proper handling, recording and tracking of human remains to inventory and cost management.

10:30 AM–11:00 AM

Break

11:00 AM–12:00 PM

Hospice Relationships

Pierce Dempsey

You are missing out on your funeral home's biggest referral network! By the end of this session, you will be able to create and maintain a successful hospice program using your company's current resources. Pierce will teach you the ins and outs of hospice and how to create a program from scratch.

12:00 PM–12:30 PM

Lunch

12:30 PM–5:00 PM

Bus Tour: Real World Look at All Aspects of Cremation Providers

Clift Dempsey, CCrE, CCFE; Chad Eubanks

Real world look at all aspects of cremation providers cemetery - crematory – funeral home. The tour will be at Leaf Cremation to see their crematory & cemetery, and Arlington Memorial Park to view their impressive cremation memorialization they have installed the cemetery.

5:30 PM–6:30 PM

Dinner

Monday, July 21

8:00 AM–8:55 AM

Breakfast

9:00 AM–10:30 AM

Multiple Sources of Cremation Marketing

Pierce Dempsey

In this session, we will discuss the many different ways to market cremation for your funeral home, cremation center and cemetery. Using new technology and innovative ways to market your cremation services in today's environment.

10:30 AM–11:00 AM

Break

11:00 AM–12:30 PM

Offerings Beyond the Cremation Converting the Cremation Price Shopper

Clift Dempsey, CCrE, CCFE

How do you educate the cremation consumer on permanent placement? Is that in a cemetery or their home? Is scattering so popular or are families just keeping the remains at home. Learn how to offer different options for families and how to market those options.

12:30 PM–1:30 PM

Lunch

1:30 PM–3:00 PM

Reducing Your Liability to Add to Your Bottom Line

Poul Lemasters, Esq.

This seminar will focus on the Cremation Authorization Form and educate the arranger on why each section is critical. Participants will not only learn the importance of each section and learn how to explain the sections to the family. There will also be examples of lawsuits that have cost providers millions.

3:00 PM–3:30 PM

Break

3:30 PM–5:00 PM

Cremation Statistics: Everything You've Wanted to Know About Online Cremation Brands

Tyler Yamasaki

Ever wondered how to harness the power of Google to attract new clients? Or how to transform website visitors into paying customers? We'll dive into proven online

marketing strategies and reveal data on the true costs of online advertising. From streamlining arrangement times to encouraging glowing reviews, we'll explore the tactics that boost your reputation and bottom line. You'll also discover how to build a compelling website that makes families feel confident, informed, and ready to act.

Curious about what merchandise sells best in an online arranger? We'll break down the items that truly captivate families, fueling both convenience and profitability. You'll learn how often families purchase merchandise, how to price it, and ways to maximize your contract values. Attendees will see behind the scenes of how families interact with our platform, gaining fresh perspective on the online funeral arrangement journey and discovering innovative approaches to modern memorialization

7:00 PM–10:00 PM

Sports Night

Join your ICCFAU colleagues for a friendly game of bowling or cornhole! Appetizers, salad, pizza, wings, and dessert will be served.

Tuesday, July 22

8:00 AM–8:55 AM

Breakfast

9:00 AM–10:30 AM

Cremation Myths Debunked

Néctar Ramírez

So many families who choose cremation are selecting no services. There is a misunderstanding of the cremation consumer, which is leading to an abundance of direct cremation policies. In this module we will take a deep dive into the psychology of the cremation consumer and gain a better understanding of their needs and wants. With that understanding we will tailor our presentation of products and services to maximize the probability of a service, higher policy value and family satisfaction.

10:30 AM–11:00 AM

Break

11:00 AM–12:30 PM

Beyond the Limits of Direct Cremation: Transforming the At-Need Arrangement Conference

Nick Karber & Stacie Schubert

“Just cremation.” “No service.” We’ve all heard these words, but what if they marked the beginning of something more? This course will equip you with strategies to engage cremation families, transforming direct cremation arrangements from mere transactions into

meaningful experiences. Discover how to create moments of authentic connection, enhance the client journey, and showcase the value in every option you offer.

12:30 PM–1:30 PM

Lunch

1:30 PM–3:00 PM

Every Life is Worth Remembering- Ceremonies for Cremation Families

Glenda Stansbury

Why do we have funerals? What does a funeral offer to a family? Isn't it just easier to not do anything? Why are our cremation families walking out our doors with the urn in their hands with no service or ceremony? How do we articulate the value of the funeral? How do we serve as consultants for our families to create healing and meaningful experiences?

The discussion focuses on the need for a personalized ceremony, options that are available and how everyone in a funeral home or cemetery staff can make the service a memorable and meaningful event. It will provide statistics about the changing demographics, provide sample ceremonies and give practical actions for funeral professionals serving their families in new and unique ways.

3:00 PM–3:30 PM

Break

3:30 PM–4:30 PM

Things You Might Not Think About, But Need to Know

Clift Dempsey, CCRE, CCCE

This session will cover the little things that get overlooked but are a necessity in running a successful cremation operation. It will also cover things you might not have thought about to increase your value and add revenue to your business. All kinds of surprises will be taught in this session.

4:30 PM–5:15 PM

University Graduation

5:15 PM–6:00 PM

Classroom Wrap-up | Presentation of Certificate

Required to attend to receive certificate (certificates will not be mailed).

6:15 PM–7:30 PM

Graduate Reception

Heavy hors d'oeuvres will be served.

Wednesday, July 23

Travel Day





College of Hospitality & Customer Experience

Dean Lori Bolton, CSE, CXE

This college is designed to give students a foundation in funeral home/cemetery hospitality and catering management. Topics range from basic event planning to interpreting financial budgets, leadership, and catering team management.

Friday, July 18

2:00 PM–5:30 PM

Registration & Check-in

4:00 PM–5:00 PM

Orientation

5:00 PM–6:00 PM

Welcome Reception

6:00 PM–7:00 PM

Dinner

Saturday, July 19

8:00 AM–8:45 AM

Breakfast

8:45 AM–9:00 AM

Introductions

Lori Bolton, CSE, CXE and John Bolton, CCE, CCrE, CSE, CXE

9:00 AM–10:30 AM

How CX Strategy Helps Scale Company Growth

Lori Bolton, CSE, CXE; John Bolton, CCE, CCrE, CSE, CXE

While this is a newer college at ICCFAU, the concept of being hospitable has a long and rich tradition in and out of funeral service. Historic names like Marriott, Hilton, and Ritz have made hospitality and customer service the foundation

of their empires. In this kick-off class, John and Lori Bolton will walk students through the foundations of hospitality in the funeral industry and define the importance of creating an experience for the families you serve.

10:30 AM–11:00 AM

Break

11:00 AM–12:30 PM

A Beginner's Guide to Building World Class Hospitality

Darin Drabing

So you want to entertain? Seems like everyone's doing it! You've read the articles about post-service receptions, buffet lines, hors d'oeuvres during visitations, and guests drinking beer, wine, and cocktails in the lobby? You're concerned your business is falling behind. You don't have any extra space and you can't afford to build a new building, but how do you catch up, where do you start, and is it even something you should do? Relax. You can do this and we can help. Join us for a look at the basics required to join the 'party'. In this interactive session, we will probe the important issues, challenge long held beliefs, and find creative answers to the questions that are required to move your business to the next level.

12:30 PM–1:30 PM

Lunch

1:30 PM–3:00 PM

Who Are You Serving: Building the Personas and Understanding Touchpoints

Lori Bolton, CSE, CXE

Customers are now driving the business bus and we as an industry are lagging behind. Everything about the traditional business model is changing due to the demand of customers. Customers have more information at their fingertips and have a true sense of how they want to celebrate a life. Who are the consumers that want a different kind of funeral service? In this session, Lori Bolton will outline the key strategies for developing a successful customer experience model, developing customer personas, relating those personas to growing your hospitality business, and how these strategies should drive your hospitality model moving forward.

3:00 PM–3:30 PM

Break

3:30 PM–5:00 PM

CX Journey Workshop

Lori Bolton, CSE, CXE; John Bolton, CCE, CCrE, CSE, CXE

Since the Customer Journey is so important in driving revenue through Customer Experience, Lori and John will lead a hands-on workshop so students can actually create a customer journey specific to their location and their customers. By the end of the workshop, students will be able to take the information back to their operations and lead a journey workshop for their staff.

5:30 PM–6:30 PM

Dinner

7:00 PM–10:00 PM

Student Night - Trivia

College vs. college! Join your classmates to see which College walks away with bragging rights as the 2025 Trivia Champions!

Sunday, July 20

8:00 AM–8:55 AM

Breakfast

9:00 AM–10:30 AM

Why Hospitality and How to Prepare Your Facility for Success

Lee Longino

In this course, we will begin to understand why there is a push toward hospitality in our profession and what got us to this point with our

customers. We will learn how to look at your facilities in a differing way better understanding the use of space and how to make your facilities help you increase your revenues.

10:30 AM–11:00 AM

Break

11:00 AM–12:30 PM

Crafting a Successful Celebration of Life: Enhancing Comfort, Personalization, and Value

Kimberly Weis

This session will guide you through creating thoughtful catering menus, designing comforting spaces, and incorporating personalized services to support families during their time of need, all while adding value to your business.

12:30 PM–1:30 PM

Lunch

1:30 PM–3:00 PM

The Celebration Journey from The Funeral Director's Perspective

Brooke Heldman

It's a funeral director's role to create a safe place by welcoming a newly grieving family into a collaborative journey of celebrating their Loved One uniquely. How do you help a family feel seen and heard from the very beginning, the first call, through their arrival into the funeral home, and into the creation of a meaningful event. This session will model how to create trust with a new family, develop vision together on a venue tour, and work with your team to detail an event that feels personal & healing.

3:00 PM–3:30 PM

Break

3:30 PM–5:00 PM

Reimagining Customer Experience through Grief

Jason Troyer, PhD

Understanding our families' needs through the lens of their grief experience is essential to creating exemplary customer experience. By remembering the funeral customer lifecycle – at-need, aftercare, outreach, and pre-need – we can better empathize with their grief-related needs at each stage. In this course, Dr. Jason Troyer will share specific examples of outreach and service offerings that reimage the customer experience and fit the psychological needs of the families we serve.

5:30 PM–6:30 PM

Dinner

Monday, July 21

8:00 AM–8:55 AM

Breakfast

9:00 AM–10:30 AM

Risk Management

Poul Lemasters, Esq.

Consumers demand more and more from businesses and it is no different in deathcare. Providing a funeral is just the first step. As providers today, we are offering more from catering and receptions, to travel, and even lodging. However, offering all these services comes with an entirely new set of risks. Do you need a license to serve food? If alcohol is available, then who is responsible? Does your insurance cover events outside of the funeral? Not knowing or understanding these as well as many more issues could cost you more than a bad review on Yelp!

10:30 AM–11:00 AM

Break

11:00 AM–12:30 PM

Technology's Role in CX

Nick Timpe, CSE

It's no secret that in today's world, technology plays a defining role in the customer's experience. How does this translate to our profession? Can we transform our processes and adapt our people to serve families in a digital way? Will we miss out on those critical moments of service that have been the hallmark of what we do? The data—and the world around us—show that the modern consumer has adapted to digital. In this session we will review examples and principles from leading firsts to see how technology can be applied into funeral service to transform the experience of the families in our care.

12:30 PM–1:30 PM

Lunch

1:30 PM–3:00 PM

Creating Exceptional Experiences for Cremation Customers

Pierce Dempsey

Providing excellent customer service is one thing, but what about exceptional customer experiences? During this session, we will explore different types of experiences for the cremation customer and follow a step-by-step process on how to properly explain those

options. Learn how to improve cremation offerings, increase your revenue, and be the #1 cremation expert in your area.

3:00 PM–3:30 PM

Break

3:30 PM–5:00 PM

Customer Experience and Employee Engagement

Lori Bolton, CSE, CXE

It's no secret that in today's world, technology You can change your buildings, offerings, marketing brand, and pricing, but the #1 influencer on your Customer Experience is delivery from your employees. How do you build and sustain a culture driven by passion for service, compassion for families, and committed to delivering exceptional experiences? Employee engagement can be defined as the extent to which employees feel committed and connected to their employer and to the work that they do. It is critical that your business has a dedicated strategy for creating an employee experience that leads to engagement to increase performance and retention, saving on the heavy costs of re-hiring and training. In this course we will explore a strategic plan for developing and maintaining employee engagement and how to measure how the Customers' felt about their experiences with your staff.

7:00 PM–10:00 PM

Sports Night

Join your ICCFAU colleagues for a friendly game of bowling or cornhole! Appetizers, salad, pizza, wings, and dessert will be served.

Tuesday, July 22

8:00 AM–8:55 AM

Breakfast

9:00 AM–10:30 AM

Successful Cemetery Events 101

Phil Zehms

Location events can go far beyond our traditional Memorial Day or Christmas Candlelight services. Phil Zehms will walk you through the basics of putting together a successful community event, from creative idea generation, setting a budget, creating timelines, event promotion, staffing, event follow up and ROI.

10:30 AM–11:00 AM

Break

11:00 AM–12:30 PM

Cemetery Event Workshop

Phil Zehms

In this hands-on workshop, students will actually come up with a creative event idea, set a budget, plan the event, and generate an ROI statement to justify the event. When they return to their location, they will have a specific program ready to go!

12:30 PM–1:30 PM

Lunch

1:30 PM–3:00 PM

Putting It All Together: Your Recipe for Success

Lori Bolton, CSE, CXE; John Bolton, CCE, CCrE, CSE, CXE

Lori and John will review the 10 steps to developing a CX and Hospitality strategy for funeral and cemetery service. Taking in all the learning from the week, students will develop a strategic CX and Hospitality plan to bring back to their business and begin to implement.

3:00 PM–3:30 PM

Break

3:30 PM–4:30 PM

Let's Do CX!

John Bolton, CCE, CCrE, CSE, CXE;

If you were starting over with a blank sheet of paper, a big pile of money, and no preconceptions, what kind of business would you design to serve 21st century funeral customers? How would it compare to the funeral home/cemetery of today? John Bolton will look at all the elements that would make up the new funeral and cemetery business, including facilities, staffing, products, and services to put it all in place. He will examine what we can learn from the funeral home or cemetery of tomorrow and how we can put it to work in our businesses today.

4:30 PM–5:15 PM

University Graduation

5:15 PM–6:00 PM

Classroom Wrap-up | Presentation of Certificate

Required to attend to receive certificate (certificates will not be mailed).

6:15 PM–7:30 PM

Graduate Reception

Heavy hors d'oeuvres will be served.

Wednesday, July 23

Travel Day





College of Land Management & Grounds Operations

Dean Gino Merendino

Exceptional cemetery service starts with grounds and operations department. Without effective land management and a commitment to an attractive, well-maintained property, there will be no sales or service. Attendees will learn how their grounds management team can succeed and continuously improve internments, landscaping, buildings, grounds maintenance, and exceptional client experience and satisfaction.

Friday, July 18

2:00 PM–5:30 PM

Registration & Check-in

4:00 PM–5:00 PM

Orientation

5:00 PM–6:00 PM

Welcome Reception

6:00 PM–7:00 PM

Dinner

Saturday, July 19

8:00 AM–8:45 AM

Breakfast

8:45 AM–9:00 AM

Introductions

Gino Merendino

9:00 AM–10:30 AM

Exceptional Cemetery Maintenance-Experience the Difference!

Tim Kolasa

A cemetery's maintenance operations, procedures, and resulting outcomes are the defining experiences for families that enter

our gates. What is exceptional cemetery maintenance and why does it matter? We'll kick off our week together with high energy and a dynamic look at what we are doing to enable meaningful experiences at our cemeteries and share collective ideas on how to improve our efforts.

10:30 AM–11:00 AM

Break

11:00 AM–12:30 PM

Creating a Committal Service that Everybody Talks About

John Gouch, Jr.

Successful cemeteries create great community events that bring visitors into the cemetery and have them leaving in awe. John Gouch Jr.'s cemetery has that experience designed into every committal service performed. He will share his step-by-step process so you can exceed customer expectations and create a buzz in your community for every funeral you service.

12:30 PM–1:30 PM

Lunch

1:30 PM–3:30 PM

Arlington National Cemetery: Restoring Honor

Jack E. Lechner, Jr.

Arlington National Cemetery is the most visited cemetery in the United States. It is the first

destination for dignitaries and heads of state. The problem with operating such a prominent cemetery is the increased pressure to get things right every time. This course will discuss the modernization of technology, processes and procedures learned from the Pentagon and forty years of experience in the deathcare profession. The goal is to perform flawless funerals in order to avoid disappointed families and public relations nightmares.

3:00 PM – 3:30 PM

Break

3:30 PM – 5:00 PM

Applying Technology to Cemetery Operations

Nick Timpe, CSE

Smooth cemetery grounds operations are critical to providing a high level of service and care to families. In this session we will explore the intersection of operations and technology. Equipping and empowering team members with the right technology can streamline work orders, automate communication across teams, make records and maps accessible from the field, enable staff to serve families on the fly, provide accountability for work quality, ensure follow-up to the families in our care, and more. We will review practical steps that you can take to leverage technology for your firm.

5:30 PM – 6:30 PM

Dinner

7:00 PM – 10:00 PM

Student Night – Trivia

College vs. college! Join your classmates to see which College walks away with bragging rights as the 2025 Trivia Champions!

Sunday, July 20

6:30 AM – 7:15 AM

Breakfast

7:15 AM – 11:15 AM

Train the Trainer

Tim Kolasa

Learn how to share your knowledge and experience so your staff can be as proficient as you are in operating equipment. Utilizing a backhoe, this class will use the same master of motion principle used by Michelangelo and Leonard da Vinci to minimize training time for your employees.

11:15 AM – 12:00 PM

Cemetery Tour

Chad Eubanks

Students will take a tour of the beautiful Arlington Memorial Park Cemetery which has evolved to meet the changing needs of the community, while maintaining its small-town charm. The picturesque grounds cover 122 acres of rolling hills, mature trees, and two sparkling lakes. It is truly breathtaking.

12:30 PM – 1:30 PM

Lunch

1:30 PM – 3:00 PM

Cremation: Changing the Face of Traditional Memorialization

Erin Schwanitz-Vogt

Explore the imperative of promoting permanent memorials in the face of the surging popularity of cremation in the United States. With projections indicating that 80% of Americans will choose cremation by 2035, Schwanitz-Vogt underscores the need for cemetery professionals to connect with families and educate them on the enduring benefits of permanent memorization. The overview emphasizes the healing, tradition-honoring, legacy-establishing, and community-building aspects of permanent memorials, advocating for a thoughtful, neutral approach in discussions with families. The presentation also delves into creative space utilization, understanding the impact of a well-maintained and cared for property, the importance of embracing community engagement strategies, and the power of building strong relationships with funeral directors to ensure comprehensive support for grieving families. Ultimately, the presentation positions the promotion of permanent memorials as both an industry responsibility and a meaningful contribution to the well-being of communities.

3:00 PM – 3:30 PM

Break

3:30 PM – 5:00 PM

Green Burial 101 for Cemeteries - Understanding Eco-Friendly Funerals as a Business Opportunity

Rachel Essig

Understand the demographic and market trends driving the increased demand for natural burial options. Define hybrid green burial and describe how it can be added to existing cemeteries. See how natural burials create new opportunities for memorialization and community involvement with your cemetery. Be able to dispel common myths and misconceptions.

5:30 PM–6:30 PM

Dinner

Monday, July 21

8:00 AM–8:55 AM

Breakfast

9:00 AM–10:30 AM

Healing Grief

Phil Zehms

Lack of compassion is usually caused by a lack of understanding. Learning more about grief and bereavement allows us to be more empathetic. In this session, we will explore the journey of grief. Discover the ways in which our mourning traditions emerged, how our profession has evolved, and the ways in which we can assist our families in moving toward healing.

10:30 AM–11:00 AM

Break

11:00 AM–12:30 PM

Sustainable Tree Care Practices for Cemetery Landscapes

Brian Borkowicz

From trees and songbirds to turfgrass and flowering plants, cemetery grounds evoke feelings of peace, place, and purpose. Yet, caring for these landscapes requires thoughtful planning and technical know-how. In this session, we'll share best management practices that promote healthy trees and sustainable landscapes. We'll also discuss how "being green" relates to today's consumer and how you can promote your "green assets" to attract new customers. Takeaways include:

- ▶ Tree care Best Management Practices that promote safe, healthy, and sustainable landscapes.
- ▶ The environmental and economic benefits of a healthy tree canopy.
- ▶ How green space contributes to quality of life, including health and overall wellbeing.
- ▶ Opportunities and threats to healthy trees and landscapes.
- ▶ Ways to leverage and promote your landscape to grow your business.

12:30 PM–1:30 PM

Lunch

1:30 PM–3:00 PM

Cemeteries as Meaningful Places of Trees: How to Become an ArbNet accredited Arboretum

Josh Gevertz

Have you ever admired the beautiful, historic trees on your cemetery grounds and wondered how you might engage with your community around them? Becoming an accredited arboretum through ArbNet may help leverage your tree collections as valuable assets, and make them a more prominent feature of your cemetery for all visitors and the families you serve.

ArbNet is an interactive community of all types of arboreta around the world, including nearly 100 cemetery arboreta. This workshop will provide an overview of ArbNet, the process of arboretum accreditation, and the resources ArbNet offers for establishing and supporting trees and arboreta, including cemetery arboreta specifically.

To illustrate this process and how it can be accomplished, this workshop will highlight the compelling story of Cypress Lawn Arboretum and Memorial Park in Colma, CA, and its journey to becoming a Level II ArbNet accredited cemetery arboretum, sharing lessons from across the 5-year tenure of its inaugural Arboretum Director.

3:00 PM–3:30 PM

Break

3:30 PM–5:00 PM

Modern Cemetery Development

Gary Freytag, CCCE

Customer needs continue to evolve and cemeteries must adapt their product offerings to meet these preferences. Cemeteries must also balance aesthetics with density and revenue generation. Gary Freytag has traveled extensively through North America to see the most effective design concepts in a variety of markets. He will share Spring Grove's long-term approach to cemetery development and how its approach has evolved to embrace several common principles that appeal to the needs of the cremation customer.

7:00 PM–10:00 PM

Sports Night

Join your ICCFAU colleagues for a friendly game of bowling or cornhole! Appetizers, salad, pizza, wings, and dessert will be served.

Tuesday, July 22

8:00 AM–8:55 AM

Breakfast

9:00 AM–10:30 AM

OSHA General Duty Clause

Mark Harrison

Graveside Safety: Led by Certified Safety Training, students will review OSHA regulations for excavating graves, cemetery hazards, and accident prevention. Students will receive checklists and documents on gravesite safety, which you can take back to train your entire maintenance staff to help fulfill your OSHA training requirements.

10:30 AM–11:00 AM

Break

11:00 AM–12:30 PM

Graveside Safety

Mark Harrison

General Duty Clause: Led by Certified Safety Training, this course provides cemetery workers and supervisors with a clear understanding of the OSHA General Duty Clause and its application in cemetery operations. Participants will learn how this overarching safety standard requires employers to provide a workplace free from recognized hazards that could cause serious harm or death. The class will explore how the clause applies to common cemetery tasks, including grave excavation, equipment use, and grounds maintenance. Practical strategies for hazard identification, risk mitigation, and fostering a culture of workplace safety will be emphasized, ensuring compliance and protecting employees from harm.

12:30 PM–1:30 PM

Lunch

1:30 PM–3:00 PM

Cemetery Liability Issues

Poul Lemasters, Esq.

This session will address a broad range of potential liability issues related to cemeteries and land management. We'll examine risk and liability in a number of different contexts and from the perspective of various parties. The session will stress disclosures and procedures designed to prevent or mitigate liability.

3:00 PM–3:30 PM

Break

3:30 PM–4:30 PM

Internal Relationships

Gary O'Sullivan, CCPE

How valuable is it to your organization to have all departments working in harmony? Some experts suggest it is extremely valuable not only to customer satisfaction, internally and externally, but to your bottom-line profitability. In this session you'll learn the keys to developing effective internal relationships to help you drive a positive, productive organization.

4:30 PM–5:15 PM

University Graduation

5:15 PM–6:00 PM

Classroom Wrap-up | Presentation of Certificate

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6:15 PM–7:30 PM

Graduate Reception

Heavy hors d'oeuvres will be served

Wednesday, July 23

Travel Day





College of Leadership, Management & Administration

Dean Gary Freytag, CCFE

The cemetery, cremation and funeral service profession is changing, and so are the skills needed to manage and lead effectively. Attendees will receive solid, relevant, results-focused training targeted at today's required core competencies.

Friday, July 18

2:00 PM–5:30 PM

Registration & Check-in

4:00 PM–5:00 PM

Orientation

5:00 PM–6:00 PM

Welcome Reception

6:00 PM–7:00 PM

Dinner

Saturday, July 19

8:00 AM–8:45 AM

Breakfast

8:45 AM–9:00 AM

Introductions

Gary Freytag, CCFE

9:00 AM–10:30 AM

Become a Leader Worth Following!

Darin Drabing

In this introductory session, we'll explore the many facets of leadership including the journey of an individual contributor to supervision, the skills necessary for the effective practice of management, and the artistry displayed in becoming a leader worth following. We will discover the motivations that drive us toward

success and those that may stand in our way. We will learn to embrace the responsibilities of followership and to harness our energies and emotions into productive behaviors that can transform your employees and your organization.

10:30 AM–11:00 AM

Break

11:00 AM–12:30 PM

Funeral Home and Cemetery Accounting: Keys to Affecting Your Bottom Line

Bill Williams, Jr.

Profit is all about increasing revenue and decreasing expenses. But what are the standards against which you can benchmark yourself? How often does your company truly analyze its expenses? Do you sometimes wonder whether there are line items you should be taking a keen look at but are missing? In this session, we'll examine critical expense items, including how to manage them, ideal ways to reduce them and industry norms to benchmark against them.

12:30 PM–1:30 PM

Lunch

1:30 PM–3:00 PM

A Case Study in Leadership

Gary Freytag, CCFE

This course will challenge the class to take on a leadership crisis taken from real life events. Students will team up to recommend viable solutions to the CEO while dealing with human resource, legal, and operational repercussions.

This course will help evaluate and benchmark your leadership effectiveness and help you develop your leadership ability.

3:00 PM–3:30 PM

Break

3:30 PM–5:00 PM

Beyond the Numbers

Bob Gordon, Jr., CCE

There is a lot more to managing and leading a successful team than just a title, it's what you do. In this face-paced interactive program participants will review top tactics to increase their effectiveness and success. Both seasoned and new managers will gain strategies they can put into action right away.

5:30 PM–6:30 PM

Dinner

7:00 PM–10:00 PM

Student Night - Trivia

College vs. college! Join your classmates to see which College walks away with bragging rights as the 2025 Trivia Champions!

Sunday, July 20

8:00 AM–8:55 AM

Breakfast

9:00 AM–10:30 AM

Communication and the Art of Effective Feedback

Carol Little

We all know that powerful communication is essential to strong leadership. But what is powerful communication and how can you effectively deliver feedback so your team will actually receive and benefit from it? As president and CEO of The Little Training Company LLC (LTC), Carol Little brings 15+ years of experience as a Certified Master Trainer and Public Speaker to these questions to help you improve the way you communicate with your team. In this workshop, she will discuss:

- ▶ The essential elements of feedback
- ▶ How, when, and where to deliver feedback
- ▶ How to address problems and get your team to buy into the solutions
- ▶ The “Feedback Sandwich”—What it is and how to serve it up

10:30 AM–11:00 AM

Break

11:00 AM–12:30 PM

First Let's Kill All the Lawyers!

Gary Freytag, CCCE

How often do you wish you could take Shakespeare's advice before dealing with difficult employee situations? As an employer/manager, are you at wits end with HR matters disrupting day-to-day operations? Do you have an employee handbook? Are its policies and procedures helping or hindering you from dealing appropriately with bad behavior? Are you unknowingly undermining your company culture? As an employer/manager it's important to have a basic understanding of how to react when you are confronted with different HR situations. This interactive session will present HR scenarios that will help you to think on your feet and exercise prudent judgment while keeping you out of court.

12:30 PM–1:30 PM

Lunch

1:30 PM–3:00 PM

Trust as a Manager

Ashley Freeman, MBA

New managers are typically promoted for their individual contributor skills, but six out of ten of them receive no formal training on how to manage people. In this session, we cover the most important and foundational interpersonal skill for a cohesive and productive team – building trust – with practical application tips you can apply to your team to enhance engagement and productivity.

3:00 PM–3:30 PM

Break

3:30 PM–5:00 PM

Navigating Difficult Conversations

Ashley Freeman, MBA

We all have that one conversation we know we need to have but have been avoiding. This session is a call to action that provides practical tools for that conversation so that you can move forward successfully through it while diffusing defensiveness, resulting in enhanced relationships and improved communication in both your personal and professional life.

5:30 PM–6:30 PM

Dinner

Monday, July 21

8:00 AM–8:55 AM

Breakfast

9:00 AM–10:30 AM

Leadership & Communication – Own it!

Robbie Pape, CCFE

Are you deliberate in how and what you communicate? During this session, Robbie Pape will help us become aware of our ‘communication comfort zones’ using the DISC Assessment. This session will provide you with communication basics, an understanding of the habits that hold us back, and the immense power that choice has in our lives both professionally and personally.

10:30 AM–11:00 AM

Break

11:00 AM–12:30 PM

Our Greatest Assets

Beverley Manning

We’ve all heard and believe the statement that “employees are a company’s greatest asset”. As managers and employers, are we doing the things to retain and develop those assets? Are we embracing our competitive advantage and providing the encouragement, incentives and opportunity for our employees to be an integral part of the company’s mission?

This course will introduce you to the latest trends, best practices and tools to assist with developing a work culture that is conducive to achievement and engagement. Topics will include performance management, hiring practices, retention, morale and the importance of consistent policies and procedures.

12:30 PM–1:30 PM

Lunch

1:30 PM–3:00 PM

Using Your Strengths to Prevent Burnout

Ashley Freeman, MBA

When was the last time you felt truly alive after work? In this session, you will define what your strengths are, learn how to apply them in your life and work, and understand research-based methods for using them to feel fulfilled and fueled even after the busiest and most draining days.

3:00 PM–3:30 PM

Break

3:30 PM–5:00 PM

Crafting Your Career Purpose Statement

Ashley Freeman, MBA

Most of us have a loose understanding of our ideal career path, but what if you could clarify your career purpose into a single statement? This interactive and reflective session walks you through the components that make up a career purpose statement and leaves you with a draft statement to share and refine with colleagues and loved ones so that you can find more joy, fulfillment, and energy in your everyday career journey.

7:00 PM–10:00 PM

Sports Night

Join your ICCFAU colleagues for a friendly game of bowling or cornhole! Appetizers, salad, pizza, wings, and dessert will be served.

Tuesday, July 22

8:00 AM–8:55 AM

Breakfast

9:00 AM–10:30 AM

Community Outreach: Setting Your Company Apart

Christina DiBari

Profit is all about increasing revenue and Are you doing everything you can to build your company’s ties into the community? Is your organization the first one families think of in a time of need? Spring Grove Cemetery gets between 20,000 and 30,000 visitors per year – for reasons other than funerals and burials. This course will explore the variety of ways Spring Grove builds its presence and positive awareness, including everything from grief programs, events and tours, to car shows, Segway’s and Facebook.

10:30 AM–11:00 AM

Break

11:00 AM–12:30 PM

“Business Law” - A Funeral Home and Cemetery Legal Outlook

Poul Lemasters, Esq.

As a manager, you are called upon to make many decisions but do you know if your decisions are legally sound? Are you aware of common hiring and firing legal issues and how to avoid them? Do you know how to handle HR issues so that you are paving the way for a good legal foundation versus creating a lawsuit? When it comes to recordkeeping, do you know what to document and what to avoid?

Gain the knowledge, the legal knowledge, to understanding the legal risks, and, more importantly, the steps to avoid legal pitfalls that run with the day-to-day job of management. From customer complaints to demand letters, this will not only help cover the basics but it will also help CYA.

12:30 PM–1:30 PM

Lunch

1:30 PM–3:00 PM

Your Marketing & Branding Mantra: Building Customer Loyalty

Doug Gober

When people hear your company's name, what thoughts or emotions are evoked? In this class, we will learn about how our actions and interactions can positively impact the development process of lasting customer loyalty. Doug Gober will pull together a variety of key branding considerations and apply them directly to cemeteries, crematories, and funeral homes. We will examine each potential point of customer contact within your business and delve into how each of these impact our existing and potential customers. Discover how this integrated branding concept can help you differentiate yourself in your marketplace.

3:00 PM–3:30 PM

Break

3:30 PM–4:30 PM

Corporate Culture: How Strong Is Your Foundation?

Gary Freytag, CCFE

Corporate culture is difficult to define but critical to an organization pursuing excellence. How do organizations define and build a positive culture? Are you a "Me" or a "We" company? How does culture help guide every employee in their day-to-day decision making? This class will delve into the key elements of building a positive, self-sustaining culture that supports the business and improves employee engagement. We will examine how leaders through their decisions and actions can nurture, or undermine culture.

4:30 PM–5:15 PM

University Graduation

5:15 PM–6:00 PM

Classroom Wrap-up | Presentation of Certificate

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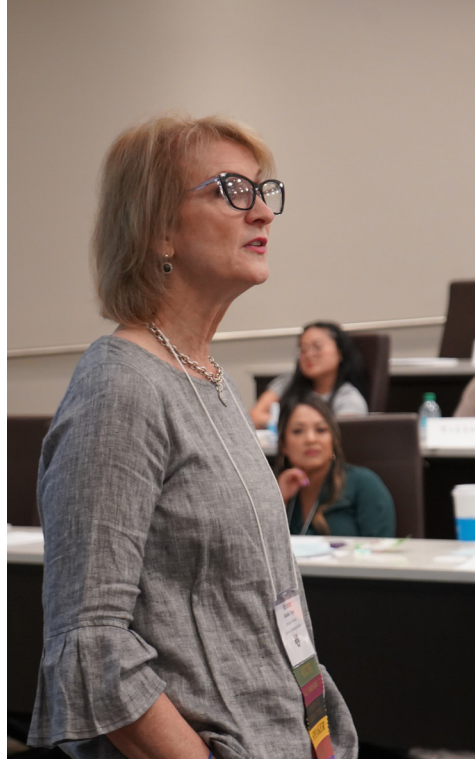
6:15 PM–7:30 PM

Graduate Reception

Heavy hors d'oeuvres will be served

Wednesday, July 23

Travel Day





College of Technology

Dean Nick Timpe, CSE

The College of Technology will provide practical strategies for attendees to apply technology at their firms for improving operations and better serving their families.

Friday, July 18

2:00 PM–5:30 PM

Registration & Check-in

4:00 PM–5:00 PM

Orientation

5:00 PM–6:00 PM

Welcome Reception

6:00 PM–7:00 PM

Dinner

Saturday, July 19

8:00 AM–8:45 AM

Breakfast

8:45 AM–9:00 AM

Introductions

Nick Timpe, CSE

9:00 AM–10:30 AM

New Technology in an Old Profession

Nick Timpe, CSE

Our profession is perhaps the oldest that exists – how can modern technology help better serve families, and what can I expect out of this school? This session will provide a roadmap for the coming week and provide real life examples of technology making the difference in the level of service provided to families. Students will

share their learning goals for the week.

10:30 AM–11:00 AM

Break

11:00 AM–12:30 PM

People, Process, Technology: Solving the Right Problem

Jason Cavett

We have all heard it before - “Do you want to grow your organization? Increase your revenue? Drive new sales? Well, use XYZ Software and you will see results!” A piece of software, by itself, is just another get rich quick scheme and often results in organizational frustration, split fiefdoms of technology, and failure to achieve the desired goals. This session will cover an approach to organizational growth that creates a bed of solid rock on which to advance, grow, and expand. Rather than throwing technology at the problem or goal, you will walk away with a plan for developing an organizational environment where your tools support and enable your growth.

12:30 PM–1:30 PM

Lunch

1:30 PM–3:00 PM

Why Digital First Impressions Matter: Also Known As You Spent \$1MM on Your Cemetery Entrance but Your Neighbor's Kid Built Your Website

Jason Cavett

As our culture continues to evolve through generational, regional, and societal changes, more people are getting their first - and sometimes only - impression from your website. What considerations should you take when presenting your funeral home or cemetery online? How do you capture the attention and, more importantly, the trust of families who are making huge decisions at emotional times? How do you prompt them to engage with your organization? This session explores design considerations, usability, and a family-focused approach.

3:00 PM–3:30 PM

Break

3:30 PM–5:00 PM

Lab: Live Website Evaluations

Jason Cavett

This morning we learned the critical elements for a successful and impactful website. Today we will use these skills for live evaluation of actual websites in our profession. Students will work in groups to evaluate funeral home and cemetery websites, report their critique to the group, and then hear professional feedback from professors.

5:30 PM–6:30 PM

Dinner

7:00 PM–10:00 PM

Student Night - Trivia

College vs. college! Join your classmates to see which College walks away with bragging rights as the 2025 Trivia Champions!

Sunday, July 20

8:00 AM–8:55 AM

Breakfast

9:00 AM–10:30 AM

Implementing and Managing Technological Innovation

Gary Freytag, CCFE

Competing in today's business environment requires constant innovation, but what does this look like from a management perspective, and how can you "manage up" to effect that change with your company's leadership? What kind

of stats do your decision makers look at, and what influences their decisions? This class will examine justifying new investment, common implementation challenges, balancing the needs of people with systems, and the unintended consequences of technological innovation from a management perspective.

10:30 AM–11:00 AM

Break

11:00 AM–12:30 PM

Customer Experience and Client Follow-up: Surveying for Results

Lori Bolton, CSE, CXE

As our interactions with consumers change through the adoption of technology it is critical to maintain the high level of service and customer experience that marks our profession. In this class we will evaluate approaches and strategies for maintaining a high level of customer experience, survey for consumer feedback, and how to use that feedback to continue improving your organization.

12:30 PM–1:30 PM

Lunch

1:30 PM–3:00 PM

21st Century Recordkeeping

Tim Kolasa, Nick Timpe

What can realistically be expected from technology when it comes to running your cemetery or funeral home? What should be pursued first? What can be done in-house and what should be purchased? This session will review off the shelf industry options for records systems, mapping solutions, report builders, as well as DIY tools for the same.

3:00 PM–3:30 PM

Break

3:30 PM–5:00 PM

Virtual Tours, Customer Surveys, and Reports Lab

Nick Timpe, Tim Kolasa, Lori Bolton

This lab is a hands-on opportunity to build your own virtual tours, surveys, and reports. Students will be instructed on 3D filming technology for building virtual tours of their property and facilities. We will review the strategy and process of surveying customers, and how to report on that data.

5:30 PM–6:30 PM

Dinner

Monday, July 21

8:00 AM–8:55 AM

Breakfast

9:00 AM–10:30 AM

Strategic Planning for IT Resources

Christina DiBari

How does a business, regardless of size or available resources, decide how to allocate their technology dollars? Every business has different initiatives and goals. In this class, we will talk about Strategic Planning, how to prioritize those IT projects and discuss a framework for your IT investments. We will also focus on 2 key challenges that most businesses are currently facing: Security and the modern workforce.

10:30 AM–11:00 AM

Break

11:00 AM–12:30 PM

Implementing and Automating Your CRM to Maximize Sales Efficiency

Tim Kolasa

With so many moving parts in the sales process and marketing outreach, how can you connect all of the dots to ensure that prospects are not falling through the cracks? How can your CRM help keep leads warm and moving through the sales funnel? This class will cover practical steps to launching a new system for your team, as well as how your sales process, follow up, scheduling, analytics, and more can be automated.

12:30 PM–1:30 PM

Lunch

1:30 PM–3:00 PM

From Clicks to Clients: Mastering Facebook, Google, SEO & Video for Growth

Mitchell McLean

Getting more business from digital marketing isn't about doing one thing right—it's about getting everything to work together. In this session, we'll break down how to connect the dots between Facebook, Google, SEO, video, and more to actually drive calls and grow your funeral home or cemetery. You'll learn simple, effective ways to optimize your Google Business Profile, get more positive reviews, and make sure your website turns visitors into families who pick up the phone. We'll also cover Facebook and Google Ads strategies that actually work, plus

how custom video can help build trust and set you apart. If you've ever wondered how to make digital marketing feel less overwhelming and more like a well-oiled machine, this session is for you.

3:00 PM–3:30 PM

Break

3:30 PM–5:00 PM

Hands-On Digital Workshop: Turning Digital Marketing into Measurable Results

Mitchell McLean

This isn't just another marketing talk—it's a hands-on session where we roll up our sleeves and get to work. We'll walk through real examples of Google Business Profile optimizations, fine-tune Facebook strategies, and show you quick SEO fixes that make a difference. You'll also get practical tips for improving your website's conversion rate and making sure your ads bring in the right families. Plus, we'll cover easy ways to use video to strengthen your brand and connect with your community. Bring your laptop, your questions, and any challenges you're facing—we're here to help you leave with a clear plan and real solutions you can start using right away.

7:00 PM–10:00 PM

Sports Night

Join your ICCFAU colleagues for a friendly game of bowling or cornhole! Appetizers, salad, pizza, wings, and dessert will be served.

Tuesday, July 22

8:00 AM–8:55 AM

Breakfast

9:00 AM–10:30 AM

“Technology Makes It All Easier – Including the Risks of Liability” A Legal Look at Deathcare Technology

Poul Lemasters, Esq.

It's so simple. In today's technology world, with a click of a button you can do anything. Buy a casket – click. Schedule a funeral – click. Write a bad review of a funeral business – click. But with all that technology brings us, it also brings new risks. While every business will have some risks, what about new risks with new technology. How does a business protect itself from technology it may not even understand? How does a business secure itself from cyber threats? How does a business provide and gather information through its website without creating a risk to

itself or consumers? The truth is that technology is great step forward – but you can't just move forward and think that new technology is free from risk management. This class will help identify technology in deathcare as well as the ways you can reduce the risks.

10:30 AM–11:00 AM

Break

11:00 AM–12:30 PM

Embracing Change: Strategies for Helping Staff Continually Improve and Adapt to New Technology

Olga Piehler

As the rate of change and technological innovation continues to exponentially increase in all aspects of our lives, it is imperative for leaders to become fluent navigators and facilitators of change. This course will cover a neuroscience perspective to change facilitation, and the top reasons change gets stuck. Attendees will be provided with tools to help identify the most common types of resistance to change (external and internal) and techniques to overcome resistance for the adoption of change in a sustainable way. The course will also address the concept of unlearning and its role in change acquisition. Participants will learn how to incorporate unlearning goals into their change-design process to achieve desired outcomes.

12:30 PM–1:30 PM

Lunch

1:30 PM–3:00 PM

Applying Artificial Intelligence to Funeral Service

Pierce Dempsey

AI is disrupting our world and evolving at a rapid pace. How does it apply to funeral homes and cemeteries? What are the benefits, the concerns, and the ethical implications? This class offers a comprehensive introduction to Artificial Intelligence (AI) and its application to our profession. Participants will learn about the fundamentals of AI, including how it can transform operations, enhance family service, and drive sales. Through real-world examples, students will understand the potential of AI to streamline business processes and offer personalized services.

3:00 PM–3:30 PM

Break

3:30 PM–4:30 PM

AI Lab

Pierce Dempsey

In this next hour we will apply what you

have learned about AI. You will get hands-on experience as we work through real world issues and experience the myriad of outcomes associated with varying degrees of Human input.

4:30 PM–5:15 PM

University Graduation

5:15 PM–6:00 PM

Classroom Wrap-up | Presentation of Certificate

Required to attend to receive certificate (certificates will not be mailed).

6:15 PM–7:30 PM

Graduate Reception

Heavy hors d'oeuvres will be served

Wednesday, July 23

Travel Day





J. Asher Neel College of Sales and Marketing

Dean Patrick Downey, CCE

The principles of sales and marketing don't change; only technique and application do. Learn how to take the tried-and-true principles of cemetery and funeral sales and apply them within today's highly mobile, multi-cultural, high-tech, information-driven marketplace. This year the J. Asher Neel College of Sales and Marketing brings together an exceptional faculty consisting of experienced leaders from all areas of cemetery and funeral service working across the US and internationally who will be presenting on a wide spectrum of content including sales and leadership skills, marketing ideas, cremation practices, artificial intelligence applications and more. A comprehensive course for both sales and non-sales professionals.

Friday, July 18

2:00 PM–5:30 PM

Registration & Check-in

4:00 PM–5:00 PM

Orientation

5:00 PM–6:00 PM

Welcome Reception

6:00 PM–7:00 PM

Dinner

Saturday, July 19

8:00 AM–8:45 AM

Breakfast

8:45 AM–9:15 AM

Introductions

Patrick Downey, CCE

9:15 AM–10:30 AM

The Purpose and Power of a Career in Sales

Patrick Downey, CCE

In today's world, salespeople can sometimes be labeled in a negative context as "high pressure" or "hucksters". However, salespeople who understand and embrace the core principles of sales as a profession are appreciated and respected for how they serve client families. In this interactive session we will explore the mindset, core competencies and personal attributes that must be mastered by true sales professionals and discuss how these principles are put into practice in our daily work in funeral and cemetery service.

10:30 AM–11:00 AM

Break

11:00 AM–12:30 PM

The Marketing and Sales Matrix – How to Integrate Both Components to Build Reputation, Call Volume and Revenue

Shane Pudenz

In this session, Shane will delve into the ever-evolving marketing landscape and demonstrate how you can harness these changes to enhance reputation, increase call volume, and boost revenue for both Cemeteries and Funeral Homes. By exploring new trends, cutting-edge technologies, and innovative strategies, you will leave with a comprehensive understanding of how to drive your businesses smarter and more efficiently..

12:30 PM–1:30 PM

Lunch

1:30 PM–3:00 PM

Raising the Bar: Applying Technology and AI to Family Engagement and Sales

Nick Timpe, CSE

In today's fast-paced world, connecting with families requires a fresh approach that balances personalization with efficiency. Modern consumers expect seamless, technology-driven interactions, and today's technology and artificial intelligence can help you deliver. In this session, you'll learn how to apply innovative technology and AI tools to engage website visitors, streamline remote arrangement meetings, and enhance virtual aftercare follow-up. Discover how AI can help you get more done in less time by automating repetitive tasks, personalizing communication, and freeing up your team to focus on what matters most—building meaningful connections with the families you serve.

3:00 PM–3:30 PM

Break

3:30 PM–5:00 PM

Learn the Six Most Powerful Ways to Influence Your Prospects to Buy

Andrés Aguilar

Selling is more psychological than it is logical. In this session, you will learn what these six powerful tools are. You will also learn the principles of why they work and how to use them in a positive way to influence people to buy from you. This is a session you don't want to miss.

5:30 PM–6:30 PM

Dinner

7:00 PM–10:00 PM

Student Night - Trivia

College vs. college! Join your classmates to see which College walks away with bragging rights as the 2025 Trivia Champions!

Sunday, July 20

8:00 AM–8:55 AM

Breakfast

9:00 AM–10:30 AM

How to Recruit, Develop, and Retain Top Talent for Your Organization: A Constant and Consistent Commitment to Becoming the Best

Shane Pudenz

This session will focus on the critical importance of a steadfast and consistent commitment to becoming the best. You will learn effective techniques for recruiting, developing, and retaining top-tier sales talent, ensuring your organizations are well-equipped for sustained success.

10:30 AM–11:00 AM

Break

11:00 AM–12:30 PM

Coaching and Communication Techniques to Keep Your Team Positive and Productive – An Interactive Workshop

Patrick Downey, CCE

Learn and roleplay communication skills and techniques to implement a coaching and communication system to stay connected with every member of your sales team and build a “Top Gun” proactive team culture within your sales organization.

12:30 PM–1:30 PM

Lunch

1:30 PM–3:00 PM

Sales Leadership

Andrés Aguilar

Leadership is a key component for any sales organization. This class will explore the aspects of good sales leadership.

3:00 PM–3:30 PM

Break

3:30 PM–5:00 PM

What a Lawyer Can Teach Me About Sales

Poul Lemasters, Esq.

Seriously? Everyone thinks that lawyers are there when things go wrong, and probably would never compare the world of a lawyer to the world of sales - but the two worlds have a lot in common. In fact, there are probably a few things a lawyer can teach you about sales! There are the obvious items such as HR and general employment issues. But go a little further and consider the regulatory and licensing side of sales. How about the general world of advertising – not only by mail, but by telephone and online? Now let's jump into all those contracts and forms that are used in every sale you make. And - wait for it - how about ethics? I know you are curious what a lawyer can teach about ethics. You can quickly see that lawyers are more involved in sales than you may have thought. This seminar will cover the spectrum of law and sales – ranging from the day-to-day legal issues all the way to tips and tricks a lawyer can share to help with anyone's sales.

5:30 PM–6:30 PM

Dinner

Monday, July 21

8:00 AM–8:55 AM

Breakfast

9:00 AM–10:30 AM

The Secret Number and the Required Habit

Gary O'Sullivan, CCFE

Whether you're a sales leader or a sales professional, perhaps you've asked this question. "Why do some people succeed in the same environment where others fail?" There are two significant competencies that affect this phenomenon. You will learn them both and be able to implement them the day you return to your business.

10:30 AM–11:00 AM

Break

1:00 AM–12:30 PM

Why Systematic and Compelling Pre-Need Presentation is Critical to Influence Today's Consumer

Sean Riley

Do you have an effective pre-need presentation or do you just wing it? When dealing with today's savvy consumer, winging it is no longer effective. Customers want you to explain your

selling proposition in a methodical and logical method. If you don't have a systematic process by which to accomplish this, you will after this session. You will learn the critical elements and the tools you need to make a compelling and convincing pre-need presentation that will help you make more sales.

12:30 PM–1:30 PM

Lunch

1:30 PM–3:00 PM

The Nuts and Bolts of an Effective Lunch and Learn Program

Kyle Aler

How do you create an effective Lunch and Learn program? This session will give you practical tips on creating an effective Lunch and Learn program. From large combination companies to stand alone cemeteries or mortuaries, everyone can benefit from these programs.

3:00 PM–3:30 PM

Break

3:30 PM–5:00 PM

Aftercare with Purpose: Building Value Beyond the Service

Erin Creger

Take your Aftercare program to the next level by transforming routine follow-up into meaningful relationships built on trust and value. This session will guide you in designing and implementing an Aftercare program that goes beyond the standard approach and delivers genuine value to the families you serve. With practical tools and actionable insights to establish trust and build long-term connections with client families.

Learn how a proactive, caring and consistent approach to Aftercare ensures families feel engaged and supported early in the process, and every step of the way. You will leave equipped with the verbiage, resources, and strategies to confidently create an Aftercare plan that fosters lasting trust, loyalty and results.

7:00 PM–10:00 PM

Sports Night

Join your ICCFAU colleagues for a friendly game of bowling or cornhole! Appetizers, salad, pizza, wings, and dessert will be served.

Tuesday, July 22

8:00 AM–8:55 AM

Breakfast

9:00 AM–10:30 AM

The Follow-up Formula: Lead Nurturing from First Contact to Close

Erin Greger

Discover tools and techniques that transform initial interactions into lasting relationships, guiding client families seamlessly through the process of making their pre-arrangements. Learn the art of personalized follow-up, leveraging insights from each touchpoint to tailor your approach.

From the first point of contact to the final close, and beyond, this session will give you a comprehensive framework to cultivate leads, build trust, educate families, and maximize conversion rates.

Uncover the secrets to developing compelling follow-up scripts and strategies that connect with your families and move toward a positive outcome for all. Whether new to sales, or refining your skillset, you will learn how to cultivate your approach to lead nurturing and follow up, ensuring families feel peace of mind knowing they have been carefully guided and educated through the decision-making process.

10:30 AM–11:00 AM

Break

11:00 AM–12:30 PM

The Invisible Force: How Sales Culture Impacts Your Sales Organization

Gary O'Sullivan, CCFE

Today, more than ever, people want meaning from their work and want to work where they know they matter. In this unique session, Gary will show you the invisible force that is at work in your organization today. He will then explain the impact that it's having on the people you get, the people you keep, and the level of performance that is achieved. If you're not aware of this invisible force impacting your business, don't miss this session!

12:30 PM–1:30 PM

Lunch

1:30 PM–3:00 PM

Cremation Myths Debunked

Néctar Ramírez

So many families who choose cremation are selecting no services. There is a misunderstanding of the cremation consumer, which is leading to an abundance of direct cremation policies. In this session, we will take a deep dive into the psychology of the cremation consumer and gain a better understanding of

their needs and wants. With that understanding, we will tailor our presentation of products and services to maximize the probability of a service, higher policy value, and family satisfaction.

3:00 PM–3:30 PM

Break

3:30 PM–4:30 PM

BE Powerful!

Robbie Pape, CCFE

With all that you know, now what? How will you show up when you return home? Robbie will take you through how to speak powerfully and how to have 'presence'. Be ready to look at what is holding you back and how/if you are showing up as a role model for your team. If not you, then who? If not now, then when?

4:30 PM–5:15 PM

University Graduation

5:15 PM–6:00 PM

Classroom Wrap-up | Presentation of Certificate

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6:15 PM–7:30 PM

Graduate Reception

Heavy hors d'oeuvres will be served

Wednesday, July 23

Travel Day





Todd Van Beck College of Funeral Home Management

Deans Mike Watkins & Mat Forastiere

Too many managers consider “creativity” someone else’s department. In funeral service, creative management is the key to differentiation.

Friday, July 18

2:00 PM–5:30 PM

Registration & Check-in

4:00 PM–5:00 PM

Orientation

5:00 PM–6:00 PM

Welcome Reception

6:00 PM–7:00 PM

Dinner

Saturday, July 19

8:00 AM–8:45 AM

Breakfast

8:45 AM–9:00 AM

Introductions

Mike Watkins

9:00 AM–10:30 AM

Course Introduction & The “WHY” of Funeral Service

Mike Watkins

This course will provide an overview of the College of Funeral Home Management and the importance of understanding the “WHY” of funeral service and connecting with your personal “WHY.” This foundational information brings value to you personally and the communities and families you serve.

This launching-off session sets the table for the valuable information and topics to come throughout the course.

10:30 AM–11:00 AM

Break

11:00 AM–12:30 PM

Overcoming Deritualization: Saving Funerals Through Private Rituals

Dr. Jason Troyer

Many funeral professionals lament that “no one values funeral rituals anymore.” It is true that families may not agree on what a public funeral service will look like. However, there are many other valuable opportunities to help individuals acknowledge their loss and honor their loved one. In this presentation, Dr. Troyer will review numerous examples of how funeral professionals can help facilitate private grief rituals that families will find valuable and meaningful.

12:30 PM–1:30 PM

Lunch

1:30 PM–3:00 PM

Can’t I Just Fire Them? Some Do’s and Don’ts of HR and Management

Poul Lemasters, Esq

Employees are not only one of the biggest expenses for a company; employees can also be the most problematic. Good employees are hard to find, and it seems even the best can cause

problems. So, what do you do when your best employee continues to come in late? How do you handle an employee that makes the nightly news - and not for a good reason? And can someone tell me if all my employees are high? This seminar provides insight to real, current HR and other management issues affecting the funeral profession today. The focus is on some tough, prevalent, and new problems that could lead to a lawsuit; and of course, the prevention measures needed to avoid the problems.

3:00 PM–3:30 PM

Break

3:30 PM–5:00 PM

Your Team – Leading, Coaching, and Directing

Mike Watkins

The most valuable asset in any funeral business is the team of employees that serve our communities daily. In this session students will be presented with leadership best practices, coaching and scheduling tools.

5:30 PM–6:30 PM

Dinner

7:00 PM–10:00 PM

Student Night – Trivia

College vs. college! Join your classmates to see which College walks away with bragging rights as the 2025 Trivia Champions!

Sunday, July 20

8:00 AM–8:55 AM

Breakfast

9:00 AM–10:30 AM

Families Gone Wild: Defusing Conflict in the Arrangement Room

Dr. Jason Troyer

Increasingly families fight among themselves and clash with their funeral arranger regarding service options, the cost of services and products, and many other topics. In this presentation, I discuss specific examples of conflict, examine the psychological roots of specific behaviors, and propose tactics for defusing and resolving the conflict. The strategies are drawn from clinical psychology and family therapy where therapists must quickly decipher challenging family dynamics and work toward positive outcomes. Attendees will leave with practical strategies they can use immediately to defuse conflict in the arrangement conference.

10:30 AM–11:00 AM

Break

11:00 AM–12:30 PM

Beyond the Service and Where to Begin

Lauren Blevins Hogan, CCFE, CPLP

As we progress inside the shift in our industry and move more toward a hospitality mindset, how do we begin? Implementation of a new way of doing business from catering to specialized services can be the most challenging part of the process. Lauren will give some clear how-to's. How she started and what she learned from some of her winning solutions and from some ideas that flopped. Embracing change will not only affect our personal lives but can have a profound impact on our businesses if our teams believe in it.

12:30 PM–1:30 PM

Lunch

1:30 PM–3:00 PM

Cremation Risk Management

Poul Lemasters, Esq.

Poul has customized this program specifically for the school of Funeral Home Management. He will provide best practices for firms to mitigate their risk exposure and ensure you, your employees, and the families you serve are protected.

3:00 PM–3:30 PM

Break

3:30 PM–5:00 PM

Why Keeping Score Matters

Doug Gober

Historically, Funeral & Cemetery Service professionals tend to be focused on serving their community. While important, care must be taken to not ignore the fact that they are running a significant business. In this presentation, Doug will explore easy to implement methods to consistently evaluate financial progress through the use of operational performance indicators and comparative analysis

5:30 PM–6:30 PM

Dinner

Monday, July 21

8:00 AM–8:55 AM

Breakfast

9:00 AM–10:30 AM

Crematory & Prep Room Management

Lauren Blevins Hogan, CCFE, CPLP

This two-session course is not a crematory operator or embalming seminar. Rather, students will be presented with proven policies, procedures, and practices to assure safe and prudent crematory and prep room management. This course will cover topics from proper handling, recording, and tracking of human remains to inventory and cost management.

10:30 AM–11:00 AM

Break

11:00 AM–12:30 PM

Crematory & Prep Room Management (Continued)

Lauren Blevins Hogan, CCFE, CPLP

12:30 PM–1:30 PM

Lunch

1:30 PM–3:00 PM

Fine Tuning Your Operation for Peak Performance

Mat Forestiere

An essential part of your role as a business leader involves your ability to see the “big picture” and provide feedback and direction to your staff. Join Mat as he shares essential leadership skills that will help you set expectations, overcome obstacles, and maximize staff productivity both as individuals and as a team.

3:00 PM–3:30 PM

Break

3:30 PM–5:00 PM

Are You Just Going Through the Motions?

Doug Gober

Research has shown a disconnect between our message about our offer and the family’s opinion as to whether or not they have sufficient information to make a logical buying decision. It is evident that there is often a breakdown between how we are presenting information and how the consumer receives it under extremely stressful circumstances. Join Doug as he helps you evaluate your method of communication and proposes meaningful skills and tools needed to help bridge this gap.

7:00 PM–10:00 PM

Sports Night

Join your ICCFAU colleagues for a friendly game of bowling or cornhole! Appetizers, salad, pizza, wings, and dessert will be served.

Tuesday, July 22

8:00 AM–8:55 AM

Breakfast

9:00 AM–10:30 AM

Service or Serving: The Simple Shift to Unlock Your Scalability

Mandie Hungarland

We all know service is important, but are you truly serving? Making this simple mindset shift can change the way you approach your team and customer interactions and unlock scalable success. This session breaks it down with unexpected strategies that drive loyalty, strengthen your team, and build lasting customer experiences. We’ll cover:

- › Turning off transaction mindset and humanizing your customer experience
- › Long-term vision, generational customers, and extra-mile mentality
- › Effects of underutilized tools like thankfulness and empathy on your physiological, emotional, and financial success

Discover how serving is the secret to growing your business the right way.

10:30 AM–11:00 AM

Break

11:00 AM–12:30 PM

The Art and Science of Connecting with the “Researcher”

Nicole Wiedeman, CSE

It’s a competitive world out there in deathcare and as managers, we set the expectations in the level of service required in our organizations. Deathcare professionals often assume consumers call in asking for information based solely on price. In this course we will we learn that we can’t make assumptions. We will discover the art of conversing with “researchers.” There is also the science behind the discussion. Certain technical elements must be included in your chat. The phone is our friend, when we approach the consumer in the right way.

12:30 PM–1:30 PM

Lunch

1:30 PM–3:00 PM

Grass Roots Marketing

Phil Zehms

In this lecture session, Phil will present on the development and application of a comprehensive grass roots marketing plan. He will share proven strategies and provides a framework for developing your own grass roots marketing plan.

3:00 PM–3:30 PM

Break

3:30 PM–4:30 PM

Creating a Grass Roots Marketing Plan

Phil Zehms

In this workshop session, Phil will lead students in developing their own grass roots marketing plan, specific to their business, it's goals, and the community it serves.

4:30 PM–5:15 PM

University Graduation

5:15 PM–6:00 PM

Classroom Wrap-up | Presentation of Certificate

Required to attend to receive certificate (certificates will not be mailed).

6:15 PM–7:30 PM

Graduate Reception

Heavy hors d'oeuvres will be served

Wednesday, July 23

Travel Day





School of Graduate Studies

Dean Robbie Pape, CCFE

The School of Graduate Studies is designed for C-Suite leaders and senior executives who are ready to drive collaboration, innovation, and growth while reaching the highest levels of leadership. Limited to 12 participants, this intimate and highly interactive program will be conducted by industry leaders and leading non-industry professionals and will offer fresh insight and learning to empower you to improve the performance of your operations and lead your organization more effectively. To apply for the program, visit iccf.com/university.

Friday, July 18

2:00 PM–5:30 PM

Registration & Check-in

4:00 PM–5:00 PM

Orientation

5:00 PM–6:00 PM

Welcome Reception

6:00 PM–7:00 PM

Dinner

Saturday, July 19

8:00 AM–8:45 AM

Breakfast

8:45 AM–9:00 AM

Introductions

Robbie Pape, CCFE

9:00 AM–10:30 AM

Servant Leadership

Dave Brown

What leaders want is to have an organization of motivated, productive team members. However, most leaders have never been taught how to truly be servant leaders. Instead of understanding that their role is to serve the people in which they are entrusted and knowing how to lead by putting others first, most leaders are overly

focused on driving results. Consequently, they unintentionally create cultures with low morale, high turnover, and decreased production.

10:30 AM–11:00 AM

Break

11:00 AM–12:30 PM

Navigate for Leaders

Dave Brown

Statistically, if you're like most leaders you lead others well when they are the same behavioral profile as you. But that also means that you are potentially improperly leading as much as 75% of your team. Because leading properly is not about leading people the way you want to be lead; it's about leading people the way they want to be lead. Yet the vast majority of leaders have never had any formal education or professional psychology training about how to identify, understand, and relate to people they lead who are of opposing behavioral types to themselves. As a result, each day relationships are damaged, team camaraderie is weakened, and millions of dollars are lost in potential sales.

12:30 PM–1:30 PM

Lunch

1:30 PM–3:00 PM

Mastering Cemetery Marketing: Strategies for Success

Shane Pudenz

This is a comprehensive and focused session that will provide valuable insights and practical

strategies for effective cemetery marketing

3:00 PM–3:30 PM

Break

3:30 PM–5:00 PM

Effective Board Management: Getting Things Done Through Good Governance

Darin Drabing

As a C-Suite leader, it is often difficult to navigate the world of Board of Directors to have an effective, cohesive organization. Join Darin as he guides you through the ins and outs of effective Board of Directors Management. The class will study the best practices of Board selection, organization, committee structures, deliverables, for profit vs non-profit, the need for diversity and much more.

5:30 PM–6:30 PM

Dinner

7:00 PM–10:00 PM

Student Night - Trivia

College vs. college! Join your classmates to see which College walks away with bragging rights as the 2025 Trivia Champions!

Sunday, July 20

8:00 AM–8:55 AM

Breakfast

9:00 AM–10:30 AM

Staying on the Right Side of the Grass - and Lawsuits, Part I

Poul Lemasters, Esq.

We all ‘hear’ the story about someone who had a lawsuit, but somehow never hear the details. Did they really get sued, or just threatened? Was it even a lawsuit or was it something else? Did they just settle? What did the insurance company do? What is the process of an issue that may or may not become a lawsuit? As a leader of my company - what role do I play?

This course will provide a detailed look into several deathcare situations that can become a bigger issue, if you don’t handle them correctly. From a subpoena to a demand letter; a state regulatory matter to a federal OSHA violation; a customer complaint to a bad viral online review; this course will use real examples to:

- ▶ Analyze several issues, all based on actual lawsuits and claims;
- ▶ Discuss the cause of the underlying issue;
- ▶ Identify the steps involved in each claim, from initial response to settlement;
- ▶ Discover steps to prevent issues from

happening; and

- ▶ Create plans to implement practices into your business.

10:30 AM–11:00 AM

Break

11:00 AM–12:30 PM

Staying on the Right Side of the Grass - and Lawsuits, Part II

Poul Lemaster, Esq.

12:30 PM–1:30 PM

Lunch

1:30 PM–3:00 PM

Built To Last - Developing a Strategic Plan to Carry Your Organization Through the 2030s, Part I

Bob Gordon, Jr., CCE

In an era of rapid technological advancements, evolving consumer preferences, and unpredictable global dynamics, organizations must chart a resilient course to thrive in the 2030s and beyond. Join us for an insightful session where we explore the essential elements of building a sustainable strategy that withstands the test of time. From harnessing innovation to fostering adaptability, we will delve into practical approaches for future-proofing your organization against emerging challenges and seizing opportunities on the horizon. Discover how to cultivate a culture of innovation, leverage digital transformation, and cultivate strategic partnerships to navigate the complexities of tomorrow’s business landscape. Whether you’re a seasoned executive or a high potential manager, this session will equip you with actionable insights to steer your organization towards enduring success in the decade ahead. A pre-work packet will be sent out to all attendees. This is an interactive two-part session, come prepared, stay engaged through the session and leave with more clarity on your path forward.

3:00 PM–3:30 PM

Break

3:30 PM–5:00 PM

Built To Last - Developing a Strategic Plan to Carry Your Organization Through the 2030s, Part II

Bob Gordon, Jr., CCE

5:30 PM–6:30 PM

Dinner

Monday, July 22

8:00 AM–8:55 AM

Breakfast

9:00 AM–10:30 AM

Seeing Beyond Tradition

Lee Longino

Lee will guide us in examining our profession's evolution and applying that knowledge to adopt a contemporary approach. This method transforms funeral services from mundane to dynamic by creating meaningful and unique celebrations of life. We will also consider the significant impact of the cremation consumer, emphasizing that they are more than 'just a direct cremation'.

10:30 AM–11:00 AM

Break

11:00 AM–12:30 PM

Unlocking the Mysteries of Government & Advocacy Involvement in the Funeral and Cemetery Profession

Caressa Hughes

Join Caressa for an insightful presentation designed specifically for funeral home and cemetery leaders. This session will demystify the complexities of federal and state government regulations and their impact on the funeral and cemetery profession.

Key Highlights:

- ▶ Understand key strategies for navigating state and federal laws and regulations.
- ▶ Learn about state-specific government issues and their implications for your business.
- ▶ Discover the legislative process and the importance of advocacy.
- ▶ Gain insights from real-world case studies and recent legislative changes.

This is your opportunity to enhance your knowledge of the governmental process in the funeral and cemetery profession.

12:30 PM–1:30 PM

Lunch

1:30 PM–3:00 PM

Designing a G.A.M.E. Plan for Employee Engagement

Lori Bolton, CSE, CXE

Employee engagement can be defined as the extent to which employees feel committed and

connected to their employer and to the work that they do. It is linked to terms like job satisfaction and employee morale. Employee engagement impacts and is impacted by overall well-being and happiness. Engaged employees care about their work and company. Why is this important?

It is estimated that the employee engagement rate costs US employers \$500 billion per year. In 2024, US Employee Engagement stood at 33%. That means 67% or a staggering 2/3 of employees are not engaged. In fact, job hiring sites like Monster and Indeed estimate that 95% of workers are looking for a new job. Additionally, 45% of employees have side hustles to earn more money or fulfill other interests.

It is critical that your business has a dedicated strategy for employee engagement to increase performance and retention, saving on the heavy costs of re-hiring and training. In this course we will explore one strategic plan for developing and maintaining employee engagement. You will understand the components of Growth, Appreciation, Measurement, and Execution to design a unique Employee Engagement GAME plan for your organization. By the end of this session, you will have an outline of your GAME plan along with a detailed strategy for at least one of the components.

3:00 PM–3:30 PM

Break

3:30 PM–5:00 PM

Encouraging Staff Creativity and Enthusiasm

Glenda Stansbury

One of the most pressing issues in funeral service today is staffing. Finding and keeping funeral professionals is an on-going topic of conversation.

- ▶ Statistics show that within the next 10 years, approximately 2000 Baby Boomer funeral directors will be retiring.
- ▶ According to NFDA "Over 60% of funeral homeowners said they will retire in five years."
- ▶ Statistics also show that mortuary school enrollment is up 24%.

Why are we struggling to find people to hire while watching staff walk out the door? Perhaps it is time to begin to think differently about work culture, support, and expectations to provide an inviting and healthy work environment. To de-adapt from tradition and embrace creative. We will provide ideas, suggestions, and food for thought as we look toward the future of our profession. This includes providing the right environment to grow and nurture employees, creating a space for creativity and unique

approaches to service, giving examples of ceremony that bring the community back to your firm.

7:00 PM–10:00 PM

Sports Night

Join your ICCFAU colleagues for a friendly game of bowling or cornhole! Appetizers, salad, pizza, wings, and dessert will be served.

Tuesday, July 22

8:00 AM–8:55 AM

Breakfast

9:00 AM–10:30 AM

Applied Finance in Deathcare

Gary Freytag, CCFE

Regardless of what role you have, understanding finance is critical to assessing the health of your organization. Finance drives both current decision-making and long-term planning. Should we build a new reception facility? Is my cemetery endowment large enough to maintain the grounds? How well am I managing critical resources? This class will take students through financial analysis as applied to cemeteries and funeral homes. It will teach how to understand financial statements, critical ratios, financial modeling, cash flow, return on investment, portfolio theory, and business valuation.

10:30 AM–11:00 AM

Break

11:00 AM–12:30 PM

Finance Workshop

Gary Freytag, CCFE

Part two of the Finance model will apply the theories introduced in applied finance to analyze the very different real-world problems faced by cemeteries and funeral homes.

CEMETERIES

- ▶ How much does it cost to maintain the grounds?
- ▶ Am I making money operating the cemetery?
- ▶ Are my goods and services priced appropriately?
- ▶ Should I be in-sourcing or outsourcing functions/
- ▶ Is my endowment invested for the long haul?

FUNERAL HOMES

- ▶ How can I tell what is appropriate workload for a funeral director?
- ▶ What is my business worth?
- ▶ Can I afford to expand my operation or facilities?

- ▶ Why should I sell pre-need funerals if I lose money?
- ▶ If I am profitable, why am I always short on cash?
- ▶ How can I finance an acquisition? .

12:30 PM–1:30 PM

Lunch

1:30 PM–3:00 PM

Leadership and the Power of Strong Leaders Starts from Within

Jay Dodds

Leadership is a powerful ideal and being a strong leader takes skill and self-understanding. Understanding your personal skills, traits and characteristics is the first step of strong leadership. Great leaders/managers possess a balanced level of both leadership and managerial traits. What exactly are these tendencies and what distinguishes the two varying disciplines. We will dissect both sides of the coin and clearly define what skills are necessary to be a great leader, but also a strong manager. Like the Yin and Yang, a strong leader must have strong managerial tendencies to lead from a position of strength and clarity.

3:00 PM–3:30 PM

Break

3:30 PM–4:30 PM

Building Success From the Ground Up

Doug Gober

If you were starting over with a blank sheet of paper, a big pile of money, and no preconceptions, what kind of business would you design to serve 21st century funeral customers? How would it compare to the funeral home/cemetery of today? Doug Gober will look at all the elements that would make up the new funeral and cemetery business, including facilities, staffing, products, and services plus the capital required to put it all in place. He will look at what we can learn from the funeral home or cemetery of tomorrow and how we can put it to work in our businesses today.

4:30 PM–5:15 PM

University Graduation

5:15 PM–6:00 PM

Classroom Wrap-up | Presentation of Certificate

Required to attend to receive certificate (certificates will not be mailed).

6:15 PM–7:30 PM

Graduate Reception

Heavy hors d'oeuvres will be served

Wednesday, July 23

Travel Day



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One-day Cremation Operator Registration

The ICCFA offers a one-day registration for those who wish to attend only the Crematory Operator Training Certification on Saturday, July 19. The cost to attend this one-day option is **\$625 per person**. This includes:

- ▶ Admission to the Friday night reception and dinner
- ▶ The all-day crematory operator training and certification on Saturday
- ▶ Breakfast, lunch, and refreshment breaks on Saturday

Please visit www.iccfa.com/university to register for the one-day Crematory Operator Training.

Cancellation Policy: Registrants canceling their registrations prior to June 19 will receive refunds. All cancellations must be made in writing and will be subject to a \$100 cancellation fee. **No refunds after June 19.**

2025 ICCFA University Registration

July 18–23 • Emory Conference Center Hotel at Emory University

Class sizes are limited so act now to reserve your spot! Registration must be received by July 9. After this date, registration will be on-site only. Please go online to www.iccfa.com/university to register for the event and make your room reservation. Due to the high volume of applications, paid registrations will be processed first.

School of Graduate Studies requires a separate application. Please visit iccfa.com/university to review the application to apply.

Cancellation Policy: Registrants canceling their registrations prior to June 19 will receive refunds. All cancellations must be made in writing and will be subject to a \$100 cancellation fee. **No refunds after June 19.** Registrations received by June 19 will be included in the attendee directory.

Housing Reservations

Students should make their reservations directly with the Emory Conference Center Hotel. To reserve your room at the discounted rate of \$179, please visit www.iccfa.com/university and click on the room block link. We do expect the room block to fill up quickly, so make your reservations early.

Registration Fees*

| | |
|--|--------------|
| College of 21st Century Services; | \$2,175 |
| College of Cremation Services; Todd Van Beck College of Funeral Home Management; | |
| College of Hospitality & Customer Experience; | |
| College of Land Management & Grounds Operations; | |
| College of Leadership, Management & Administration; | |
| J. Asher Neel College of Sales & Marketing; or College of Technology | |
| School of Graduate Studies | \$3,000 |
| Additional Meal Package (for guests not attending ICCFAU) | \$1,250 each |

* Fees include all meals from Friday’s dinner through Tuesday’s Graduate Reception, as well as the receptions and refreshments during breaks and the Sports Tournament. Fees cover a 20% service charge and a 9.25% tax on all food service.

2025 ICCFAU Faculty

Andrés Aguilar

Los Parques
Miami, FL

Kyle Aler

Precoa
Portland, OR

Lauren Blevins Hogan, CCFE, CPLP

Williams Funeral Homes & Crematory
Columbia, TN

John Bolton, CCE, CCrE, CSE, CXE

Park Lawn Corporation
San Jose, CA

Lori Bolton, CSE, CXE

Park Lawn Corporation
San Jose, CA

Brian Borkowicz

Davey Tree
Wheeling, IL

Dave Brown

Southwestern Consulting
Nashville, TN

Kathy Burns

InSight Books, Inc.
Oklahoma City, OK

Jason Cavett

webCemeteries
Kutztown, PA

Erin Creger

Security National Family of Companies
Salt Lake City, UT

Clift Dempsey, CCrE, CCFE

Leaf Cremation
Acworth, GA

Pierce Dempsey

Leaf Cremation
Acworth, GA

Christina DiBari

Spring Grove Cemetery & Arboretum
Cincinnati, OH

Jay Dodds

Park Lawn Corporation
Houston, TX

Patrick Downey, CCE

Fairfax, VA

Darin Drabing

Forest Lawn Memorial-Parks & Mortuaries
Glendale, CA

Rachel Essig

Green Burial Council
Folsom, CA

Chad Eubanks

Arlington Memorial Park
Sandy Springs, GA

Mathew Forastiere

Park Lawn Corporation
Houston, TX

Ashley Freeman, MBA

Flourishing Work LLC
Snellville, GA

Gary Freytag, CCFE

Spring Grove Cemetery & Arboretum
Cincinnati, OH

Josh Gevertz

Cypress Lawn
Colma, CA

Doug Gober

Foresight
Phoenix, AZ

Bob Gordon Jr., CCE

Cypress Lawn
Colma, CA

John Gouch Jr.

Gethsemane Cemetery & Memorial Gardens
Charlotte, NC

Mark Harrison

Certified Safety Training

Brooke Heldman

Dignity Memorial
Tampa, FL

Caressa Hughes

Service Corporation International
Houston, TX

Mandie Hungerland

Dead Ringers
Batavia, OH

Nick Karber

Forest Lawn Memorial-Parks & Mortuaries
Glendale, CA

Jeff Kidwiler, CCE, CSE

Blackstone Cemetery Development
San Clemente, CA

Tim Kolasa

Gethsemane Cemetery
Reading, PA

Jack Lechner, Jr.

Cincinnati, OH

Poul Lemasters, Esq.

ICCFA/Lemasters Consulting
Cincinnati, OH

Carol Little

The Little Training Company, LLC
Kingwood, TX

Lee Longino

Dignity Memorial
Tampa, FL

Beverley Manning

Spring Grove Cemetery & Arboretum
Cincinnati, OH

Mitchell McLean

Funeral Directors Life
Abilene, TX

Gino Merendino

Merendino Cemetery Care
Linden, NJ

Gary O'Sullivan, CCFE

Gary O'Sullivan Company
Winter Garden, FL

Robbie Pape, CCFE

Carriage Services
Houston, TX

Olga C. Piehler

Service Corporation International
Houston, TX

Shane Pudenz

Carriage
Houston, TX

Néctar Ramírez

Forest Lawn Memorial-Park & Mortuaries
Glendale, CA

Sean Riley

Precoa
Portland, OR

Stacie Schubert

Service Corporation International
Houston, TX

Erin Schwanitz-Vogt

Coldspring
Cold Spring, MN

Glenda Stansbury

InSight Books, Inc.
Oklahoma City, OK

Larry Stuart Jr.

Raven Plume Consulting
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Nick Timpe, CSE

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HealingPathCemetery.com
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Mike Watkins

Park Lawn Corporation
Houston, TX

Kimberly Weis

Dignity Memorial
Tampa, FL

Nicki Wiedeman, CSE

Dead Ringers
Batavia, OH

Tyler Yamasaki

Parting Pro
San Francisco, CA

Phil Zehms

Terrace Park Cemetery & Funeral Home
Kansas City, MO

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