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### **MESSAGE SCHOOL ENROLLMENT AND NUMBER OF GRADUATES CONTINUES DECLINE**

(Golden, Colo., March 24) -- Massage school student enrollments and graduations continued their decline from 2006 to 2008, even as the number of training programs for massage therapists continued to grow during that period, according to new research by Associated Bodywork & Massage Professionals (ABMP). ABMP has conducted biennial research on school trends since 1998 as a service to the profession.<sup>i</sup>

Enrollment has declined 11.9 percent from 66,653 entrants in 2006 to 58,700 in 2008. Graduates from massage therapy programs in 2008 totaled 53,372, vs. 62,784 graduates in 2006, a decline of 15.0 percent.

“ABMP considers these results a continuing market correction that began after the peak in school activity in 2004,” said Les Sweeney, nationally certified massage therapist and ABMP president. “Based on our extensive relationships with massage and bodywork training programs, we noted two years ago that there was a leveling off in the rapid school-enrollment trend. We think that massage and bodywork school enrollment is in the process of settling into a more natural number.”

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While the number of massage therapy schools continued to grow over the last two years, the growth rate from 2006 to 2008 was even slower than the growth rate from 2004 to 2006. The number of state-approved schools increased 2.5 percent, compared to an increase of 7.8 percent from 2004 to 2006.

“We think the growth of massage programs has likely reached its end; in fact, the 2010 report could likely show a decrease in the number of schools,” Sweeney said. “It would not be surprising to see a further reduction in the number of massage training programs during the next few years. The current economic crisis could accelerate that trend. The landscape has become more competitive. Those with quality instruction, passion for the field and effective student recruitment and support are more likely to thrive.”

ABMP has an active school relations program that includes nearly 2,500 ABMP staff visits to schools over the last decade, a comprehensive initiative launched in 2007 to strengthen massage students’ educational experience and the sponsorship of a 2008 instructors’ textbook in massage therapy.

ABMP serves the massage, bodywork and somatic therapy professions and is devoted to promoting ethical practices, fostering acceptance of the professions and protecting the rights of legitimate massage and bodywork practitioners. Representing more than 66,000 members, ABMP is headquartered in Golden, Colo. ABMP is employee owned and is the largest massage therapy membership association in the nation.

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<sup>i</sup> State-approved massage therapy programs were e-mailed a questionnaire in January, 2009. Non-respondents received no fewer than three follow-up phone calls, yielding responses from 81.9 percent of schools, a total of 1,387. The same methodology has been used in the surveys since 1998.

School Enrollment and Graduation, 1998-2008

