**Session 1: Keynote Presentation with Jan Schwartz**

**Description:** Massage Therapy education is at a crossroads. All of our leading agencies are talking about education, and so are individual therapists. We have task forces, committees, work groups and forums trying to lay out plans, guidelines and documents. How do we make decisions about these important issues of scope of practice, competencies, and teacher preparedness? How do we fit into the health and wellness fields; do we want to have evidence informed practices; what are the advantages/disadvantages? What about energy work—is it massage therapy or is it something else? Most importantly, what is the role of the schools in figuring out all of this? Jan Schwartz’s keynote will address these questions and make some radical suggestions about how to move forward.

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**Session 2: Recent Changes in the Higher Education Act with Gina Simpson and Kate Zulaski**

**Description**: The Higher Education Act (HEA) was signed into law in 1965 to strengthen US educational resources by providing financial assistance for students. It increased federal money given to universities, created scholarships, made low-interest loans available to students, and established a National Teachers Corps. Before each HEA reauthorization every three years, Congress amends programs, alters the language and policies of existing programs, and makes other adjustments in policy focus. Regulation changes that went into effect on July 1, 2011 are having a significant impact on accredited massage therapy training programs (57 percent of the massage school universe). All educators can benefit by better understanding the emphasis being placed on gainful employment, academic rigor, consumer protection, and student achievement at the state and federal levels. This session provides an overview of important regulatory changes and policy shifts. A panel discussion follows and focuses on a positive response to current regulation challenges to help us improve massage training.

**Session 3: The Client Perspective—What It Can Teach Us About Massage School with Cindy Williams, Terrie Yardley-Nohr, Karen Hobson, Dirk McCuiston, and Diane Redman**

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**Description**: In 2011, ABMP School Liaison Cindy Williams interviewed everyday people during her travels to visit massage schools. Her questions focused on individual perceptions of massage therapy and first massage experiences. The interviews, captured on video, bring the client perspective to life and remind us that we play a role in how the public views massage. This session asks us to take a hard look at curriculum, community outreach programs, and other methods we might use to enhance consumer views of massage therapy and improve the marketplace for future generations of therapists.

**Theme 1 – *The chatty therapist***

We constantly hear the complaint that massage therapists talk too much during a session, often out of context of the session. Why is this happening? Where in massage curriculum could the topic of chattiness best be explored? What activities could be used in the classroom to drive this point home?

**Theme 2 – *The potential client who has never received a massage***

There is a large population of people who have never received a massage, often because they are apprehensive and/or fearful. What approaches are massage therapists using to reach out to clients who may be fearful of massage? How can we teach students to do the same?

**Theme 3 – *Therapists with their own agendas***

Clients report that they are not getting the massage they ask for and that therapists seem to have their own agenda. In addition, some clients report that therapists aren’t checking in on needs and requests prior to each session. What do we need to teach students to make sure clients are getting what they ask for? And what’s the deal with no intake? Why is this key piece getting overlooked?

**Theme 4 – *Educating clients on how to give feedback***

Many clients don’t offer feedback during a session. They don’t like what they are receiving, and they don’t say a word. How do we teach students to ask for the feedback they need in order to make moment by moment changes to the session and give their best massage?

**Theme 5 – *Cost as a deterrent to frequent massage***

If you talk to most therapists they would tell you that they can’t drop their prices any lower, yet cost was a big issue for the people I interviewed. What can we do as a profession to make massage more accessible and what should we teach our students about these issues?

**Session 4: The Culture of Feedback at Your School with Jacqueline Hungerford, Dr. Drew Riffe, Diane Geddis, Jeff Forman, and LJ Zielke**

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**Description**: Giving and receiving constructive feedback is essential to building self-awareness, learning, and growing as an individual. It is also essential for improving the operations at your school. How can schools create a culture of giving and receiving feedback in a way that is useful and constructive? What types of feedback tools can we use to identify areas of campus weakness and make positive change? This session explores how to give, receive, and use feedback in the classroom, in the faculty room, and in administrative offices.

1. Can you provide an example of an instance where feedback caused a significant change in school operations? What was the feedback and how did the school change?
2. How can a school create a culture of giving and receiving effective feedback and using that feedback to improve school operations or classroom instruction?
3. How can we make sure that people give useful, constructive feedback? How do you reframe, or work with feedback that is negative, personal, or hurtful?
4. Would you tell us a little about the methods teachers at your school use to give students effective feedback? Do instructors receive direction about strategies for ensuring that feedback supports student growth?
5. Most often, students feel uncomfortable giving other students feedback. They tend to give vague feedback like, “I feel more relaxed”, or “that was really good – thank you”. How do we teach students to give usable, constructive feedback to one another? How do we reinforce those good feedback-giving behaviors in the classroom?
6. Many schools ask students to complete a form as a way to provide feedback to instructors from students. Are there any other methods besides a form that you have found useful? How do you ensure that instructors are using student feedback constructively and actually evolving their teaching strategies in response to student comments?
7. Do you have a system in place where one instructor gives feedback to another instructor after observing a lesson? How does this process work at your school? What are the benefits and drawbacks?

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1. As an administrator how do you evaluate instructor effectiveness and give instructors useful feedback to help them improve their performances?
2. What methods does the school use to gather feedback from students on their satisfaction with their education? Do you gather feedback from graduates who have been practicing in the field for a period of time? How do you incorporate the feedback in your planning to grow your school effectively?
3. How do you, as an administrator, gather useful feedback from your instructors on curriculum improvements, course structure, and student services? Sometimes instructors have idealistic views of what the school can do to be better. How do you manage expectations and prioritize instructor suggestions?
4. How does your school obtain feedback from employers on the performance of graduates? Can you provide an example of one way that employer feedback influenced your curriculum?
5. What systems do you have in place to ensure that clients are giving constructive and detailed feedback in the student clinic (beyond the typical “It was great!” comments)?

**Session 5: Technology-Driven Marketing—Is There Any Other Kind? with Eric Brown**   
   
**Description:** The days of promoting your school with direct mail postcards, glossy brochures, and ads in local magazines or the Yellow Pages are over. Today, successful, cost-effective marketing is web-based and evolving quickly. This session with Eric Brown, cofounder of the World Massage Conference, explores easy and practical ways to attract prospective students using new web-based tools. Even those who are technically challenged can jump on the electronic bandwagon with the tips shared in this workshop.

**Session 6: In-House Loans—Should We or Shouldn’t We? With Paul Stone, Roger Patrizio, Michael McGillicuddy, and Ray Siderus**

**Description:** Most students have difficulty paying massage school tuition. In the past, schools could elect to obtain accreditation and secure federal funding for student tuition. Today, new education requirements and reduced federal aid make it difficult to fund student education. Some schools are opting to create in-house loan programs to fund student tuition, but are the risks too high? This session takes a hard look at in-house loans and illuminates the pros, cons, risks, and rewards of helping students pay for tuition without looking to outside sources.

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1. Can you give us a brief history of your loan program? Why did you start the program? What research did you conduct? How did you get it set up? Who is in charge of the program at your school?
2. What percentage of your student population uses your in-house program?
3. What type of application process do you use? Do you often find you need to reject applications? What are some common reasons that student applications are rejected?
4. Do you give students full loans or do you require a down payment? How often do students make payments? When do payments start? When do payments end (i.e., before they get a certificate of completion, 6 months after graduation, etc.).
5. What types of fees do students pay (set up fee, late fees, etc.)? What type of interest do you charge?
6. What’s the default rate on loan payments? What do you do when students don’t make payments?
7. What are other challenges schools should consider when they set up their loan programs?
8. How might schools get started setting up in-house loan programs?

**Session 7: Is Your Website Good Enough? With Les Sweeney, Eric Brown, Rick Rosen, and Su Bibik**

**Description:** Most of us have wish lists for improvements we’d like to see on our websites. A poorly constructed website can turn off visitors, make information difficult to locate, lower your ranking in search engines, and even decrease enrollment calls. Weak design, poorly structured navigation, slow load times, jumbled communication messages, or no calls to action can all affect your web success. This session looks at key concepts for ensuring your website is good enough.

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1. Eric, give us some ideas about how a school should structure navigation. How do you get people to view the information that’s most important?
2. Rick, it seems that school websites must communicate with a number of different audiences including perspective students, current students, and the general public. How do you determine appropriate communication messages, differentiate these audiences on your site, and get people to take the actions you want?
3. Su, how do you keep people coming back to your website? Who manages website updates?
4. Eric, getting to the top of search engine rankings can be important. Can you give us two practical ways a school could improve its rankings?
5. Rick, the look and feel of a website says something about the culture at a massage school. What visual elements did you use to capture the experience of going to massage school at Body Therapy Institute?
6. Su, what’s one improvement you want to make to your website? Why?
7. Eric, same question.
8. Rick, same question.
9. Su, share a feature of your website that you particularly like? Why does this feature work?
10. Eric, same question.
11. Rick same question.

**Session 8: Massage Therapist Quality Control and Massage Curriculum: Inconsistent or Diverse? Strength or Weakness?**

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Moderator: Jan Schwartz

Panelists:

FSMTB - Debra Persinger

Alliance - Stan Dawson

NCBTMB - Susan Toscano

COMTA – Kate Zulaski

ABMP – Bob Benson

MTF – Ruth Werner

**Description:** Most states have a wide range of massage training options. As a result, many massage industry professionals (including bloggers, CE providers, employers and state massage board members) have complained that the quality of massage graduates and the hands-on work they provide is dropping. For instance, School A’s curriculum is treatment-focused, costs $15,000, and lasts 1,000 hours. School B’s curriculum is relaxation-focused, costs $6,000, and lasts 500 hours. Graduates from both campuses enter the local marketplace. As a profession, do we view these differences as strengths or weaknesses? Do we embrace curriculum diversity or do we see the contrast in these programs as something that holds the profession back? How do we evaluate massage quality? What criterion defines a high-quality massage? If massage quality is dropping, what can we do at the school level to improve it? Facilitated by Jan Schwartz, a panel tackles these tough questions with plenty of time for input from attendees.

1. On the Internet and at conferences like this one you hear from bloggers, CE providers, employers, therapists, and massage board members that the quality of massage graduates and the hands-on work they provide is dropping. What’s your opinion on the situation?
2. How do we know quality is dropping? What evidence do we have? Who gets to decide the criteria for quality?
3. In some states groups have advocated for more required hours, but is it really just about hours? Will more hours mean stronger graduates or simply higher tuition rates that burden new professionals?
4. Do we need a core set of outcomes that every entry-level massage program should follow? (this does not preclude programs teaching more than the core outcomes).
5. Therapists enter the profession and choose diverse careers in a variety of environments. How do we embrace the level of diversity represented by these different paths massage therapists can take when they graduate?

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1. It seems that everyone is looking to schools to ensure graduate quality, but what about the rest of us. What can each of the national organizations do to support schools in their efforts to improve quality?
2. Are you aware of the attempts of therapists and educators working on core competencies on their own? What are your thoughts about that?
3. In your opinion, what’s the next step the massage profession can take to improve the quality of massage received by clients?