

The Shrinking Pie

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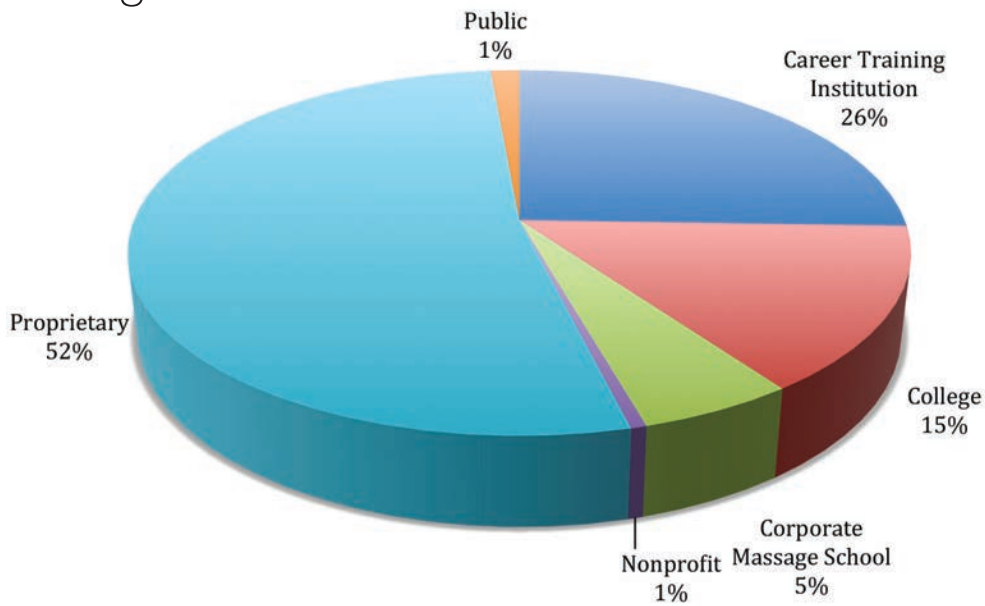
Numbers of graduates and programs continues to shrink, albeit more slowly

By Les Sweeney, BCTMB



The current total of approved massage programs in the United States is 1,274. This is down 3.4% from 2012's total of 1,319, and down 20% from the peak of 1,600 recorded in 2008.

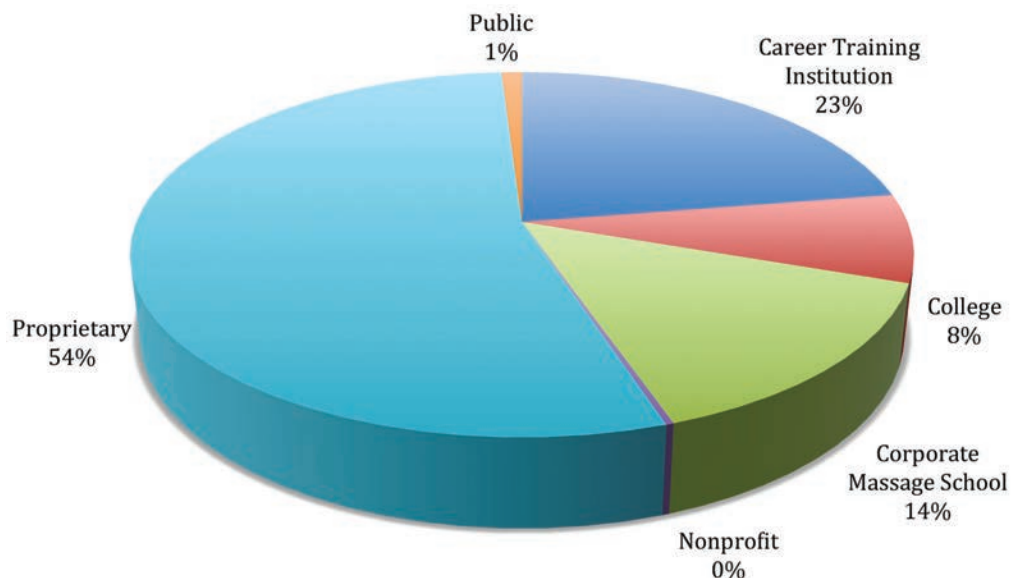
Types of Programs



In 2014, those 1,274 programs graduated 36,305 students, resulting in an average number of graduates of 28.5 per program, down 4.2% from 2012's average of 29.8. In 2012, there were 39,251 graduates, meaning the number of new entrants into the field fell by just over 8%—the lowest percentage drop since graduation totals reached their peak in 2004.

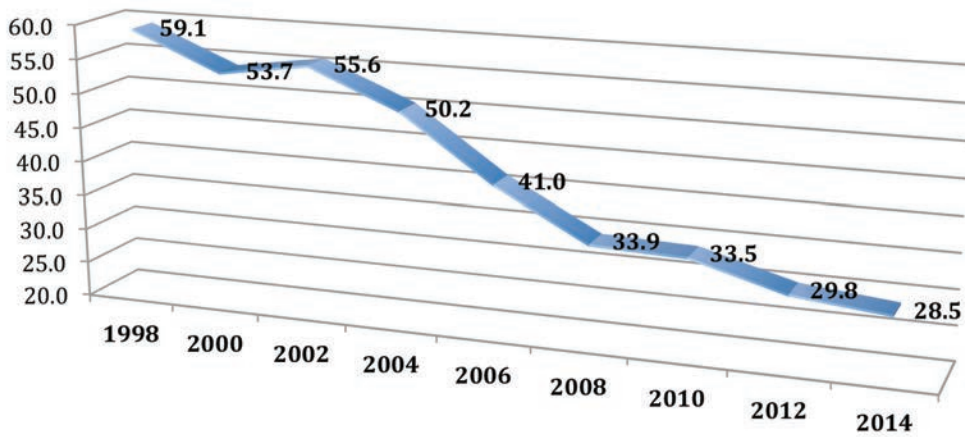
The number of “career institutions” that offer massage therapy—defined as multi-program institutions offering several career training programs in addition to massage therapy (typically medical and dental assisting, medical record-keeping, etc.)—fell 12.2%, from 370 to 325 programs. This is the lowest number of career institution programs since ABMP began tracking program type in 2004, and down 30% from the peak in 2006.

Graduates by Program Type



Perhaps the most significant number identified is the overall trend of the average number of graduates per school, which has declined from a peak of just over 59 in 1998, to its low of 28.5 in the 2014 survey. The median number of graduates in 2014 was 20, which means that more than 600 programs are graduating fewer than 20 students per year. While program tuition has increased over the 16-year period, the number of smaller student cohorts portend a continued volatility in the massage program marketplace.

Graduates Per Program

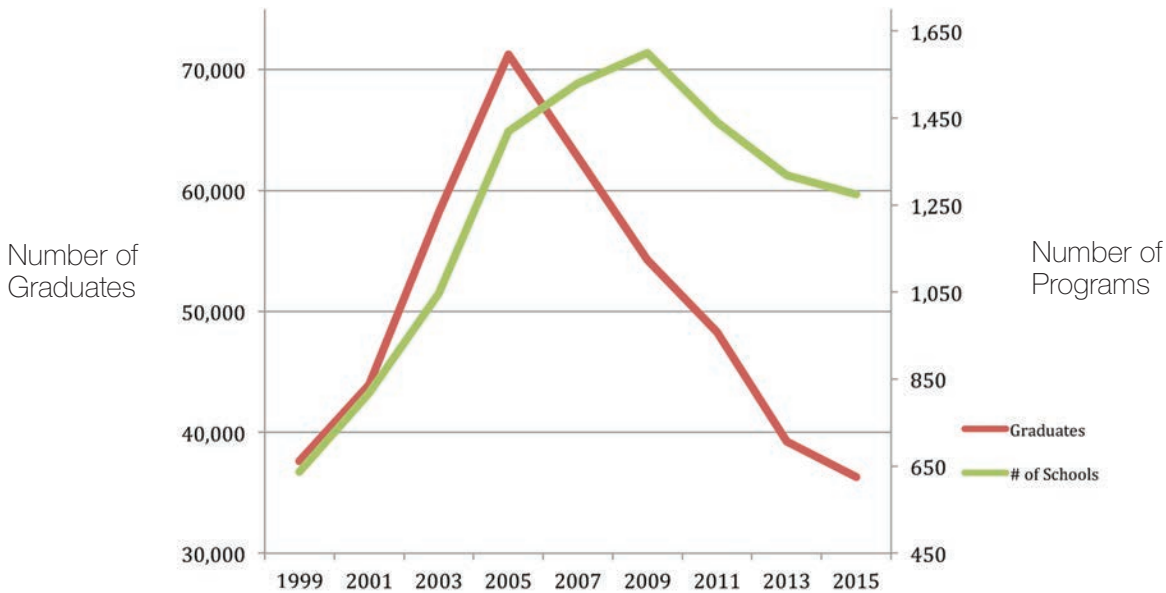


Other survey highlights:

Programs that are Title IV aid-eligible reported a higher number of graduates (30.9) than non-eligible programs (25.3), but the margin was not as significant as in past years. In addition, the proportion of programs that are accredited/aid-eligible decreased slightly over 2012, down to 56.9% from 58.7%.

Specifically looking at Proprietary programs (institutions offering massage therapy and sometimes also spa programs, typically single campus, single owner), accredited/aid-eligible programs graduated on average 43.3 students, while non-accredited/aid-eligible programs graduated 25.6. This disparity shrank compared to 2012 (49.9 v. 25.3).

Programs & Graduates



Les Sweeney, BCTMB, is President of Associated Bodywork & Massage Professionals. For more information, email les@abmp.com or call 303-679-7612.

