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SBCOM Closing This Month

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After 25 years of instruction, the Santa Barbara College of Oriental Medicine is closing its doors. Reasons for the closure are primarily financial and include poor fall admissions and the high-rent/low-income economic reality of Santa Barbara, Calif. The SBCOM Board of Directors sent the following letter to students, alumni, faculty and staff:

It is with great sorrow and disappointment that we have to inform you that SBCOM will no longer be able to provide educational services for the majority of our students as of December 11th (the end of the trimester). Our current plan for students who are scheduled to graduate in August is for a specific class and clinic schedule that will allow them to graduate from SBCOM. We need to present this plan and have it accepted by accreditation, the state bureau and the acupuncture board. We have already started this process today.

For all other students, we want you to know that we will do our utmost to accommodate and assist every student in their transitioning to another college to finish their program. We will make individual appointments with each of you to try and work out a suitable and detailed transfer that meets each of your needs. This is our highest priority and commitment. We are working with the state bureau of education and accreditation to facilitate this process as smoothly as possible.

The reason behind this sad event is that Santa Barbara is no longer a viable place for a college that provides this type of specialized education. The reason all of this has happened so quickly is twofold. Firstly, we lost almost 50% of the second year class for multiple reasons including financial difficulty. Secondly, the fall incoming class was approximately 50% of expectations with a severe drop off of applicants at the last minute. Santa Barbara does not have the demographics to support this any longer. In addition, it is very difficult to attract students from outside our area to such a high rent/low pay community. Most other acupuncture colleges have seen cuts in their admissions in the last two years, but for us, the difference is critical due to our small size. We are able to meet our financial obligations through the end of the trimester. We see no way to continue in a responsible and ethical manner beyond that time. By choosing to plan now, we are able to meet all of our obligations to students, faculty and staff, as well as creditors, with honor and integrity.

We have pursued all other options including merging with another college and finding a lender to extend credit. We are informing you as soon as possible based on the legal and ethical decision arrived at by the Board of Directors and shareholders. We understand that this comes as a great shock, and we truly regret any hardships this may cause. We will schedule a series of meetings in the next week to help you get thru this process. In addition, we will schedule individual appointments to answer all questions and make arrangements. You may call Cheri or JoAnn if you need to speak to them before your appointment time.

We extend our sympathy and sorrow to you at this time. SBCOM has been an

important part of all our lives for many years. At this last stage, we want to do our best to honor the heart of SBCOM, the people who make our college, by helping in every way possible. We dedicate ourselves to making sure that this closure will be done in the most supportive, loving and practical manner possible.

SBCOM Board of Directors

According to SBCOM President JoAnn Tall, the college is going to be implementing a teach-out program through Pacific College of Oriental Medicine. "We are going to have PCOM administer a program utilizing our faculty and personnel that will allow our graduates who have a year left to successfully complete our program," Tall said. The teach-out program currently is in the process of gaining approval through the appropriate channels. There are 24 students eligible for the program and approximately 30 students are planning to transfer to other acupuncture colleges.

"We are very grateful to the whole acupuncture college community; we have received a lot of support and love from every avenue imaginable," Tall said. "It is a great comfort to know that in times of such distress, that people involved in our profession truly practice what they preach. We thank all the countless people and agencies who have been extending their care and concern to us in this difficult time. Our students have been so incredibly understanding and supportive, even in the midst of their own loss, sadness and upheaval. We wish to extend our love and care to everyone in our community and elsewhere who have helped our college throughout the last 25 years and still work to support our efforts in this difficult time."

For additional information regarding the school's closure, please visit the SBCOM Web site at www.sbcom.edu.

DECEMBER 2006