
BUILDING THE PROFESSION OF STRUCTURAL INTEGRATION:

A Blueprint from The International Association of Structural Integrators® (IASI)

PREAMBLE

Since the inception of The International Association of Structural Integrators® (IASI) in 2002, the Board of Directors and other dedicated volunteers have worked tirelessly to fulfill IASI's mission of preserving Structural Integration (SI), representing SI to the public, and advancing the highest professional standards. These efforts have strengthened our profession by providing many assets that define and represent a legitimate profession. These assets include a psychometrically valid exam, a sound code of ethics, and basic continuing education criteria.

As we continue to press onward in fortifying our profession, we see the need for a unified voice in presenting ourselves more effectively to related professions, regulators, insurers, and the public. In order to become a unique and recognized legitimate profession, we also have to enhance our standards for education and finish the work of creating standards for practice.

With wisdom and input from SI schools, seasoned practitioners, and leaders in the field of SI, The IASI Board of Directors has created this document entitled "Building the Profession of Structural Integration: a Blueprint from The International Association of Structural Integrators®". This Blueprint details what is needed to professionalize Structural Integration and outlines strategies to achieve this goal. IASI Board of Directors present this Blueprint to the membership for further input in order to unite and galvanize efforts in creating the unified voice the profession needs to claim its rightful place in the healthcare field.

INTRODUCTION: BUILDING A PROFESSION

Since Dr. Ida P. Rolf introduced Structural Integration (SI) to the world in the middle of the twentieth century, thousands of practitioners have been trained and hundreds of thousands have received Structural Integration services. Demand is growing around the world, and sophisticated consumers are looking for competent practitioners in a complex marketplace. Complementary and alternative medicine disciplines are emerging as distinct professions, adopting agreed-upon standards. It is time for Structural Integration to do the same, and take its place as a distinct professional discipline.

The members of the International Association of Structural Integrators® (IASI) want to raise awareness everywhere about the value and significance of Structural Integration. In order to achieve this goal, the profession needs a unified definition and clear standards so that we can tell the world with one voice *who we are, what we do, how we are educated, and how we are distinct* in a crowded field of bodywork therapists. This blueprint for building the profession consolidates and expands the assets of the past and present to move with determination into a bright and secure future.

THE IMPORTANCE OF CLEAR PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS

Successful professions have clear and consistent standards, within a defined domain, for:

- ❖ Education and qualifications for entry to practice
- ❖ Safe and effective practice
- ❖ Continuing education

Standards clarify the work of the profession for the public, other professionals, policy-makers, and potential students. They offer a basis for maintenance and evolution of the domain of practice. A strong professional association that maintains standards and has a significant number of practitioners as members further validates the profession.

The IASI Board of Directors is committed to leading a strategic and collaborative effort to establish clear and consistent standards for this profession. This paper is the blueprint for that work. It has four parts:

- ❖ Background
 - From direct teaching to organic growth
 - Assets supporting Structural Integration as a profession
 - Challenges to progress in today’s environment
- ❖ Blueprint for Strategic Development
 - Practice standards
 - Education standards
 - Competency/credentialing standards
- ❖ Securing the Future for Structural Integration
 - Building public awareness; Defining and promoting SI
 - Ensuring adequate supply of practitioners
- ❖ Conclusion

The goal of this blueprint can only be realized by the collective effort of engaged practitioners, schools, and researchers. All structural integrators share responsibility for the “durability” of the profession. The IASI Board of Directors will solicit feedback to this paper. In response, the Board will publish a detailed plan for the development and implementation of SI standards, with estimates of time to completion and resources required. The time frame will include short-and long-term elements. The membership of IASI will contribute significantly as committee leaders and members.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

FROM DIRECT TEACHING TO ORGANIC GROWTH: NEW SCHOOLS, NEW MODELS

In the early years, practitioners of Structural Integration learned directly from Dr. Ida P. Rolf. Since Dr. Rolf’s death in 1979, new education programs have organically emerged to meet the demand for SI practitioners who provide quality services. New research has also motivated some senior practitioners to expand the original format of the “Ten Series” and create their own models for education.

The arrival of new Structural Integration programs and schools led by practitioners with little or no contact with Dr. Rolf necessitated some self-regulation for consistency with her principles and adequate instruction for practice. The recent upsurge of massage and bodywork CE courses that address fascia and claim to work the body’s structure have intensified the need for clarity about what SI is, exactly, and how Structural Integration practitioners are adequately prepared for practice. In 2002, IASI was established to meet this need. A major part of IASI’s mission is “To advance and promote the highest professional standards for Structural Integration” and “To preserve and support the continued evolution of the art, science and philosophy of Structural Integration.” IASI’s School Recognition criteria were developed as part of this mission, and graduates of IASI recognized schools may join IASI and take the professional certification examination offered by the Certification Board for Structural Integration. However, some existing schools offer Structural Integration programs that do not meet IASI’s criteria for recognition.

Today, Structural Integration firmly occupies a tiny niche outside the mainstream of a complex health services environment. Planning for the security and growth of the profession requires a critical assessment of the opportunities and challenges of the present moment. The profession has valuable resources to respond to them. Because Structural Integration is a small profession with a large vision for universal access, the plans must engage and coordinate these resources with deliberate care.

1 ASSETS SUPPORTING SI AS A PROFESSION

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3 SUCCESSFUL, TALENTED PRACTITIONERS

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5 There are thousands of structural integrators in practice in Eastern and Western Europe, North and South America, Australia,
6 New Zealand, and Japan. Wherever they establish practice, their practices fill with clients who come because of word of
7 mouth referrals. These professionals mentor students and new practitioners. A vibrant community of continuing educators
8 teaches specialized and advanced courses across the globe. This workforce is generating confidence of the public and allied
9 professionals in the value of Structural Integration for human health.
10

11 IASI RECOGNIZED SCHOOLS

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13 IASI currently recognizes schools and programs that provide 500 hours of classroom instruction in Structural
14 Integration theory and practice with an additional 230 hours that includes general bodywork, ethics, business practices, and a
15 minimum of 100 hours of anatomy, physiology and kinesiology. Schools must either require these as prerequisites or fulfill
16 these requirements in their own program. Graduates of SI schools ~~must have~~ must have a total of 730 hours to be recognized
17 as IASI members. Programs must include at least two opportunities to provide a complete structured series of sessions
18 under direct supervision.
19

20 At this time, 18 programs/schools are recognized around the world. The programs produce less than 200 practitioners per
21 year. It is not known how many practitioners retire from active practice per year, or whether this is an adequate number of
22 providers to meet demand. Education programs with consistent standards must be developed and supported in order for the
23 profession to grow and thrive.
24

25 STRONG ORGANIZATIONAL AFFILIATIONS

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27 Structural Integration practitioners have always been held in high regard within the massage and bodywork therapy industry.
28 With increasing demand for SI services by the public and the growth of SI educational programs, SI must enter the
29 mainstream as a unique professional discipline with strong standards to safeguard and nurture its growth. With professional,
30 educational, and research organizations as resources, the profession of Structural Integration is poised to take its rightful
31 place among health care services. These organizations include the following:
32

33 IASI

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35 The International Association of Structural Integrators® is the professional membership organization for all Structural
36 Integration practitioners. Founded in 2002, IASI sprang up as a grassroots organization from within the profession to set
37 standards, move towards certification, ensure continuation of a professional identity, and promote Structural Integration’s
38 continued growth as a respected profession in the healthcare field.
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40 CBSI

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42 The Certification Board for Structural Integrationsm examines and maintains standards of ethical and professional
43 practice in the delivery of services through a voluntary credentialing program that promotes the competency of
44 practitioners of Structural Integration. CBSI identifies Board Certified Structural Integrators to the profession and the
45 public. The CBSI establishes and enforces education, examination, experience and ethics requirements to strengthen the
46 interests of Structural Integration professionals and protect the public. The CBSI is working with the Institute for
47 Credentialing Excellence and American National Standards Institute towards accreditation of its Certification Examination
48 for Structural Integration (cm) (CESI). The Oregon Board of Massage Therapists accepts the examination as a licensure
49 examination. There are currently 375 board certified structural integrators.
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51 RISI

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53 The Rolf Institute of Structural Integration® established in 1971, is a nonprofit organization developed and existing under
54 the laws of California and Colorado. The oldest school of Structural Integration, it has educated approximately fifty
55 percent of Structural Integration practitioners worldwide. Recognized by the U.S. Government as a tax-exempt, educational
56 and scientific research organization, RISI is headquartered in Boulder, Colorado, and periodically sponsors additional
57 trainings in other locations. RISI has five international licensees that independently offer educational programs compatible
58 with those sponsored in the U.S. They are located in Germany, Japan, Australia, Brazil and Canada. Membership in the
59 RISI is open only to graduates of its educational programs. The Commission on Massage Therapy Accreditation (COMTA)
60 accredits RISI’s educational program.

1 IPRRF

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3 The Ida P. Rolf Research Foundation is an independent non-profit organization established to encourage and support
4 evidence-based studies of SI effects and its implications for conventional and complementary health care. The Foundation
5 was created with generous support from the Rolf Institute® of Structural Integration, Boulder, Colorado. Since then, the
6 Foundation has become an independent entity that seeks to advance the entire field of Structural Integration and all recognized
7 schools of SI. The Foundation administers the triennial International Fascia Research Congresses.

8
9 FRS

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11 The Fascia Research Society was established as a membership organization under the supervision of the Ida P. Rolf Research
12 Foundation in 2007 to facilitate, encourage, and support the dialogue and collaboration between clinicians, researchers and
13 academicians, in order to further the understanding of the properties and functions of fasciae. Through a variety of member
14 benefits, the Society exists to bridge the gaps in time between Congresses, and connect its community, facilitating continuous
15 exposure to others working in all disciplines of the field. Membership is open to persons of all disciplines.

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18 CHALLENGES TO PROGRESS IN TODAY’S ENVIRONMENT

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20 MEETING THE DEMAND FOR SERVICES

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22 In recent years, scientific research findings have created a “buzz” around fascia and the role it plays in body systems and pain.
23 There has also been an increase in interest and demand for complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) services in
24 general as holistic principles and lifestyles have become more popular and desired. People around the world are turning
25 more and more to CAM professionals in search of pain relief and overall better health and quality of life, which Structural
26 Integration provides. As CAM services have become a bigger part of the mainstream health care field, demand for
27 Structural Integration services has subsequently increased. The profession must be prepared to supply adequately prepared and
28 credentialed practitioners to meet demand.

29
30 PUBLIC PERCEPTION AND CONFUSION WITH MASSAGE

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32 During the time that the SI profession has developed out of infancy, the massage profession has grown explosively and
33 professionalized very successfully. Structural Integration has grown and organized itself in response to demands and
34 opportunities over time, and the resultant structure is confusing to the public, particularly in the environment in which
35 massage has become a mainstream profession. There are multiple “brands” of SI, and multiple organizations speaking for SI.
36 There is no clear, agreed-upon message from the profession about what SI is, how it “fits” into a nation’s health services
37 structure, why the “brands” are significant, or (in many places) how to become a legally authorized practitioner.

38
39 STANDARDS WITH NO “TEETH”

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41 Individuals and schools with no known ties to any recognized SI school are currently offering “Structural Integration”
42 services and/or education programs. “Structural integration” is often used to represent a style of deep tissue massage that
43 can be added to any massage therapist’s skill set by attending a weekend seminar or short series of classes. Because Structural
44 Integration is a systematic process rather than an application of a set of techniques, the outcomes of these therapists are
45 likely to diminish the publics’ perceived value of Structural Integration. The situation will only worsen as more
46 unprepared therapists and schools tack Structural Integration onto their service menus. It is the profession’s responsibility to
47 ensure that Structural Integration practitioners are qualified to perform SI and that the schools or apprenticeship programs
48 where they study provide the education they need to do so.

49
50 BARRIERS TO PRACTICE AND USA LICENSURE ISSUES

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52 In the United States, 34 states regulate the practice of Structural Integration, with a variety of requirements, almost none of
53 which are specific to the discipline itself. Boards of massage, nursing, medicine and chiropractic all are employed by
54 states to regulate Structural Integration practice, usually defining it as a subset of massage therapy. A wide range of
55 requirements that are often found to be quite confusing challenges practitioners and educators. At worst, they severely limit
56 both practice portability between states and increased accessibility of an adequate supply of qualified SI practitioners for the
57 public. Most states that regulate SI require graduation from a nationally accredited education program, often specifically a
58 massage program, as well as passing a national certification examination. Many of the boards regulating SI practice have the
59 authority to determine criteria for educational programs and pathways, as well as which examinations they will recognize.
60 They also have the authority to determine continuing education requirements. To offer guidance to regulators and other
61 professions, the Board of Directors has adopted a position statement on the appropriate regulation of Structural Integration.

BLUEPRINT FOR STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT: PROPOSAL OF THE IASI BOARD OF DIRECTORS

A profession needs a unified public face, and a strong professional organization that represents it. IASI fulfills this need for the profession of Structural Integration. To support the public promotion of SI's unique identity, IASI will establish and regularly revise standards for three areas: practice, education, and competency assessment. The IASI Board of Directors currently works with committees of volunteers and will further empower these committees to create such standards. A strong membership, including students and faculties of the educational programs as well as practitioners, is vital to determining standards that are truly inclusive and representative of the entire profession.

STANDARDS FOR PRACTICE

IASI's Ethics Committee develops and maintains ethical standards for practice for the Board of Directors. Using this model, IASI's working committee structure will formalize responsibilities for standards development and maintenance for practice and education in these other important areas as well:

- ❖ Philosophy, definition, and scope of Structural Integration practice
- ❖ Standards of professional practice
- ❖ Core competencies for basic practice
- ❖ Guidelines for expansion of practice beyond the basic level
- ❖ Standards for continuing education: providers/educators and course approval

STANDARDS FOR BASIC EDUCATION AND SCHOOL/PROGRAM APPROVAL

The Education Council, which consists of 1 to 2 representatives from each current IASI recognized schools, currently works with the Board to recommend policy related to education programs. The Board of Directors will further empower the Education Council in decision-making about matters related to approval of basic education programs for Structural Integration. The Council will be responsible for recommending minimal standards for school and program approval. The School Approval Committee will be responsible for using these standards set by the Education Council to grant approval to qualifying programs and schools, and for regular review of school approval and compliance with standards. IASI school approval criteria will ensure that all graduates will demonstrate the Core Competencies for Basic Structural Integration Practice. Educational programs will provide any proprietary education beyond entry level at their discretion. The Council and the Board of Directors will jointly develop standing Rules of Procedure governing the membership and operations of the Council and School Approval Committee.

Moving from voluntary school recognition by IASI to a formal school approval process will provide a clear standard for entry-level education for Structural Integration, and support cohesion among the Structural Integration community.

The Education Council will be empowered to develop the criteria for School/Program approval, which then will be administered by the School Approval Committee for:

- ❖ Initial approval of SI school/program
- ❖ Re-approval of SI school/program
- ❖ Initial approval of SI apprenticeship/mentorship program
- ❖ Re-approval of SI apprenticeship/mentorship program

As a foundation for development of the formal process for school and program approval, the Education Council and IASI Board of Directors will have major responsibility for developing these key standards for IASI:

- ❖ Common vocabulary for Structural Integration,
- ❖ Core competencies for basic Structural Integration practice
- ❖ Core curriculum for IASI recognized schools
- ❖ Standards for competency determination and credentialing
- ❖ Additional Standards for quality assurance for IASI recognized schools

COMMON VOCABULARY FOR STRUCTURAL INTEGRATION

Like most unique disciplines, Structural Integration relies on specific ideas, understandings, and methods that allow efficient communication among practitioners and researchers. These are transmitted to new practitioners through the education process. A common vocabulary will define SI terms in order to:

- ❖ Develop and clarify terms for a common language among the different branches of SI
- ❖ Support communication with medical and other professional communities
- ❖ Assist readers and the general public to understand Structural Integration's publications
- ❖ Create linguistically cohesive curricula for basic and continuing education
- ❖ Support clarity in the Certification Exam for Structural Integration (CESI)

CORE COMPETENCIES FOR BASIC STRUCTURAL INTEGRATION

Educational guidelines for an entry level Structural Integration program should include the fundamental knowledge, skills, and behaviors expected of a new practitioner. These statements of core competencies for basic practice will establish what educators, students, health care professionals, consumers, employers, and policy-makers can expect from graduates of all Structural Integration education programs approved by the IASI. The Education Council will use multiple resources including the CBSI's Job Task Analysis to develop the Statement of Core Competencies, which will be adopted by the IASI Board of Directors after review and commentary by IASI members.

CORE CURRICULUM FOR IASI-APPROVED EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS

An agreed-upon core curriculum will provide an entry-level education standard to assure all SI schools utilize the profession-approved education platform for graduating students. In the year 2011, members of the faculties from eleven of the current IASI recognized schools reached a consensus about what is essential for basic SI education and called it "The Draft IASI Core Curriculum." The next steps for further development of a Core Curriculum are:

- ❖ Review the vocabulary and drafted curriculum
- ❖ Align curriculum with the core competencies for basic practice
- ❖ Establish appropriate minimum instructional time for each curricular area
- ❖ Determine minimum requisite hands-on learning experiences for graduation

The IASI Board of Directors is committed to assuring the quality of SI education programs. Formal accreditation is the worldwide "gold standard" for quality assurance for the education a student receives at occupational schools, colleges, or other institutions of higher learning. For Structural Integration, The Board will work towards accreditation standards but there are significant barriers to accreditation for Structural Integration education at the present time. There are few schools and programs, and apprenticeship education is still a necessary option. There is a very limited supply of practitioners prepared to serve as program faculty. Most programs have small faculties and educate small numbers of students. Most are not housed in public institutions or nonprofit entities but are privately owned and operated enterprises. The cost of developing and operating educational programs offers a small margin for administrative expenditures. For many programs, these factors make accreditation too expensive and resource-intensive to consider. The need for quality assurance is not diminished by these circumstances, however. The Education Council will be empowered to recommend minimum standards for quality assurance to the Board of Directors.

STANDARDS FOR COMPETENCY DETERMINATION AND CREDENTIALING

The Certification Board for Structural Integration can now certify structural integrators through the Certification Exam for Structural Integrationsm (CESI). CBSI and IASI worked with a professional psychometrician and a large number of faculty and senior practitioners to identify knowledge categories and create and validate an exam to test the entry level of knowledge necessary for the safe and effective practice of Structural Integration. The CESI was introduced in 2007 and has been taken by over 375 Structural Integration practitioners, with an overall pass rate of 80 percent. Certification may be maintained either by retaking the CESI or by completing 72 hours of IASI-approved continuing education every four years.

The Certification Board for Structural Integration (CBSI) is autonomous in decision-making, but due to small numbers of certificants, is not yet self-supporting and requires financial and administrative support from IASI. The CBSI is currently accountable for conducting periodic updates of a professional Job Task Analysis and maintenance and ongoing development of the Certification Examination for Structural Integration (CESI).

All legitimate professions have standards for membership and use of the professional title. Professional credentials

1 designate that an individual has met established standards. Credentials communicate to clients, employers, and payers what
2 to expect from a practitioner. Certification and evidence of educational attainment are the most common credentials for
3 membership in a recognized profession.
4

5 Structural Integration needs clear standards for entry to practice. The IASI Board of Directors strongly encourages IASI
6 recognized schools to offer the CESI exam to their graduates at the end of their program. This will create a level of
7 security for Structural Integration, ensuring it remains its own unique profession. IASI requests that every structural
8 integrator will successfully:
9

- 10 ❖ Complete an IASI recognized educational program
- 11 ❖ Pass the Certification Examination for Structural Integration (CESI).
- 12

13 Achievement of this goal will require adoption of the practice and educational standards as described, and investment in the
14 CESI for its improvement, maintenance, and eventual accreditation.
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18 SECURING THE FUTURE FOR STRUCTURAL INTEGRATION

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21 BUILDING DEMAND: PROJECTING A UNIFIED MESSAGE TO THE PUBLIC:

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23 Our goal in building demand is simple. We need to make the general public aware that Structural Integration exists,
24 understand what it is, and what it can do. The beauty of SI is that once these hurdles are passed, the demand comes naturally;
25 the potential client is intrigued, and all that remains is seeking out a practitioner.
26

27 DEFINING SI

28

29 All Structural Integrators know the struggle of explaining exactly what it is we do, particularly in producing that infamous
30 “elevator speech,” -that clear, simple, 30-second explanation that leaves the listener with a basic understanding of our
31 work. Many of us shy away from using the word “massage,” because we know the moment the listener hears that familiar
32 word and conjures the associated mental images, the known label of “Massage Therapist” is applied and rest of our speech
33 goes unheard. But when we use words like bodywork, manual therapy, alignment, fascia, movement patterns and
34 neuromuscular systems, the confused listener casts about trying to relate us to physical therapists, chiropractors, and other
35 known practitioners. Of course at this point, that 30-second window has long since passed.
36

37 Part of IASI’s mission is to develop a clear and concise definition of Structural Integration, written in language that is
38 understandable to the public, with agreement from all SI schools, that it is an accurate summary. We believe this is key
39 in a variety of ways. As illustrated in the paragraph above, it will assist our practitioners in effectively describing and
40 marketing their work. It will also help to solidify and communicate SI’s status as an entity distinct from other forms of
41 bodywork. And perhaps most importantly, it will serve as a unifying exercise within our ranks. Much of the difficulty in this
42 task lies in identifying the aspects of our work that distinguish it as Structural Integration, as opposed to the specialized
43 stylistic aspects that differentiate each individual school. The process of creating this standardized definition will bring all
44 of us to a better understanding of our commonalities and differences.
45

46 PROMOTING SI TO CONSUMERS, RELATED PROFESSIONS, REGULATORS, AND INSURERS

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48 Another important aspect of IASI’s mission is in representing the interests of Structural Integration professionals to both the
49 public and other professions. We would like to see Structural Integration become a household name, recognized and valued as a
50 worthy modality, so that medical professionals will be familiar with it and recommend it to their patients, and the patient’s
51 insurance company will understand what it is and cover it. IASI consistently takes every opportunity possible to increase public
52 awareness and properly represent the field of Structural Integration. Through multi-media opportunities, face-to-face meetings,
53 and an ever-growing member base, we are spreading the word that our hands can shape the world.
54

55 ENSURING ADEQUATE SUPPLY OF PRACTITIONERS

56

57 Professionalizing SI will also attract more practitioners to the field. As the demand for Structural Integration
58 professionals grows, our educational standards will encourage the best prospects to specifically seek out quality education
59 programs, and enable them to distinguish authentic SI schools from deceptively named knock-off programs.
60 Prospective students, especially those without a “license to touch,” will make a significant financial investment to

1 become a Structural Integration practitioner. Improving options for education financing and reducing regulatory restrictions
2 on practice (especially limiting in the United States) will require clear professional standards. As these restrictions are eased,
3 more prospective students will be able to pursue Structural Integration education. These new practitioners will pour fresh
4 energy into their chosen schools, IASI, and their communities, exponentially increasing our profession's strength and reach.
5

6 CONCLUSION

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8 Part of IASI's mission is to make the general public aware of what Structural Integration is, and what it has to offer. In order
9 for this to happen, the collective community of Structural Integration schools and practitioners must become clear and unified
10 in defining what SI is and is not. Working together to create the standards outlined in this document will bring us to
11 that clarity.
12

13 Adopting standards for practice, education, and certification will allow us to present Structural Integration to
14 consumers, regulators, complementary professionals and insurers with a clear, consistent and comprehensive message.
15 With this blueprint as our guide, IASI will work with all members of the SI community to achieve these goals. We will
16 leverage our existing resources to address our challenges, and work together to establish the standards that will ensure
17 Structural Integration's place as a distinct professional discipline. Our profession's growth and future depend on it.