

Rolf Movement® Faculty Perspectives

Revitalizing Rolf Movement Certification: A 2011 Initiative by the U.S. Rolf Movement Instructors Group

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A New Beginning for Rolf Movement Integration

In 2011, the U.S. Rolf Movement faculty initiated a program to meaningfully expand the Rolf Movement Integration certification program. As announced in spring 2011, the U.S. program now requires thirty class days (three of which may be a mentorship or independent study) and is taught as a series of workshop-format courses. Each course focuses on a specific topic within the domain of Rolf Movement Integration.

Rolf Movement Integration has been the container at the Rolf Institute® for Structural Integration (RISI) for dimensions of the Rolwing® Structural Integration (SI) process that, for practical reasons, fall outside the considerable scope of the basic Rolwing training sequence (Phases 1, 2, and 3). These “other dimensions” of Rolwing SI include training in perception, coordination, and expression, as well as psychobiological aspects of the work. As these other dimensions of structural integration have been more explicitly defined, movement courses have been designed to better teach skills and knowledge for practice.

The Rolf Movement Integration faculty, as a whole, continues to discuss how best to nurture these additional dimensions of SI in the context of the RISI. At the meeting in August of 2011, movement instructors from the U.S., Europe, Australia, and Brazil shared regional perspectives. The group resolved both to follow the Curriculum Development and Review Committee curriculum guidelines, and to also respect each region's format for Rolf Movement Integration certification. As this is being written, it is too soon to know what further changes may occur in the different regions

of the RISI community. This article focuses on what has been introduced within the U.S.

What Inspired the Change?

The U.S. initiative reflects practical considerations that led to a change in format: the knowledge base and skills fundamentals to the movement program outgrew the limitations of an eighteen-day training. Competence as a Rolf Movement Integration practitioner depends on familiarity with a broad set of perceptual and coordinative skills – embodiment that takes time to develop, but is essential to effective intervention. A simple example is the skill to perceive the “pre-movement” of a client – to do so, one effectively “reads” the client's perceptive activity and offers moment-to-moment feedback. Moment-to-moment coaching, to be useful, depends on perceptive clarity in one's own body. This takes more time than has been available. How, then, does one train practitioners to do this? The U.S. faculty has struggled with this question.

Long blocks of time away from home and practice have already been identified as an obstacle for many students wishing to pursue movement certification, so lengthening the required class time compounds the dilemma. A format based on a series of workshops resolves this issue and is more practical than lengthening the intensive format. The workshop format also reflects the learning experience of many Rolf Movement Integration instructors themselves. Many current movement instructors were either long-term students of other movement disciplines (such as dance or martial arts) learned primarily outside of RISI, or were students in multi-year study groups taught by Hubert Godard, again outside of RISI-offered courses.

Successive years of seeing and feeling integrated movement helped bring along understanding and embodiment of the work. Many instructors who trained in this way have played a role in promoting and clarifying the Rolf Movement Integration knowledge base. The workshop format allows for a number of years of study and integration and is expected to improve the training of new practitioners.

Growth in Rolf Movement Integration

What other factors contribute to the new format? The domain of Rolf Movement Integration continues to organize formally as a body of work. Historically, it's been a challenge to put movement concepts and techniques into words. In the past decade, movement instructors have produced more written handouts and articles that further define the field. Many instructors have co-taught with each other, in large part due to an interest in refining and clarifying the complex study of perception and coordination. Instructors continue to ask questions about how and why Rolf Movement Integration works. These questions happen at a time when the beginnings of answers have started to appear.

In the past three decades, research has begun to answer long-held questions about what it means to change posture and movement. Research in the field of neuroscience has given our profession a number of gifts in the form of plausible validation for how and what we do. Functional (MRI) imaging now allows scientists to directly observe the plasticity of the brain. Real-time imaging confirms that when someone learns to perceive or move differently, the brain is actually building a stronger and more differentiated map of the body and the space in which it moves.

Maps and the Language of the “Movement Brain”

Maps are a great way to speak about how the brain organizes perception and coordination. It's very similar to what Google does to map the Earth. Google maps help us see how the landscape and roadways fit together. They allow us to see our familiar landscape from above, and to figure out how to go from point A to point B, and do so with many variations. When we learn to perceive differently or move differently, our internal “Google function”

has built a better map of the territory. Our map gains "options." The map metaphor is a handy way to explain SI. When a person integrates – when a person's posture or quality of movement shifts – it's not a superficial change but one that lasts. When this happens, we know that the maps have changed, and are likely to continue to do so as new usage patterns are strengthened.

Rolf Movement Integration certification is a journey to learn how the coordinative maps in the brain change. It is a multi-faceted approach for speaking to the brain's "map drawing" process. Maps are a central part of the system intelligence that keeps us upright and allows our body to respond to all the challenges of life, without consciously thinking about it. We can conveniently refer to this intelligence as our "movement brain." Movement approaches require us to speak the language of the movement brain – those parts of us that learn to move and remember movement patterns. We can all learn to speak and hear this language. It is an older language than words. The language of the movement brain is often nonverbal, involving, for example, body shape, sensation, and expressive gesture. We learn through experimentation and through the embodied guidance; it's not a purely cognitive process, nor is it merely physical action. An optimum learning environment typically engages creativity and one's whole being.

Each person learns a language in his or her own way – some more visual, tactile, or auditory. Most of us tend to learn language in context – actually doing something – and language learning requires repetition within the context. Like language, all aspects of working with movement are also lessons in what optimizes our learning process. We tend to learn best when we discover our particular learning style and then learn to guide our teachers to help us make sense of the new territory. We anchor learning by finding our own voice, by finding authentic ways to teach it in our own words and gestures. Movement education at the RISI includes asking questions about styles of learning.

A New Format

The new U.S. Rolf Movement Integration certification format allows students to choose the particular courses they wish to take, choose the order in which to take them, and choose to take each course's discoveries back to their SI practices.

The new format allows students to learn from multiple instructors and multiple descriptive styles and demonstrations of the work. Each course is both a snapshot of the whole as well as a particular application of how movement can change. Each student has a faculty advisor with whom he or she can receive support and guidance.

Courses in the U.S.

The offering of courses for RMI certification in the U.S., as of this writing, covers topics that include:

- Perceptive Core Stability
- Breathing and Walking: Movement Education to Support the SI series
- Interoception: The Primordial Roots of Sensation, Tonus, and Gesture
- Our Spine in Motion
- Embodying Rolf's SI Recipe
- Origins of Gesture and Movement: An Embryological Perspective
- Orientation, Perception, and Resonance – Essential Skills that Support Psychobiological Dimensions within the Structural Integrative Process

This list is an initial set of offerings and covers some of the topics that RMI touches on. It is likely that both the U.S. and our international faculty will continue to contribute to the list, enabling it to grow in size and scope as well as perspective. RMI is still a young field with enormous potential for development in its education.

International Courses Offerings

In addition to courses offered in the U.S., the certification program accepts transfer credit, so U.S. students can travel to take courses internationally. RMI instructors from different regions simply arrange for students to receive U.S. movement certification credit for courses taught in that instructor's region. Transfer credit from other regions helps students broaden their experience further. (For a complete list of policies refer to the Rolf Movement Integration pages at www.rolf.org/cont_ed/movementtraining.)

Rolf Movement Integration and the Future of SI

SI must develop a compelling message if it is to survive as a profession in the

decades to come. Fascial mobilization is no longer the exclusive province of structural integrators, let alone Rolfing practitioners. How will the SI community articulate what is different about SI from myofascial release techniques that are now ubiquitous?

The U.S. Rolf Movement Integration certification program is one region's initiative to strengthen the Rolfing SI message by strengthening the understanding and embodiment of the certified Rolf Movement practitioner. What makes the Rolfing SI message strong is clarity around the capacity to see and feel coordinative change, to see and feel movement before it even begins. The capacity to see and intervene in coordination is a specific domain of skill within the Rolfing SI umbrella. Coordinative change is change in motor control. The Rolfing SI paradigm offers a package of interventions to make lasting improvements in motor control. Rolfing SI offers a broad set of measures to determine that change has occurred. The tradition of Dr. Rolf rises to a level of congruence and scientific verification when practitioners are able to convey this message through articulate explanation and solid embodiment. Such a message of congruence and relevance offers an opportunity for the RISI to lead the SI community in further inquiry about the nature of Dr. Rolf's work.

In Memoriam

Structural Integration: The Journal of the Rolf Institute® notes the passing of the following members of our community (in alphabetical order):

**Don Hazen, D.C.,
Certified Advanced Rolfer™**

**Gladys Man,
Certified Advanced Rolfer**

**Robert Ouradnik,
Former Rolfer**

**Robert Tacchino,
Certified Rolfer**