Yoga Alliance Shares Enhanced RYS Standards as Initial Outcomes from its Standards Review Project

Changes Signal Community’s Desire for YA to Reinforce its Credentials, Curriculum, and Code of Conduct

Arlington, VA (June 25, 2019) – Today, Yoga Alliance shared the initial outcomes of its community-led Standards Review Project (SRP), a comprehensive and inclusive 18-month long effort to adjust its yoga teacher training credentials to meet today’s cultural, societal, and environmental needs. These changes include significant enhancements to the standards underlying its Registered Yoga School (RYS®) credentials.

“It’s time to welcome updated standards that reflect the state of yoga in 2019 and into the future. We are deeply grateful to the tens of thousands of members of the yoga community who generously shared their perspectives in support of this practice we all love,” said Shannon Roche, President & CEO of Yoga Alliance and the Yoga Alliance Foundation. “The community’s charge to Yoga Alliance was clear: step more fully into the role of a professional association, not only in reference to our standards but also in how we support our members and the broader yoga community. This included a mandate for us to strengthen our capacity to uphold the integrity of our credentials so that they are synonymous with high-quality, safe, and equitable yoga. It also included a call for us to serve as a convener for conversations that impact the entire yoga profession, including the future of yoga teaching and various community-wide, systemic issues. We have heard the call.”

The changes announced today will take effect beginning February 2020 for new schools applying for the first time and by the end of 2021 for current RYS 200s. Yoga Alliance emphasizes that no RYS or Registered Yoga Teacher (RYT®) will be asked to act upon these initial outcomes immediately and that it will guide current and future members through the implementation of these changes over the next many months with great care.

Highlights from the changes being announced today include:

- Significant enhancements to the foundational-level credential (as desired by 83% of SRP survey respondents). The standards underlying Yoga Alliance’s most widely-held teacher
training credential for schools – the foundational-level RYS 200 – have been substantially enhanced, including:

- **An emphasis on learning objectives, which will be transparently tied to instructional hours.** All of the minimally required 200 hours must now be classroom hours directly in support of a core curriculum (see below). Current standards only require a minimum of 125 hours (of the 200 total) be directly tied to educational categories; with the remaining hours not linked to categories, the current standards allow for inconsistent interpretation among schools and, therefore, inconsistent connection to key yoga learnings.

- **The adoption of a common “core curriculum” that supports authenticity of lineage, style, or methodology.** The new common “core curriculum” identifies four core categories with thirteen areas of competency, shifting from five educational categories with less defined learning goals and outcomes. This ensures a shared understanding of foundational yoga concepts while still providing for flexibility by each RYS to honor tradition.

- **A heightened emphasis on the demonstrated knowledge, skills, and experience of RYS graduates.** All RYSs must now assess trainees’ knowledge, skills, and experience against the 13 competencies prior to certifying trainees. This will support public safety, help manage the practicing public’s expectations, and strengthen the community’s ability to self-regulate.

- **An increased prioritization of the breadth and depth of the knowledge, skills, and experience of those leading trainings.** By February 2022, all Lead Trainers must hold the E-RYT 500 credential, up from E-RYT-200 or E-RYT 500 currently. Further, at least 75% of the curriculum must be taught by qualified Lead Trainers, more than doubling the current requirement (32.5%). This will ensure that those new to yoga teaching will be guided and supported by teachers who have a deep familiarity with yoga’s full breadth and depth.

- **Greater rigor and integrity in the application process for Yoga Alliance credentials (as desired by a majority of SRP survey respondents).** Yoga Alliance has enhanced its RYS application to allow for a deeper understanding of an applicant’s proposal, including a review of syllabus, curriculum, and hours-by-competency allocation; the overall schedule; manual(s) and other training materials; letters of intent; and more. In addition, this review will now be conducted by an academic-style peer panel to ensure a fair, consistent, and thorough review process. Finally, all RYS 200 schools will be asked to re-credential every three years to ensure they still meet or exceed the standards.
A stated commitment to ethics befitting of a yoga teacher, unifying the membership around these shared principles. All YA credential holders will commit to ethical, safe, and inclusive behavioral conduct within their yoga teacher training programs and other offerings, including:

- An updated Code of Conduct (cited as “very important” by 91 percent of SRP survey respondents) for RYSs and RYT that signals a commitment to proper behavior within their teaching training programs and classes;

- A Scope of Practice (cited as “somewhat to very important” by 86 percent of SRP survey respondents) for RYT that clearly defines the role of a yoga teacher, including responsibilities and limitations; and

- Equity in Yoga. All YA credential holders will commit to a shared responsibility for awareness of and commitment to change the inequities that exist within yoga that result in many people feeling excluded and underrepresented in the practice.

In addition to agreeing to an updated Code of Conduct and new Scope of Practice, all RYT will be asked to complete an online course on equity in yoga as a condition for any YA credential. Yoga Alliance will work with leaders in the field of equity to develop this complimentary course for members that will count towards an RYT’s Continuing Education requirement.

Ongoing and forward-looking review in support of a growing and changing field. Yoga Alliance commits to a process of continuous improvement and community collaboration with a particular emphasis on how best to support the future of the yoga teaching profession. Instead of a periodic, standalone standards review, YA has built internal capacity to ensure that its credentials keep pace with changes in the practice. Also, in response to community interest, YA will explore whether there is need for additional credentials to signal a higher level of mastery or a specialty in certain subject areas.

Changes to the professional-level teacher training credentials – the RYS 300 and RYS 500 – as well as to specialty credentials such as YACEP, the RPYT, and RCYT will be shared next summer.

Additionally, Yoga Alliance will respond to the call to convene community-wide dialogues in support of the field’s challenges and growth. Later this year and in partnership with the community, Yoga Alliance will launch explorations of “what is yoga?”, the roles of power and empowerment within yoga, and the broader issue of inequities that exist in yoga.

“Throughout this project, we held several guiding principles that helped us navigate and make actionable decisions from the tremendous amount of input shared by the community. They included: traditional yogic values, equity, accountability, integrity, and balance and stability across our self-
governing community. We will continue to be guided by these to build upon this strong foundation going forward,” said Roche.

“We began this (Standards Review) Project to ensure that YA’s credentials deliver appropriate value to all who hold them. Member schools and teachers should be able to rely on the credentials to serve as differentiators in a crowded field. The public should be able to look to the credentials as indicators of high quality, safe, and accessible yoga that considers students’ unique needs,” said Yoga Alliance Board Chair Kerry Maiorca (RYS 200, E-RYT 500). “Shoring up our standards and embedding an ethical commitment within them will propel the value of our credentials and serve the community in many ways. These changes will better position our teachers and schools to be recognized for their knowledge, skills, and experience.”

Both the Yoga Alliance website and the Yoga Alliance Standards Review Project website include robust detail on the changes. The new standards underlying the foundational-level RYS 200 credential will help yoga professionals continue to learn, teach, and practice their vast array of lineages, styles, and methodologies as a voluntary, self-regulating community. They will empower a shared love and understanding of yoga with an emphasis on quality, safety, and equity. And, most importantly, they will help millions of current or aspiring yoga students worldwide to experience yoga’s benefits towards better mental, physical, spiritual, and emotional health, decreased stress, and greater wellbeing.

About the Standards Review Project

In 1999, in its role as a voluntary, member-based organization serving yoga schools and teachers, Yoga Alliance sought to ensure and preserve the quality of yoga education and practice by establishing and disseminating standards for the training of yoga teachers and by maintaining a registry of teachers who met these standards.

A rapid increase in the number of people practicing yoga over the last decade led to a proportionate rise in the number of yoga teacher training schools and graduating yoga teachers, which created the need to evaluate the organization’s yoga teaching standards.

In 2017, Yoga Alliance launched a review of its standards, calling it the Standards Review Project (SRP). The SRP brought together Yoga Alliance members and non-members, yoga teachers and practitioners, thought and field leaders, wisdom holders, and not-for-profit and for-profit business leaders from around the world in a comprehensive and inclusive process. This undertaking included thousands of
voices inside and outside of yoga who offered their viewpoints through a 12,000-respondent survey, a listening tour, a series of virtual town halls, working group sessions, and other feedback channels.

About Yoga Alliance and Yoga Alliance Foundation

Founded in 1999, Yoga Alliance (YA) is a member-based, non-profit organization that serves yoga schools and teachers across the globe, providing a world-recognized, best-in-class credential and unifying its members around a shared ethical commitment. In addition, YA delivers a strong value proposition to its members through community-building initiatives, educational resources, advocacy efforts, and social impact programs. Its partner organization, the Yoga Alliance Foundation, advances equity and social change within and through the practice of yoga.

Yoga Alliance understands that in many locations around the world, the marketplace has designated its credential as a de facto requirement for employment, serving as an indicator of high-quality teaching and safe instruction. YA does not take this lightly and rather embraces this responsibility and the associated accountability that comes with it, pledging to uphold it now and into the future.