

# Program Review Executive Summary

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## Paramedic Technology Program

Majors Reviewed:

- *Applied Health Studies - Paramedic, B.S.*
- *Emergency Medical Services, A.A.S.*
- *Paramedic Technician, Certificate*

April 2016

## Executive Summary

The Pennsylvania College of Technology Paramedic program originated in 1979 as the Williamsport Hospital Paramedic Training Institute. It became the third nationally accredited paramedic program in the United States. In 2015, the paramedic program reaffirmed its accreditation with the Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs (CAAHEP) upon the recommendation of the Committee on Accreditation of Educational Programs for the Emergency Medical Services Professions (CoAEMSP).

The strength of the paramedic program is faculty and staff that are experienced and credentialed. The program has an active medical director who began his career as a paramedic and has been recognized nationally as an EMS physician. Engaged communities of interest serve on an advisory committee, steering the program as stakeholders in EMS. Regional hospitals and EMS services provide students with hospital and ambulance experiences that include excellent clinical opportunities and paramedic preceptors. In this way, the program continues a culture of preparing future paramedics who succeed with national certification (97% NREMT success rate), successfully gain employment (97% positive placement), and impress their future employers (100% positive employer survey).

Significant change has occurred in Emergency Medical Services (EMS) over the past three years. A new restriction allows only graduates of nationally accredited paramedic programs to sit for National Registry certification (NREMT). Pennsylvania subsequently changed state certification to endorse NREMT as the required certification for all future basic and advanced EMS provider levels. Emergency Medical Services has been faced with a rapidly declining volunteer base of EMS practitioners expediting the need for career, paid EMT and paramedic positions. The U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, indicate that employment of emergency medical technicians (EMTs) and paramedics is projected to grow 24% from 2014 to 2024, much faster than the average for all occupations.

The Penn College Paramedic Program is well positioned for these changes in EMS, with over 37 years of national accreditation and experience preparing participants for national certification testing. A 2013 program review resulted in a recommendation to develop a non-credit division offering basic EMS provider courses in four surrounding counties through an innovative video-based training model. Also, Penn College EMT and EMR courses are now offered through dual enrollment with high schools via Penn College Now (PCNow). Both the non-credit and PCNow offerings allow individuals to earn academic credit toward Penn College paramedic majors, thus creating recruitment pathways. These opportunities were accomplished collaboratively with partnerships and financial support from the Pennsylvania Department of Health/Bureau of EMS, regional EMS councils, county commissioners, and hospital and volunteer EMS services.

The 2016 program review was a comprehensive assessment of program effectiveness and curriculum integrity and relevance. The following recommendations have been presented as opportunities for the future:

- The paramedic program will conduct a major curriculum review and subsequent revision of the paramedic majors.
- Medical terminology (MTR) coursework will begin to transition to the paramedic department in the Fall 2016 semester.
- The paramedic department will increase non-credit offerings of EMR and EMT courses to improve recruitment.
- Collaborative discussions will be proposed with North Central Pennsylvania EMS services to coordinate and consolidate the medical director role into a full-time position.