



Articulation Agreements: The Path to Offering College Credit for Your Accredited Paramedic Program

By Bill Mergendahl

Offering college credit to students who complete nationally accredited paramedic programs is important not only to these students, but to our EMS profession as a whole.

Many paramedic programs are based in post-secondary academic institutions that grant college credit for successful completion of a paramedic educational program. These programs are based in colleges, universities, community colleges, and junior colleges that are accredited by a regional or national institutional accrediting body. Some programs are based in vocational, proprietary, and religious schools that are accredited by regional or specialized institutional accrediting bodies with the authority to approve college credit.

What if a program--which is the case with ours--is not based in an institution that grants college credit? How can the program make college credit available to its graduates? One way is through an articulation agreement.

I write this article as the President of a paramedic program accredited by the Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs (CAAHEP). Our program is one of a relatively small, but growing, group of paramedic programs based in settings outside of post-secondary institutions. The program roots are based in an EMS agency with sponsorship established through an agreement with a large teaching hospital in our service area.

Being closely aligned with an EMS agency provides many advantages for our paramedic program. We have great relationships with our clinical settings, we can provide top-notch field-internship experiences to our students with our own staff, and we have cultivated an excellent instructional staff of active EMS field providers who can impart their experiences to our students.

Unfortunately, we did not have an established method to grant college credit to our program graduates. Developing an articulation agreement with a qualifying educational institution allowed us to provide college credit to our students.

An articulation agreement is an official arrangement between an educational institution and a training facility to provide college credit to individuals completing a particular training program. Those programs not offering Associate or Bachelor degrees are encouraged by the CAAHEP *Standards and Guidelines** to establish articulation agreements that provide for maximum transfer of clinical and clinically related coursework. Courses in general education, social sciences, and

health sciences should parallel offerings in colleges and universities. The agreement allows students to receive college credit if they enroll at the educational institution; it does not require students to receive college credit if they do not register.

Establishing articulation agreements can be accomplished by all programs that are not based in a traditional educational setting that grants college credit. A CAAHEP accredited paramedic program will have already completed much of the documentation that many colleges require as part of ensuring the quality of the educational program. Program goals, expectations, objectives, and learning domains are established. The curriculum has been created with written course syllabi that a college will evaluate. A system will be in place for student evaluation and assessment as well as documented policies and procedures for fair practices within the program.

Every college has a somewhat different culture, personality, requirements, and areas of focus that come into play when evaluating a program for developing an articulation agreement. The bulk of the “heavy lifting” has already been done by virtue of a program’s successful completion of the CAAHEP accreditation process.

The procedure for establishing articulation agreements can involve meetings and paperwork; however, the process itself can make a program better. Insight can be gained into the educational institutions, exposing a program to new methods and ideas that will allow the program to make improvements while meeting the standards and requirements of the college or institution. Most importantly, a program will be providing students with a valuable edge and the encouragement they need to continue their journey as lifelong learners.

In order to continuously advance the EMS profession we all must take training and education seriously. An articulation agreement can serve as the mechanism for obtaining college credit toward an Associate or Bachelor degree upon completion of an accredited paramedic program, thus allowing our profession to provide educational opportunities and experiences that are second to none.

** “Programs not offering Associate’s or Bachelor’s degrees are encouraged to establish articulation agreements that provide for maximum transfer of clinical and clinically related coursework. Coursework in general education, social sciences, and health sciences should parallel coursework offered in colleges and universities.”*

CAAHEP Standards and Guidelines, Section II C

Bill Mergendahl is Chief Executive Officer for Professional Ambulance (Pro EMS), Cambridge, MA. In 2009, Bill was appointed by the American Ambulance Association to serve as one of its two representatives on the CoAEMSP Board of Directors. Bill began his career in EMS by serving as an EMT and dispatcher at Pro EMS during his undergraduate years at Boston University. He was then appointed head of daily operations in 1990. During this time, Bill became certified as a paramedic and earned his law degree, finally being named CEO of Pro EMS.



Paramedic Certificate to Associate or Bachelor Degree Programs Articulation Agreement

This articulation agreement, which is effective on the date of the final signature, provides transfer admission opportunities for graduates of (Name of EMS Program) Paramedic (EMT-P) Program who are academically qualified and interested in completing an associate or bachelor's degree at (Name of College). Students must complete all 11 transferrable modules and receive their EMT Paramedic Certificate to transfer a maximum of 30 credits to (Name of College), depending on their chosen degree requirements. Students will then take a minimum of 30 credits at (Name of College), as specified in the accompanying degree plan table for any degree. Other college transfer credits, in addition to these 11 modules, may be reviewed on an individual basis.

Terms of Agreement:

1. The Paramedic Program students (graduates) accepted to (Name of College). will receive a maximum of 30 transfer credits for the successful completion of their EMT-Paramedic Certificate deemed comparable (based on current course description information, course requirements, and agreement by the representatives of the respective programs) to current (Name of College) courses. (See accompanying degree plan table for transfer equivalents.)
2. Based on placement testing, the transfer student may be required to complete developmental courses in English or mathematics prior to enrolling in a program's graduation requirements in those disciplines. Also, the transfer student must complete all prerequisite courses for upper-level courses.
3. This agreement shall include those students who are currently enrolled in the (Name of EMS Program) Paramedic Program Training Program commencing in (month and year) and thereafter. (Prior graduates may be admitted on an individual basis.)
4. This agreement will be reviewed annually and may be revised by mutual consent. In addition, (Name of EMS Program) and (Name of College) agree to notify one another of program changes that might affect the transfer of students under this agreement.
5. Both organizations agree to the right to use each other's names in print and media advertising for the purpose of marketing the programs, described herein. All materials must be approved by the respective communications and/or marketing offices at the partner institution.
6. (Name of EMS Program) agrees to provide to (Name of College) student information for the express purpose of contacting (Name of EMS Program) graduates directly regarding the degree program between the two institutions described in this Articulation Agreement in compliance with all state and federal laws.
7. This agreement is predicated on the satisfactory, and continued, accreditation of (Name of EMS Program) by 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 Profession (CoAEMSP).

(Name of EMS Program) and (Name of College), recognizing the importance of providing seamless coordination between the respective institutions, hereby enter into an Articulation Agreement.

We, the undersigned, as the representatives of (Name of EMS Program) and (Name of College), hereby demonstrate our commitment to full implementation of the Agreement.

Paramedic Program

Date _____

Print Name and Title

College

Date _____

Print Name and Title

**(Name of EMS Program) and (Name of College)
Degree Plan Table for Articulation Agreement***

(Name of EMS Program) Modules	(Name of College) Courses	College Credits Awarded**
Module #1, #3	SC101 Anatomy & Physiology I	4
Module #1, #3, #7, #9	SC102 Anatomy & Physiology II	4
Module #5, #10	HE221 Pharmacology	3
Module #5	MA130 Math for Health Sciences	3
Module #2, #6, #7, #8	SC141 Introduction to the Study of Disease	3
Modules #2 - #10	ME201 Medical Terminology	3
Module #6 (Cardiology)	Free Elective	3
Module #7 (Pediatrics, Obstetrics, Gynecology)	Free Elective	3
Module #9 (Medical Emergencies)	Free Elective	3
Module #11 (Misc. Topics)	Free Elective	1
		30 Credits Total

**These transfer courses indicate the maximum number of credits depending on the student's selected degree program*

*** Credits evaluated by (Name of Program Director, Title and Date)*