



Why I am a Believer in Accreditation

By Megan Corry, EdD, NRP



For more than two decades, I have had the pleasure of being a paramedic educator at City College of San Francisco, serving as program director since 2003. Then, and now, our mission is to help students develop the knowledge, skills, and professional behaviors necessary to provide advanced emergency medical care in the pre-hospital setting.

Early in my career, I had a sense that a good educator could know intuitively if an aspect of our program was working. You could just “feel it.”

Of course, that’s a fallacy. Until you measure every aspect of the program against standards that are objective and fair, you cannot measure quality, let alone improve it.

That’s exactly what accreditation provides: a well-developed system of standards that ensure high quality education that results in a reliable, consistent, and competent workforce. That, in turn, can enhance healthcare outcomes.

The Committee on Accreditation of Educational Programs for the Emergency Medical Services Professions (CoAEMSP) provides the accrediting activities for more than 750 paramedic programs nationwide on behalf of the Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs (CAAHEP), the only nationally recognized accreditation organization for paramedic education.

Years ago, after our program completed its re-accreditation process with CoAEMSP, one of our reviewers encouraged me to apply to be a site visitor. I was accepted and in that first year I was completely blown away. I had assumed there was a “right” way to meet a standard. What I learned was that there are so many ways to effectively meet a standard. The accreditation process fosters that shared learning across programs.

Getting to see how other programs innovate and operate, including programs in very different settings,

opened my eyes to the incredible diversity of high quality paramedic education programs. It also showed me that the accreditation process is never static or fixed. It is always about continuous quality improvement.

The National Association of EMS Educators (NAEMSE) is one of 11 organizations in the field that serves as a sponsor of CoAEMSP. Sponsors are invested in the accreditation process and provide their expertise as members of the CoAEMSP Board.

In 2021, I was nominated by NAEMSE to serve on the CoAEMSP Board. At first, I was a little intimidated. After all, I am “just” a program director. But I had written my doctorate dissertation on an accreditation crisis earlier in the history of City College. In that process, I learned a lot about how colleges operate and I looked forward to bringing an educator’s point of view to the board.

This year I was honored to be elected vice chair of the CoAEMSP board. As I look ahead to the future of accreditation, I see incredible opportunities and, yes, some challenges.

The nation is struggling with an EMS workforce shortage. There are many avenues to address the workforce crisis. But at the most basic level, we must graduate quality paramedics from our education programs – individuals who are prepared to pass the Registry exam and be credentialed by their state. Accreditation is key to that.

In 2025, CoAEMSP begins accepting applications for voluntary accreditation of AEMT programs. This is a big step forward for the field, and for CoAEMSP, which will need to provide accreditation services to a greater number of programs. But I’m confident the organization is ready.

I am excited about the future of EMS education and the important role that accreditation plays in ensuring quality education for our students. And I look forward to the important work ahead. All of us share the same goal: contributing to the safety and well-being of our communities, ourselves, and the nation.

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