

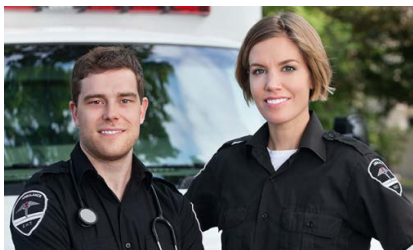
## Lessons Learned: How Removing Silos Has Led to Innovative Programming

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Mitchell Community College is one of 58 community colleges in the North Carolina Community College System. Mitchell CC offers a wide variety of both continuing education (non-credit) and curriculum (credit-bearing) programs. Like every other community college in our system, we have experienced declining enrollment for the past several years. This has challenged us to take a hard look at the way we serve our students and meet the workforce needs of business and industry and our community at large.

In 2016, Mitchell CC was selected as one of 12 cohort colleges to participate in the U.S. Dept. of Education Office of Career, Technical and Adult Education's Mapping Upward project, led by CORD. Guided by the technical assistance we received through the project, we assessed how we provide programming, award credit, and incorporate industry-recognized certifications in our programs. The main goal of the project was to explore strategies for converting non-credit certificate programs to credit-bearing stackable credentials leading to associate degrees. Through the project, we have been able to transform the way we value credit and non-credit at the college and have begun to recognize the impact that each has on students and careers.

One example of this new process can be seen in the college's emergency medical science (EMS) program. At Mitchell CC, EMS has been offered for many years as a non-credit program composed of two primary paths: EMT and paramedic. The EMT path is completed in one 16-week semester and consists of 200 hours (classroom, lab, and 24 hours of clinical experience). The paramedic path is completed in 14 weeks and consists of 1000 hours (460 classroom hours, 200 lab hours, 100 clinical hours, and 240 hours of field experiences). Students who complete those paths are eligible to sit for the NC EMT and paramedic exams and become credentialed. However, students who completed the program were not able to move forward in their careers because they had not earned academic degrees. Moreover, if they wanted to continue with their education and earn associate or bachelor's degrees, the credit earned through this program did not articulate. Since EMS providers now seek degreed paramedics to lead their organizations, this limited the graduates' career mobility.



A plan was put in place to develop a credit-bearing EMS program that would enable non-credit completers to be awarded credit for meeting specific outcomes and competencies that had

been built into the non-credit course. The college created a bridge program that would facilitate the articulation of the non-credit courses to curriculum credit. Through this process we have developed the following program options:

- Career and College Promise, a pathway designed for dual-enrolled high school students;
- Emergency Medical Science Bridging Option, for completers

of the non-credit credential; and

- A traditional two-year associate in applied science (AAS) degree in emergency medical science.



The Career and College Promise (CCP) pathway enables high school students to earn college credit. Participating students have both college transfer and CTE options. The EMS pathway allows high school seniors to enroll in an EMT course the college offers on the campus of a high school that is dedicated to CTE. Students who complete the course are eligible to become certified EMTs. The high school students also take medical terminology courses that can be articulated from the high school to the college. Students who complete all three courses earn academic certificates from the college. These courses are part of the EMS degree, allowing students to stack the credentials.

The EMS Bridging Option is designed to allow a certified, non-degreed paramedic to earn an AAS degree in EMS by completing course requirements identified outside of the paramedic subject area. This program gives the student an opportunity to enhance learning already achieved through non-credit certification courses for paramedics. Coursework includes medical terminology, general education courses, and anatomy and physiology. Currently, when graduates of the non-credit paramedic program enroll in the credit-bearing AAS emergency medical science degree, they receive 42 articulated credits and need fewer than 30 credits to complete the EMS Bridging Option.

The EMS curriculum provides the knowledge, skills, and attributes necessary to provide advanced medical care as paramedics for critical and emergent patients. Students gain complex knowledge, competency, and experience while employing evidence-based practice under medical oversight and serving as links between medical emergency scenes and the healthcare system.

The college has seen great success with this program. The curriculum of the EMS program was offered for the first time in fall 2017. That same semester, students who had already completed the non-credit program, who enrolled in the bridging option, and who completed the general education requirements for the AAS in EMS were awarded degrees. An additional five students have earned their associate degrees. Currently 16 CCP students have completed the pathway.

The Mapping Upward cohort colleges are now part of the CORD-led Advancing Credentials through Career Pathways project, funded by the ECOM Foundation. This experience has provided the college with additional opportunities for growth and collaboration. We are taking a closer look at other non-credit programs to determine how we can replicate this process in advanced manufacturing careers such as mechatronics, welding, and computer integrated machining, as well as health care and information technology.

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