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## Partnership of Excellence: UCLA Paramedic Program Celebrates Milestone

by Christopher Cussat

April 2006, MERGINET This year, the Daniel Freeman Paramedic Education Program will celebrate its 35th anniversary. Since its founding, more than 3,000 students have graduated and have gone on to serve their communities as some of the best paramedics and healthcare providers around. With this long and impressive history, it is the second oldest program of its kind in the country and the oldest one on the West Coast.



Early Freeman Paramedic Class

Rosa I. Calva, client services manager at the UCLA Center for Prehospital Care, explained, "The program itself has made tremendous contributions to EMS and the community over the years; its dedicated faculty give their heart and soul every day so that their students can be successful and great paramedics."

She also noted, "It was the first accredited program and, in fact, their accreditation certificate is numbered as #1."

The Freeman Program still continues to provide a quality education for aspiring paramedics and is now affiliated with UCLA.



Walter S. Graf, MD, a physician at the (then-named) Daniel Freeman Hospital, first established the Paramedic Education Program there in 1970. Unfortunately, it was going to have to close in 1998 because the hospital could no longer afford to continue its operation. That's when UCLA stepped in.

The UCLA Center already offered EMS (prehospital) education and housed one of the largest EMT programs. "We had so many that it was just a natural fit for UCLA to partner with the Freeman Paramedic Program," said Calva.

She added, "It was such a valuable resource to the community that if they



Walter S. Graf, MD

[UCLA] could do anything to help keep it, they would."

Thus a partnership was born in 1999 when the UCLA Center for Prehospital Care made a proposal to help maintain the program and keep it going.



*First partnership class in 1999*

Today, UCLA operates the Daniel Freeman Paramedic Education Program at its original location. It operates with a clock-hour, full-time curriculum, which combines didactic education with professional and clinical experience for a total of 1,140 required hours (it typically takes seven to eight months to complete). Classes are taught to national standards and graduates receive their ACLS, PHTLS, PALS and BLS certifications as part of their training.

Josh Binder is an alumnus and now the clinical coordinator of the Freeman Program. "It's a great affiliation between the two; people are proud to be from both institutions."

Calva agreed, "It's been a great success. We have very high graduation rates and very high national registry passing rates--all in all, it's been a successful venture."

Freeman Program Director William Dunne added, "I think the combination of the two institutions is a great marriage for the creation of highly educated, professional paramedics who are clinically proficient, compassionate, ethical and empathetic health care and public service providers."

A few examples of the program's unique offerings include: an anatomy and physiology block where students participate in a cadaver lab at UCLA as well as classes in medical Spanish that are offered to paramedic students during their primary education. Binder said, "We have always been accessible to private students who are not affiliated with or sponsored by fire-service agencies; our program gives them the opportunity to become paramedics and then enter the fire-services afterwards."



*Current Faculty and Staff*

He considered this aspect to be the Freeman Program's legacy.

On June 10, 2006, a special graduation ceremony (for the class that started in September 2005) will also acknowledge and celebrate the 35th anniversary of the Freeman Program's founding. Cesar Aristeiguieta, MD, state of California director of EMS, will be the keynote speaker.

Calva concluded, "In recognition of the impact they had on their communities, this event will be a 'hats off' to our alumni, the people who founded the program, and the great things that they all continue to do."

An invitation is extended to any alumni or any personnel who were key players in the development of the program, including (but not limited to): past instructors, past directors, etc. For more information, please contact Rosa Calva at (310) 572-2073 or [rcalva@mednet.ucla.edu](mailto:rcalva@mednet.ucla.edu).



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