

Assistant Professor Fifer is coordinator of one of the only baccalaureate Emergency Medical Services/Paramedic programs in America. He also works as a paramedic and often deploys to disaster areas and national security events as a part-time employee of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services National Disaster Medical System.

ASSISTANT PROFESSOR DAVID FIFER

Emergency Medical Services/Paramedic Degree Program in the College of Justice & Safety



For the student interested in pursuing an Emergency Medical Services/Paramedic degree at EKU, what advice would you give him/her?

“We offer a really outstanding program. We take students into great depth on every aspect of what paramedics need to know. Online, we’re able to draw upon subject matter experts from all over the industry and country. We have professors who are directors of some of the largest EMS enterprises in the country and they bring that real-world experience to the online student. Also, we are the second longest accredited paramedic program in the United States which means we have a really well-established program with a lot of experience and deliver a high-quality education.”

Most states do not require a degree in order to become a paramedic. Why then should a student pursue an associate’s or bachelor’s degree?

“Generally, if you want to move into management, a director level position, teaching, regulatory jobs, preparedness jobs, disaster response, or work for state, local, or federal government, it is increasingly common that you need a degree. We have a lot of paramedics who are 10-15 years into their career, and they begin to realize a lot of doors are closed to them without a degree.”

How do you make a very hands-on program work in an online environment?

“All of the students in our online program are working paramedics – that is a prerequisite for the online degrees. They’ve typically already completed their internships, their rotations and of course, are working in the field. Through the course work, we explore difficult issues and equip the students with tools that they didn’t have before.”

Because of the nature of the career, constantly dealing with life crises and sometimes death, what advice do you give students in order to maintain healthy mental care?

“We confront it head-on, taking ownership of it, talking about it. We don’t shy away from the difficult aspects of the job. We talk about mental health, the history of its stigma, and the process of grief. This is part of the education process. But understand that taking care of patients is an incredibly fulfilling and very worthwhile career. This is the main reason so many get into this field to begin with.”

❖ For more information on the Emergency Medical Services/Paramedic program, [click here](#).