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For Immediate Release

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Johnstown, PA - After more than six years of research and development, a high-tech ambulance developed by Saint Francis University's Center of Excellence for Remote and Medically Under-Served Areas (CERMUSA) will begin active service with the Cresson Area Ambulance Association.

At a brief ceremony at 11 a.m. Thursday, March 16, 2006, the keys to the futuristic ambulance, the First Responder Emergency Communications Mobile (FREC-M) will be turned over to the ambulance service, allowing the vehicle to enter active, life saving service. The event takes place at Saint Francis' John P. Murtha Telehealth Research Building, 111 Juniper Drive, Loretto.

Participants will include Saint Francis University President, Rev. Gabriel Zeis, T.O.R., Cresson Area Ambulance Association President Gerald Stevens, CERMUSA Director Jay Roberts, and Congressman John P. Murtha's District Director Brad Clemenson. The FREC-M project is funded through Defense Department funding obtained by Congressman Murtha.

The Cresson Area Ambulance Association has been an active partner with CERMUSA throughout the design and development phase of this research effort, and will continue providing important research data in a "real world" environment.

CERMUSA initiated the research effort to develop a modern ambulance in 1999 in response to a needs assessment showing that first responders needed improved communications from the scene of a medical emergency and throughout the time transporting the patient to a trauma center.

Several similar research efforts have been done elsewhere in the nation, but the CERMUSA FREC-M project was the first to target the specific environmental and technological challenges in the rural ridges and valleys of west-central Pennsylvania. The new ambulance is capable of providing continuous voice and data transmission through a variety of communications links, and has the ability to transmit and receive live video through a satellite video conferencing system.

While the ambulance's communications package includes standard emergency radio systems, additional communications equipment has been installed in the Emergency Departments of both Conemaugh Memorial Medical Center and Altoona Regional Medical Center to allow the use of the additional communications technologies installed in the new ambulance.