

The Ascent

Spring 2026

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Message From Dean John Deaton

Greetings,

Welcome to the spring 2026 semester! We had a very successful fall semester with another record-breaking year of growth in [College of Aeronautics \(COA\)](#) student enrollment. I'm happy to report that we successfully accommodated all flight student blocks this fall, which was no small task. Weather and other delays continue to be part of daily life here, in Florida—welcome to aviation! These are factors that all student pilots face, regardless of where they are, and while I'm biased, I think we do a commendable job in moving our students through the various stages of flight training in a timely manner, notwithstanding all these nuisance factors.



While I've been dean for just over four years, I have been a COA faculty member for more than 25 years and, in that time, I have watched the college grow and evolve. When I first came to Florida Tech, the emphasis was on [undergraduate programs](#)—the COA offered no online and few graduate degree programs. The flight program worked independently from the COA as an LLC, and we had less than 30 aircraft at that time.

Today, the environment is different. While I don't have space to document all the significant changes from the last 25 years, I can highlight several.

First, we now have integrated aviation and academic programs. This integration was not trivial. It took time and required effort and trust on both sides, but today, both units work seamlessly together.

Second, we now have nearly 50 aircraft and service over 650 flight students. Of the four colleges on campus, ours has the highest rate of growth for enrollment, as well.

Third, we have robust [graduate programs](#) in management, human factors and safety—both online and on campus—and even offer a new doctoral degree completely online ([Doctor of Aviation, Av.D.](#)).

Fourth, we have enhanced our relationship with alumni. We rely on them for guidance and direction for our programs and have reestablished "hangar parties," where alumni and students can network.

Last, but not least, we are continuously developing new programs, conducting cutting-edge research and establishing relationships with industry. Most notable is a series of courses involving Advanced Air Mobility, highlighting the COA's commitment to looking toward the future of aviation and being ready for whatever comes next.

Impressive developments such as these are the product of many smaller steps and accomplishments that require much time, effort and collaboration. The stories in this and every issue of *The Ascent* are meant to showcase it all—the big, the small and everything in between. So, as you read about our upcoming events—mark your calendars for Aeronautics Week in April!—faculty research highlights and student awards, know that these are the steppingstones that will continue to propel the COA forward.

As always, thank you to our faculty, my admin team and staff, students, alumni, the COA advisory board and the University Marketing and Advancement teams. It is my honor to be dean and to work with such a prestigious group of individuals.

Respectfully,
John Deaton, Ph.D.
Dean and Professor, College of Aeronautics



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FLORIDA'S STEM UNIVERSITY™

Panthers on the Rise

1 SABRINA KIPP '78 A.S. AND DENNIS COYNE

Sabrina Kipp '78 A.S. serves as a volunteer safety officer and director of training for the Delaware Aviation Museum Foundation's B-25 type rating program.

Kipp recently helped [aeronautical science with flight student](#) Dennis Coyne earn his second-in-command type rating in the foundation's North American B-25J Mitchell "Panchito." She supported his training throughout the program, which he completed successfully.

With more than 33,855 hours of flight time, Kipp's aviation career spans flight instruction, charter operations and freight and passenger flying. She has flown a variety of aircraft, including the Douglas DC-6 and Convair CV-340 for newspaper delivery routes, carrying *The Wall Street Journal* and *Barron's*.

2 BRIAN KEENE '79

Brian Keene '79, a former airline pilot and retired airline industry executive, spent 40 years in aviation before turning a lifelong interest in airports into a second career. In retirement, he founded AV Pro Designs, a company that manufactures highly detailed, historically accurate miniature airport dioramas.

AV Pro Designs builds the models at 1:400 scale from materials such as polystyrene, art board, die-cast models and 3D-printed components. Museums, hotels, private collectors and aviation institutions around the world have acquired the creations.

Keene uses archival photographs, as well as his experience as a pilot, to depict airports as they appeared during specific periods, including John F. Kennedy International Airport in the 1970s and 1980s and Los Angeles International Airport in the 1980s and 1990s. Some dioramas include nighttime scenes. Other airports his company has replicated include Newark Liberty International, Heathrow and Mumbai International.

3 JAMES "JIM" L. BLACKFORD '85 A.S., '85

James "Jim" L. Blackford '85 A.S., '85, received the [2025 College of Aeronautics Skurla Outstanding Alumni Award](#). Blackford is a captain and line check airman with United Airlines.

He began his airline career as a Boeing 727 flight engineer with People Express, later transitioning to Continental Airlines

and then United Airlines through company mergers. Over the course of his career, he has flown the Boeing 737, 747, 757, 767 and 787, and he holds a single-engine seaplane rating.

Blackford earned his Bachelor of Science in [Aviation Management and Flight Technology](#) from Florida Tech in 1985. As a student, he was active in [Alpha Eta Rho](#), the university's [Flight Team](#) and as a flight instructor.

He remains engaged with the university through the [Florida Tech Alumni Association](#), the [College of Aeronautics Advisory Board](#) and ongoing mentorship with Alpha Eta Rho.

4 GAVIN FAHNESTOCK '06

Gavin Fahnestock '06 has joined McFarland Johnson as regional planning manager in the company's Aviation Division. He supports the firm's growing airport and aviation consulting practice throughout the southeastern United States.

In his role, Fahnestock leads a team of airport planners and works with airport stakeholders and local, state and federal agencies to guide planning and development projects from concept to completion.

Fahnestock has more than 19 years of experience in aviation planning and has managed airport projects across the country. His background includes airport master plans and updates, on-call planning and design services, runway relocations, airfield development programs and terminal capacity and improvement projects.

Gael Le Bris '11 MSA, Loup-Giang Nguyen '19 MSA, Karla Medina '22, and Joshua Sattan '24 MSA

Gael Le Bris '11 MSA and Loup-Giang Nguyen '19 MSA co-lead a national research effort to improve airport access through emerging mobility technologies. The project, completed under the Airport Cooperative Research Program, produced "ACRP Research Report 269: Enhancing Airport Access with Emerging Mobility," a comprehensive guide on integrating new ground transportation modes into airport planning and operations.

Le Bris and Nguyen worked alongside fellow Panthers Karla Medina '22 and Joshua Sattan '24 MSA, contributing to research on multimodal access, connected and automated vehicles, and strategies for improving landside efficiency and passenger movement. They also developed planning tools and guidance for airport operators.

WSP, a leading engineering and professional services firm, recognized the team's contributions with a Global Excellence Award in Technical Excellence for advancing innovation in aircraft technology and airport compatibility.





5 KEVIN THOMPSON '13

Kevin Thompson '13 received the Florida Airports Council Aviation Leadership Award, an honor recognizing individuals who have demonstrated exceptional service to Florida's aviation community and to the Florida Airports Council's board of directors, committees and education foundation.

Thompson serves as assistant vice president of planning for the Greater Orlando Aviation Authority, overseeing planning functions at Orlando International Airport (MCO) and Orlando Executive Airport (ORL).

Thompson was also recently elected as a board member of the Tony Jannus Distinguished Aviation Society, an organization dedicated to honoring individuals who advance the development and improvement of the scheduled airline industry.



6 TYLER PRATHER '20, '21 M.S.

Tyler Prather '20, '21 M.S., won the Pulitzer Electric Aircraft Race and received a gold medallion at the Pulitzer Trophy Race in Springfield, Ohio. The event marked the first electric aircraft competition, held on the 100th anniversary of the last Pulitzer Aircraft Race in 1925.

Prather flew the BETA Alia CX300, an all-electric aircraft, and recorded the fastest laps of the course. She reached a 132.97-knot speed and completed the course in 19 minutes and 50 seconds. The next-closest competitor finished at 99.85 knots in 26 minutes and 38 seconds.

Prather works as a human factors engineer, flight instructor and ferry pilot at BETA Technologies.



7 ROBERT EMILIANO RODRIGUEZ '22 A.S., '22 A.S., '22, '23, MSA

While he attended Florida Tech, [Robert Emiliano Rodriguez](#) '22 A.S., '22 A.S., '22, '23 MSA, was a research assistant for the [College of Aeronautics](#) and completed two internships with NASA.

Through that experience, Rodriguez worked closely with NASA's public



relations and education departments, which led to his second internship in program and partnership management, where he supported NASA's collaborative initiatives for a full semester.

Now, just three years after graduating from Florida Tech, Rodriguez has supported national defense and space exploration efforts, conducting electronic warfare testing with the U.S. Army and serving as a mission controller on NASA's Crew Health and Performance Exploration Analog (CHAPEA) mission.

Today, Rodriguez is on the ground working as a senior systems engineer at Lockheed Martin on the F-35 program.

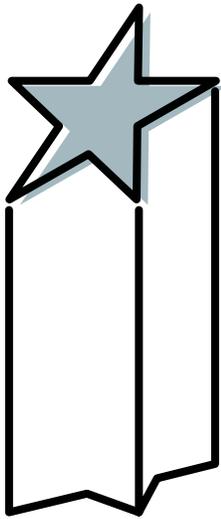
"In my role supporting the F-35 program, I focus on developing advanced training systems that replicate the aircraft digitally, what we call a 'digital twin,'" Rodriguez says. "This allows us to train both pilots and maintainers on how to operate and sustain the jet using realistic, immersive simulations. It's like giving the aircraft a brain and embedding that intelligence into various training devices."

Beyond his professional work, Rodriguez serves as the vice president of program management for a nonprofit dedicated to leadership development and has also volunteered with Cochise County Search and Rescue, supporting the sheriff's office in emergency missions throughout southern Arizona.

8 YARISSE ADORNO '23

Yarisse Adorno '23, a [Florida Tech Aviation](#) certified flight instructor, is a contributing author in *Latinas in Aviation, Volume V*, a collection curated by Jacqueline S. Ruiz that highlights the experiences, challenges and achievements of Latinas working across a wide range of aviation fields.

Adorno's story appears alongside contributions from engineers, pilots, flight attendants, air traffic controllers, veterans and aviation administrators. She joined 19 of the book's 28 contributing authors at the official launch during the fifth annual Latinas in Aviation Global Festival Sept. 27, 2025, at the College Park Aviation Museum in Maryland.



2025 GOLD Ad Astra Award Winner

WARREN PITTORIE

Warren Pittorie '15, '18 M.S., '22 Ph.D., is the [2025 Graduates of the Last Decade \(GOLD\) Ad Astra Alumni Award winner](#).

The prestigious [honor](#) celebrates Florida Tech graduates from the past 10 years who are already making waves and who show incredible promise as the visionary leaders of tomorrow.

Pittorie, a former Florida Tech assistant professor and flight education chair, today serves as a Boeing 737 first officer with Avelo Airlines.

"The biggest reward with my current role so far has been being able to fly some of my former students, as well as Florida Tech faculty, staff and even fellow alumni."

Although he is no longer a full-time faculty member, Pittorie is a part-time flight instructor with [Florida Tech Aviation](#), and he comes back to campus as often as possible to volunteer with current and former aviation students and as a guest lecturer, he says.

He is also a [Florida Tech Alumni Association](#) board of directors executive member and a [College of Aeronautics Advisory Board](#) member.

As a student, Pittorie held several campus leadership positions, including president of the [Student Government Association](#), [InterFraternity Council](#) and his fraternity, [Alpha Tau Omega](#); an [Office of Undergraduate Admission](#) student ambassador; and a resident director for [Roberts Hall](#) and [L3Harris Village](#).

"My long-term goal is to continue to gain valuable experience within the commercial aviation industry and to bring this experience back to Florida Tech in the form of time, talent and treasure," he says.

Pittorie accepted his GOLD Award at the Alumni Awards Gala during [Homecoming Week 2025](#).

"I've been to several Alumni Awards Galas, and I love the energy in the room," he says. "Seeing faculty, staff, students and alumni mingling with each other under one roof, celebrating this big event, is awesome to witness."

But sharing this honor with several people in the room made this year's event particularly meaningful, he says.

"A lot of my current and former Florida Tech students attended, and they're the reason I'm still connected to Florida Tech and the reason I received this award. The award is just about as much for me as it is for them."

Q&A:

Best concert you've attended:

Luke Combs in Atlanta

Guilty pleasure snack:

Pizza—it's a snack, trust me!

Favorite airport:

Nashville International Airport

Walk-out song:

"Start Me Up" by the Rolling Stones

Someone you would swap jobs with:

One of my best friends, Lauren-Ann Graham '20, '23 M.S., who is an Orion mechanical test engineer with Lockheed Martin

"My long-term goal is to continue to gain valuable experience within the commercial aviation industry and to bring this experience back to Florida Tech in the form of time, talent and treasure."

-Warren Pittorie '15, '18 M.S., '22 Ph.D.



Happenings

SAVE THE DATE: AERONAUTICS WEEK 2026

Aeronautics Week is back, and the [College of Aeronautics](#) invites students, alumni and industry partners to mark their calendars for its return April 22–24.

This year's lineup will feature two signature programs. The COA Research Showcase will highlight innovative student projects from the spring 2026 semester, and a networking event will offer a fun, relaxed atmosphere for meeting industry leaders, reconnecting with friends and building new relationships across the Florida Tech community.

Additional events and details are on the way.

Scan to register today!>>



COA HOSTS FORUM ON FUTURE AUTONOMOUS FLIGHT

The [College of Aeronautics](#), in partnership with the [College of Engineering and Science](#), hosted an industry forum and student networking event focused on future autonomous flight Oct. 28, 2025. More than 100 students attended the session, which highlighted developments in advanced air mobility, artificial intelligence, unmanned systems and safety assurance.

The event featured a moderated panel discussion titled "How Hiring Is Changing with AI and the Emerging AAM Domain."

Panelists included Adolfo Klassen of Paladin AI; Cong Liu of Collins Aerospace; Benjamin Emeterio '21 A.S., '23, of Eve Air Mobility; Amit Choudhri of Radial Vector Consulting; and Antonio Campello of the Advanced Air Mobility Association. Chris Fernando moderated the discussion.

The forum provided students with direct access to professionals shaping the future of autonomous and next-generation aviation technologies.



AEROSPACE ON CAMPUS PANEL: PROFESSIONALS SHARE ADVICE FOR THRIVING IN SPACE INDUSTRY

Presented by the Wings Club Foundation and Aviation Week Network, Aerospace on Campus brought leading voices from the aerospace industry to Florida Tech. At the event, executives, mentors and editors from top aerospace companies, airlines and *Aviation Week & Space Technology* magazine shared career insights with students during an expert panel and presentation. The discussion covered hiring trends, networking strategies and practical tips for navigating the aerospace industry.

Here, we've compiled some of the best advice for aerospace hopefuls that speakers shared at the event.

"You might think what you know today will work for your professional career, but there will be detours along the way. ... Be flexible, recognize that you have a strong foundation and continue to build and expand your knowledge so you remain competitive in the workplace."

— **Huntley A. Lawrence '85**, CEO and Managing Partner, HAL Strategy Group

"Stay working on what you're really interested in."

— **Irene Klotz**, Senior Space Editor, Aviation Week Network

"Just ask. If you're interested, if you're ambitious, if you know you're hardworking—just ask. If you don't, you may never get those doors to open up to you. Don't be shy."

— **Joe Bussenger '13**, Senior Director of Launch Operations, Relativity Space

"There's a difference between confidence and cockiness. So, portray a willingness to learn. Even when you're 10 years into your career, you're still learning."

— **Zachary Ewing '22**, Fluids Engineer of Launch Infrastructure, Blue Origin

"Tell people your dream. Tell people your goals. Be passionate, and don't be afraid to go right up to them and say, 'Hey, I want to go to space. What can you do to help me get there?' Put yourself out there, and don't ever underestimate yourself because you never know what opportunities might come out of it."

— **Lauren-Ann Graham '20, '23 M.S.**, Orion Test Engineer, NASA

"You'll find Florida Tech grads everywhere you go. Talking to other alumni is a great way to really understand what's available in a career path."

— **Kenny Peden '16, '18 MSA**, Pilot, JetBlue

"Take advantage of the extracurricular activities Florida Tech has to offer because those will benefit your career more than you know. Building relationships, networking with people who are different from you, sharing your perspective, and using that to reach thoughtful conclusions are all valuable experiences."

— **Letwan Sutton '20 A.A., '20, '21 MBA**, Aviation Tax Manager, MySky

NEW PARTNERSHIP BRINGS HIGH-TECH BOOST TO WEATHER EDUCATION, RESEARCH

Florida Tech students and researchers will have new data and tools to study extreme weather through a new [partnership](#) with weather technology firm Climavision.

Climavision provides detailed, AI-driven weather modeling from global to neighborhood scales and operates a national radar network that fills coverage gaps between government-operated NEXRAD sites. Under the partnership, Florida Tech students, faculty and researchers will gain access to the company's resources, workshops and scientific expertise.

These new capabilities and resources better equip [meteorology](#) students and faculty to study and understand embedded circulations and tornadoes within tropical storms and hurricanes in Florida and the development of hurricanes and other weather phenomena that may impact the coastal southeastern United States. The radar data will also help with faster detection of gust fronts, damaging winds and extreme rainfall events that reduce visibility and make flying dangerous.

The partnership will not only provide real-world weather data, but also deepen students' exposure to machine learning, numerical weather prediction and AI-driven forecasting—all of which serve Florida Tech in its focus on preparing students for the modern workplace.

The [College of Aeronautics](#) plans to integrate Climavision's data into class projects and research. The company's gap-filling radar network is especially valuable for studying low-altitude weather and how it influences general and commercial aviation, search and rescue, medical transport and growing sectors, such as drone services and advanced air mobility.

"Weather is so important to aviation," said [Michael Splitt](#), an assistant professor of [meteorology](#). "Having access to these Climavision resources will give our students an edge in their learning and ultimately position them to better support the rapidly evolving aviation industry."

COA HOSTS RESEARCH SHOWCASE

The [College of Aeronautics](#) hosted its fall Research Showcase Dec. 4, 2025, featuring more than 100 student projects from three upper-level courses: [Aviation Meteorology 2 \(AVS 3201\)](#), [Airport Terminal Development \(AVM 4202\)](#) and [Aviation Research \(AVT 4002\)](#).

Students presented semester-long work across three project types: research studies, terminal development plans and meteorological analyses. The showcase allowed them to demonstrate applied research, connect course concepts to aviation, weather and infrastructure challenges and discuss their work with peers, faculty and visitors.

Attendees explored a wide range of topics across meteorology, airport planning and aviation research while engaging directly with the students who developed the projects.



RANKIN ACHIEVES ASTRONOMICAL IMAGING MILESTONE

[William Rankin](#), retired [College of Aeronautics](#) professor and current adjunct faculty member, has successfully [observed and photographed](#) all 110 celestial objects included in 18th century French astronomer Charles Messier's catalog.

This astrophotography feat was recognized by the Astronomical League, to which Rankin belongs, and earned the former professor of [aviation management](#) a certificate and pin.

The Messier observation program was approved by the League in 1966, the first such program it approved. The selection of objects is highly regarded and often a starting point for amateur astronomers observing and imaging.

COA LAUNCHES NEW LINKEDIN PAGE



The [College of Aeronautics](#) has launched a [new LinkedIn page](#) to better connect with alumni and share the latest COA news, achievements and events. Follow us on LinkedIn and stay engaged with the Florida Tech aviation community.



FLORIDA TECH, EVE AIR MOBILITY FORMALIZE COLLABORATION

A new agreement between Florida Tech and Eve Air Mobility will supercharge student experiences in the evolving advanced air mobility (AAM) field by providing industry-level technical challenges for them to tackle, guest lectures, potential internships and more from the Melbourne-based urban air mobility business of aerospace corporation Embraer S.A.

Exposure to real-world challenges associated with AAM is one of the most valuable aspects of the agreement, said [Meredith Carroll](#) '03 M.S. professor of aviation human factors, director of the [ATLAS Lab](#) and co-leader on the two-year Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) along with Benjamin Emeterio '21, ecosystem strategy lead at Eve.

"We can provide theoretical problems for them to solve, but if Eve has actual technical problems in need of innovative solutions, that process gives students real-world experience—and it's a motivating factor," Carroll said. "If they produce a great solution, maybe there will

be interest in internships or even employment. So, it really enhances the educational aspect of the courses."

The MOU Florida Tech and Eve signed also calls for discussions on future research collaborations in areas of interest to both parties, including aviation human factors, aviation operations, autonomy, aviation business management approaches and aviation psychology.

"This partnership plays a vital role in advancing cutting-edge research and driving innovation across the urban air mobility ecosystem," said Luiz Mauad, vice president of Customer Service at Eve Air Mobility. "We believe that partnering with a prestigious, STEM-focused university like Florida Tech will help establish a strong pipeline of high-quality talent through internships, pilot projects and local career fairs. More importantly, this MOU lays the foundation for ongoing collaboration, enabling us to tackle real-world challenges together and co-develop curriculum that aligns with the evolving industry needs."



FDOT RECOGNIZES ATLAS LAB FOR ADVANCED AIR MOBILITY RESEARCH

Florida Tech's [ATLAS Lab](#), a leader in [advanced air mobility \(AAM\) research](#), was [recognized](#) in the Florida Department of Transportation's (FDOT) new Advanced Air Mobility Business Plan for its pivotal role in shaping the future of AAM in the state. FDOT featured Florida Tech as one of nine universities contributing to Florida's growing "Aerial Highway Network."

The plan describes FDOT's initiative to invest in a new way to connect Florida's cities—the AAM aerial network will offer faster and more flexible travel between key metropolitan areas. Sky-high freeways will have dedicated travel lanes and strategically placed aerial on- and off-ramps to increase business and leisure travel options.

The ATLAS Lab is cited as an institution that will help the state build a safer, more efficient and more sustainable air transportation network. It's run by professor of aviation human factors [Meredith Carroll](#), whose research focuses on autonomy, human-automation interaction, pilot interface design and AAM training.

FDOT's plan also includes an expansion of its SunTrax campus—a facility dedicated to vehicle testing and research in Auburndale, Florida—to serve as Florida's AAM headquarters to test and refine air and ground transportation technologies.

In November, College of Aeronautics Dean [John Deaton](#) and Associate Dean [Rian Mehta](#) toured the growing facility.

"AAM is such an exciting and developing new field of aviation, and the College of Aeronautics is looking to play a leading role in its development as an industry within aviation," Mehta said. "Being recognized by the Florida Department of Transportation, in their AAM Business Plan, is a wonderful testament to the great research work we are doing as a college."



A+ Accolades

FLORIDA TECH FLIGHT TEAM COLLECTS TOP PLACEMENTS AT REGIONALS

The [Florida Tech Flight Team](#) is soaring after a [strong showing](#) in October's 2025 regional SAFECON competition in La Grange, Georgia. The team placed third overall—the same placement that earned them a bid to nationals last season. They're setting their sights on another competitive run as they await the announcement of the National SAFECON 2026 qualifiers.

Scan the QR code for a full list of events and placements.

And the Award Goes To ...

JOSEPH BARLOW AND GRACE HILL

2025 Barbour Scholarship



Students Joseph Barlow and Grace Hill have been named 2025 Barbour Scholars by the Laura Taber Barbour Foundation. The scholarship recognizes accomplished students pursuing aviation careers at accredited programs. Students are nominated by their professors and selected by the foundation's scholarship committee.

Barlow is an [aeronautical science with flight](#) senior minoring in [aviation safety](#). Hill is an [aviation human factors and safety](#) senior with a minor in [forensic psychology](#).

After graduation, Barlow plans to continue his studies at Florida Tech by pursuing a [master's degree in aviation safety](#) and aims to work as an airport or airline safety officer. Hill intends to pursue a career centered on advancing aviation safety, including strengthening safety protocols and promoting a culture of accountability and improvement. She also hopes to mentor others who share her interests.

DALLAS BOODHOO AND RYDER SCHUCH

IADA Foundation Business Aviation University Scholarship



Students Dallas Boodhoo (right) and Ryder Schuch (left) won International Aircraft Dealers Association (IADA) Foundation [Business Aviation University Scholarships](#). The prestigious award recognizes students for both their academic excellence and genuine passion for the business aviation industry.

Boodhoo and Schuch are two of just 11 students chosen from a pool of more than 155 applicants to receive the scholarships. They each received \$4,000.

Boodhoo is pursuing a [Doctor of Aviation](#) and is passionate about improving safety and technology in the business aviation industry.

"This award means the world to me," Boodhoo said. "It is a representation of the hard work that I put in, and it is a tangible investment in my future. I strive to pay this forward as I achieve my goals."

Schuch is a sophomore studying [aviation management](#). He accepted his award in person at the 2025 NBAA Business Aviation Convention and Exhibition in Las Vegas.

"Aviation is truly a service industry, and I look forward to being a part of that service industry," Schuch wrote in a LinkedIn post.

ASHLYN BARWICK, NOA HOLLANDER AND CASSIDY REALE

2025 Tony Jannus College Scholars Award



[Florida Tech Aviation](#) students Ashlyn Barwick, Noa Hollander and Cassidy Reale were three of six recipients of the 2025 Tony Jannus College Scholars Award, presented at the Tony Jannus Distinguished Aviation Society's 61st annual awards banquet in Tampa, Florida. Each student received a \$4,500 scholarship and two roundtrip tickets to any destination served by Southwest Airlines.

The award recognizes college and trade school students who demonstrate excellence in their pursuit of a career in commercial aviation.

Barwick is a sophomore studying [aviation management with flight](#) and [air traffic control](#). She is pursuing her commercial pilot rating and plans to become a commercial pilot for United Airlines and fly alongside her uncle.

Hollander is a sophomore studying [aviation management](#). She previously served in the Israeli Air Force, where she coordinated training flights at a search-and-rescue helicopter squadron. She is also the secretary and historian for the [International Society of Air Safety Investigators](#). She plans to pursue a [master's degree in airport development and management](#) from Florida Tech and hopes to become an airport planner.

Reale is a sophomore studying [aviation management with flight](#). A member of the [Florida Tech Flight Team](#), she earned her private pilot's license with a scholarship from the Air Force Flight Academy. She is working on her instrument rating and plans to work as a flight instructor at Florida Tech and eventually become a commercial airline pilot. She also hopes to open a flight school.

ALEXANDER DEMKO

Wings Club Foundation Scholarship



Alexander Demko has been named the university's first Wings Club Foundation Scholar.

Demko, an [aviation management](#) sophomore, received the Future of Aviation Scholarship and was honored at the Wings Club Foundation's annual Black-Tie Gala in New York City. At the event, the foundation awarded \$345,000 in scholarships to 22 students pursuing careers in aviation or aerospace.

GABRIELLE GREEN

La Porte Aero Club Collegiate Scholarship



Gabrielle Green has been awarded the La Porte Aero Club Collegiate Scholarship, which provides \$3,000 to qualified applicants pursuing aviation-related studies.

Green, an [aviation management with flight](#) and [air traffic control](#) major, returned to her home state of Indiana to accept the award in person.

SOULEYMANE SALL

UAA Janice K. Barden Aviation Scholarship



[Aviation management](#) major Souleymane Sall was awarded the [UAA Janice K. Barden Aviation Scholarship](#) from the National Business Aviation Association's (NBAA) charitable arm, NBAA Charities.

The scholarship is awarded at a minimum of \$1,000 to undergraduates studying aviation or related areas. Sall and 14 other recipients across six scholarship programs were announced at the NBAA Business Aviation Convention and Exhibition in Las Vegas.

RALPH ROCCO '24, '25 MSA, CARLIE SWORDS '23 A.A., '25, AUSTIN WOOD

ACRP University Design Competition

A team of students advised by professor [Debbie Carstens](#) won second place at the 2024-2025 Airport Cooperative Research Program (ACRP) University Design Competition. Graduate students Ralph Rocco '24, '25 MSA, Carlie Swords '23 A.A., '25, and Austin Wood will split a \$2,000 cash prize for their winning project, Airfield Lighting for Enhanced Runway and Taxiway Awareness (ALERT-X).

They completed their project over a semester in Carstens' [Human Performance 1 course](#), which gives students an opportunity to apply theoretical concepts to the real world. In this case, the project addressed airport safety, operations and maintenance.

"I'm very proud of my students for their effort throughout the semester in creating a design idea to address airport challenges," Carstens said.

The annual competition encourages students to design innovative and practical solutions to challenges at airports. Submissions are made across four categories: Passenger Experience and Innovations in Airport Terminal Design; Airport Environmental Interactions; Airport Management and Planning; and Airport Safety, Operations and Maintenance.



College of Aeronautics

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Featured Photo



FROM THE ARCHIVES: A DIFFERENT VIEW OF FLIGHT

[Florida Tech Aviation](#) captured this inverted flight moment during a 2022 aerobatic demonstration. [Warren Pittorie](#) '15, '18 M.S., '22 Ph.D., flew the aircraft, an American Champion Citabria, and performed a series of maneuvers—including hammerheads and barrel rolls—while then-student pilot Jayden Cornwall '23 A.S., '23, photographed and filmed the flight. The [footage](#) was produced as part of a social media partnership showcasing Florida Tech Aviation's aerobatic, tailwheel and spin-training opportunities.

Today, Pittorie serves as a Boeing 737 first officer with Avelo Airlines and continues to instruct part time with Florida Tech Aviation. Cornwall also remains with the program as a part-time flight instructor.

**Want to see more photos from the sky?
Follow the College of Aeronautics and Florida Tech Aviation.**



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