News from the College of Aeronautics

The Ascent

Fall 2026

INSIDE THE ISSUE

Panthers on the Rise..... 2

From 'The Jetsons' to 'Star Wars' 4

Happenings 6

And the Award Goes To..... 9

In Memoriam: Korhan Oyman..... 9

Alumni Spotlight: Kodey Bogart 10

Featured Photo 12

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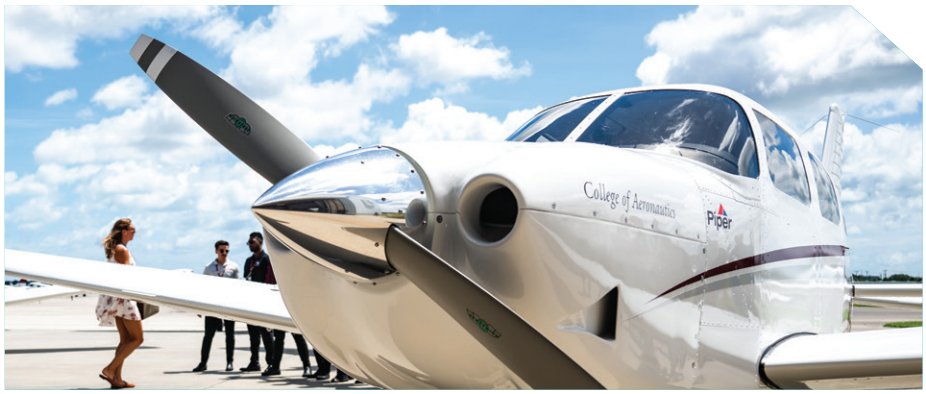


New Role, Shared Mission: Meet Interim Dean Rian Mehta

I am so pleased to welcome you all to a new academic year! As many of you know, John Deaton stepped down as College of Aeronautics (COA) dean this summer and has returned to the faculty. I am honored and humbled to step into the role of interim dean as the university conducts a national search for his replacement. Everyone at the COA and Florida Tech thanks Dr. Deaton for his many years of service as dean, and we are grateful that he will be returning to his passion for educating young minds.

For those whom I have yet to meet, let me introduce myself and my Florida Tech history. I am a COA triple alumnus, having earned my bachelor's, master's and doctoral degrees here. I have also taught at Florida Tech for 12 years and have served as associate dean and head of the COA's academic arm for the last six years. For much of my career, my research focus has centered on trust in automation and flight deck design, but I have also worked in airport operations and am a commercial pilot.

As I take on this interim role, I am energized and excited for all that lies ahead for our college. I am proud to work alongside an amazingly talented and hardworking faculty and staff at the college and the flight school. Everyone's commitment to and focus on providing our students with the highest-quality education is so inspiring. It pushes me to do my very best, as well.

This issue will highlight some of the great things that have occurred recently, and there is so much more to come. Over the years, the COA has grown to meet the demands of the industry by creating a robust pipeline of pilots, air traffic controllers, airport operators, aviation planners and more. This semester, we have welcomed another record class of bright and passionate future aviation experts. We look forward to matching that growth with state-of-the-art equipment to enhance our education and ensure we stay at the cutting edge of collegiate aviation education.

We are working feverishly to develop our ability to provide pilots with exposure to jet aircraft systems, simulators and curriculum, while also pursuing enhancements to our air traffic control simulation capabilities. On a more nostalgic front, this summer, the Skurla Hall lobby received a much-needed renovation, which will be carried throughout the building in the coming years.

It is a privilege to be of service to the college, and I strive to be a worthy steward who continues the upward trajectory that we have been on for the last several years. I appreciate the trust that university leadership has put in me and am so thankful for the support of faculty, staff, students and alumni alike. With the help and support of all, we will work tirelessly to push toward greater heights and create a shared vision for the future. Thank you, and I look forward to updating you again in the spring!

Regards,
Rian Mehta '13, '15 MSA, '17 Ph.D.
Interim Dean

Panthers on the Rise

1 JAMES DUWVE '80 A.S., '82

James Duwve '80 A.S., '82, capped a 48-year flying career with his retirement from United Airlines in 2025.

Duwve began his aviation journey at Florida Tech, where he earned his commercial, instrument, multiengine and certified flight instructor ratings before entering Aviation Officer Candidate School in 1982. He went on to serve as an S-3 Viking antisubmarine aircraft mission commander and landing signal officer in the U.S. Navy, accumulating 225 carrier landings before transitioning to civilian aviation.

After earning a Master of Business Administration and working for a period in corporate aviation, Duwve joined United Airlines in 1997 as a first officer on the Boeing 727. He spent 23 years as a full-time instructor pilot on the Boeing 757/767 fleet before returning to the line as a captain—a role he held until his retirement.

Throughout his career, Duwve credited his time at Florida Tech and his membership in Pi Kappa Alpha fraternity as foundational to the discipline and teamwork that defined his decades of service in the Navy and commercial aviation.

2 COLLEEN MONDOR '90

Colleen Mondor '90 has built a career asking not how aviation accidents happen, but why.

Best known for *The Map of My Dead Pilots*, a 2011 memoir drawn from her time as a dispatcher for a small airline in Fairbanks, Alaska, Mondor has since emerged as one of aviation journalism's most distinctive voices. In 2024, she launched *Probable Cause*, an online newsletter focused on aviation accidents and the systemic failures that cause them.

Her mission, as she described it in her inaugural post, is to go beyond the accident report.

"How crashes like this happen is one thing," she wrote. "The why is what perplexes me, and the question I keep trying to answer."

Mondor grew up near Cape Canaveral, Florida, and came to aviation through her stepfather, a retired Air Force pilot and flight instructor who offered to pay for flying lessons if she majored in aviation. She enrolled at Florida Tech, earning a degree in aviation management, before making her way to Alaska, where she took a dispatching job in 1993 and later pursued graduate work at the University of Alaska Fairbanks, researching legendary Alaska bush pilots and contemporary Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) Part 135 accidents.

Probable Cause has continued to draw readers with Mondor's sharp, accessible and frequently candid writing on topics ranging from contemporary accidents to Alaskan aviation history.

3 REBECCA HUPP '92 AND MARSHALL STEVENS '93

Marshall Stevens '93, vice president of operations and chief operating officer of the Memphis-Shelby County Airport Authority, took office May 5 as chair of the American Association of Airport Executives (AAAE) for the 2026–2027 term during the 98th Annual AAAE Conference and Exposition in Los Angeles.

Stevens, who succeeds Rebecca Hupp '92, vice president of aviation at Austin Commercial, was elected along with other members of the AAAE Executive Committee by the AAAE membership.

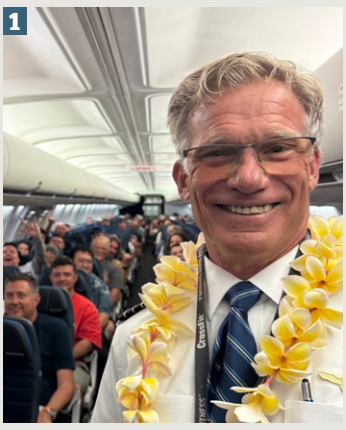
AAAE is the world's largest professional organization representing the individuals who work at public-use commercial and general aviation airports.

4 CHRIS FERNANDO '02

Chris Fernando '02 has joined VHB as the regional aviation director for the mid-Atlantic, bringing more than two decades of aviation planning, environmental policy and emerging technology knowledge to support projects across the East Coast from his base in Raleigh, North Carolina.

In the role, Fernando will guide VHB clients through a rapidly changing aviation and transportation landscape, with an emphasis on projects that advance innovation while meeting regulatory and sustainability requirements.

Fernando's background spans federal, state and local aviation work. He has consulted for the FAA, the U.S. Department of Transportation, NASA, multiple state transportation agencies and airports nationwide, leading environmental and planning studies, advanced air mobility (AAM) and uncrewed aerial systems (UAS) research programs and policy initiatives aimed at integrating current and emerging aviation operations into broader transportation networks.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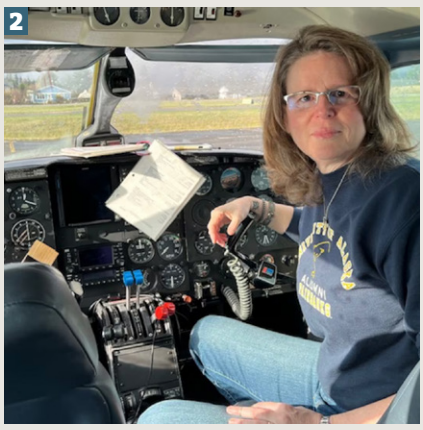
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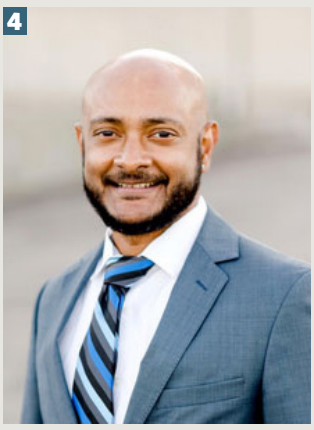
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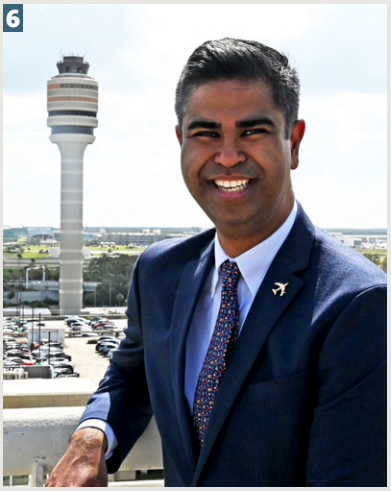
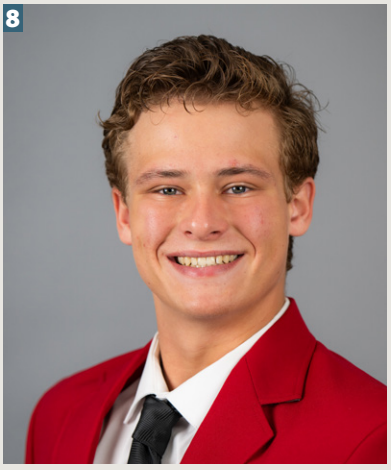




Fernando holds a bachelor's degree in aviation management from Florida Tech, where he serves as an adjunct professor and as industry liaison and faculty researcher at the ATLAS Lab.

5 RYAN MEYER '07

Ryan Meyer '07 was awarded the 2026 NEC/AAAE Aviation Excellence Award at the 2026 NEC Airports Conference in Hershey, Pennsylvania, in March.

The honor recognizes aviation professionals of exceptional quality serving in a second-in-command role whose contributions shape airport operations without holding the top position.

Meyer serves as the director of planning and programming at Lehigh-Northampton Airport Authority in Allentown, Pennsylvania.

6 DARREN L'APPANNA '11, '13 MSA

Darren L'Appanna '11, '13 MSA, received the Business Travel Service Award from the Global Business Travel Association (GBTA) at the GBTA U.S. Chapter Leadership Summit in Miami in February.

L'Appanna serves as the manager of air service and business development for the Greater Orlando Aviation Authority, which oversees both Orlando International and Orlando Executive airports.

He will now also serve as chapter president for the GBTA Central and Northern Florida Chapter.

7 KURT KRIER '15, MADIE POON-GALLOWAY '16, '17 MSA, AND CONNOR HASKIN '17

Kurt Krier '15, Madie Poon-Galloway '16, '17 MSA, and Connor Haskin '17 made up the majority of a team that won the ACC Young Professionals Innovation Competition at the AAAE/ACC Airport Planning, Design and Construction Symposium in Indianapolis in March.

The competition is part of the symposium's Young Professionals Program, which supports early-career professionals through networking, mentorship and hands-on projects. Teams were formed in early fall and tasked with developing innovative concepts to address pressing industry challenges.

Their winning concept, "Airport Opportunity Zones: Simplifying Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) Land Release for Non-Aeronautical Development," proposed a National Airport Opportunity Zone (AOZ) program to streamline how airports convert underused land to nonaeronautical uses, such as hotels, business parks and solar installations. The team argued that billions of dollars in potential revenue remain inaccessible due to regulatory ambiguity and process inefficiencies and proposed a standardized, expedited review pathway with dedicated tracks for short- and long-term development projects, enabling airports of all sizes to more efficiently develop underused property.

Krier serves as technical manager at AtkinsRéalis, Poon-Galloway as senior planner at AtkinsRéalis and Haskin as senior aviation planner and project manager at McFarland-Johnson Inc.

8 JOSEPH BARLOW '26

Joseph Barlow '26 has earned a U.S. patent for a baseball helmet safety innovation he co-developed with high school classmate Sid Tekumalla. The design could transform equipment standards across youth, collegiate and professional baseball.

Barlow, who earned a bachelor's degree in aeronautical science with flight, a minor in aviation safety and an associate degree in air traffic control from Florida Tech, developed the technology during his senior engineering capstone course at Liberty High School in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania.

The patent covers a honeycomb structure, built from engineered Nylon 6 and Nylon 12 materials, that fits inside baseball helmets and recovers at least 90% of its shape after impact. Current helmets are typically discarded after a significant hit because internal padding cannot maintain its protective strength. The design allows helmets to be safely reused, offering a more durable and cost-effective alternative.

"We watched a lot of videos and saw that head safety in baseball just wasn't as developed as it should be," Barlow said in an article published by the *Lehigh Valley Press*. "We believed our idea would work, but none of us expected it to perform as well as it did."

Both inventors plan to pursue the sale or licensing of the patent as they continue their careers.

FROM 'THE JETSONS' TO 'STAR WARS':

Lessons from Fiction About the Future of Flight

By Deborah Carstens '96 MBA

What do aircraft, spacecraft and robots have in common? In my experiences at NASA and Florida Tech, I've learned that the future of flight isn't just about futuristic "flying taxis" or highly accurate and functional robots; it's about people.

At the heart of every complex technology are humans interacting with automation and each other to enhance safety on the ground, in the sky and in space. My human factors and safety research has taught me repeatedly that even the most advanced technology depends on understanding humans.

My introduction to this concept wasn't in a university classroom or on a jobsite. I grew up watching "Star Wars" and reruns of "The Jetsons." I was mesmerized by the automation of the starship fleet and by Rosie, the robot performing household chores.

At the same time, I was fortunate to have access to my very own rocket scientist, whom I fondly referred to as "Dad," a Delta rocket propulsion team member for over 30 years.

My interest in aeronautics began at birth. I viewed rocket launches from my front yard and explored Delta rocket control rooms on employee family days. That propelled me into an 11- year career at NASA-Kennedy Space Center (KSC) before I began my tenure as a Florida Tech faculty member.

Last year, I returned to my roots on a sabbatical working with NASA on a control room research study for the In-Situ Resource Utilization Pilot Excavator (IPEx)—a robot created to dig up regolith, or lunar soil, to extract and transport hydrogen, oxygen and water resources essential for life support.

The research identified 50 recommendations for enhancing the next-generation control room design to optimize humans' ability to monitor robotic excavators.

In my first lesson, I recalled "The Jetsons" and "Star Wars": Automation augments human performance. IPEx may be the brawn, but the brains behind it are the humans who designed and developed the robot and supporting systems and directed it to perform.

Advanced Air Mobility (AAM), another of my research interests, promises to revolutionize transportation with electric vertical takeoff and landing (eVTOL) vehicles, which could be crewed or uncrewed.

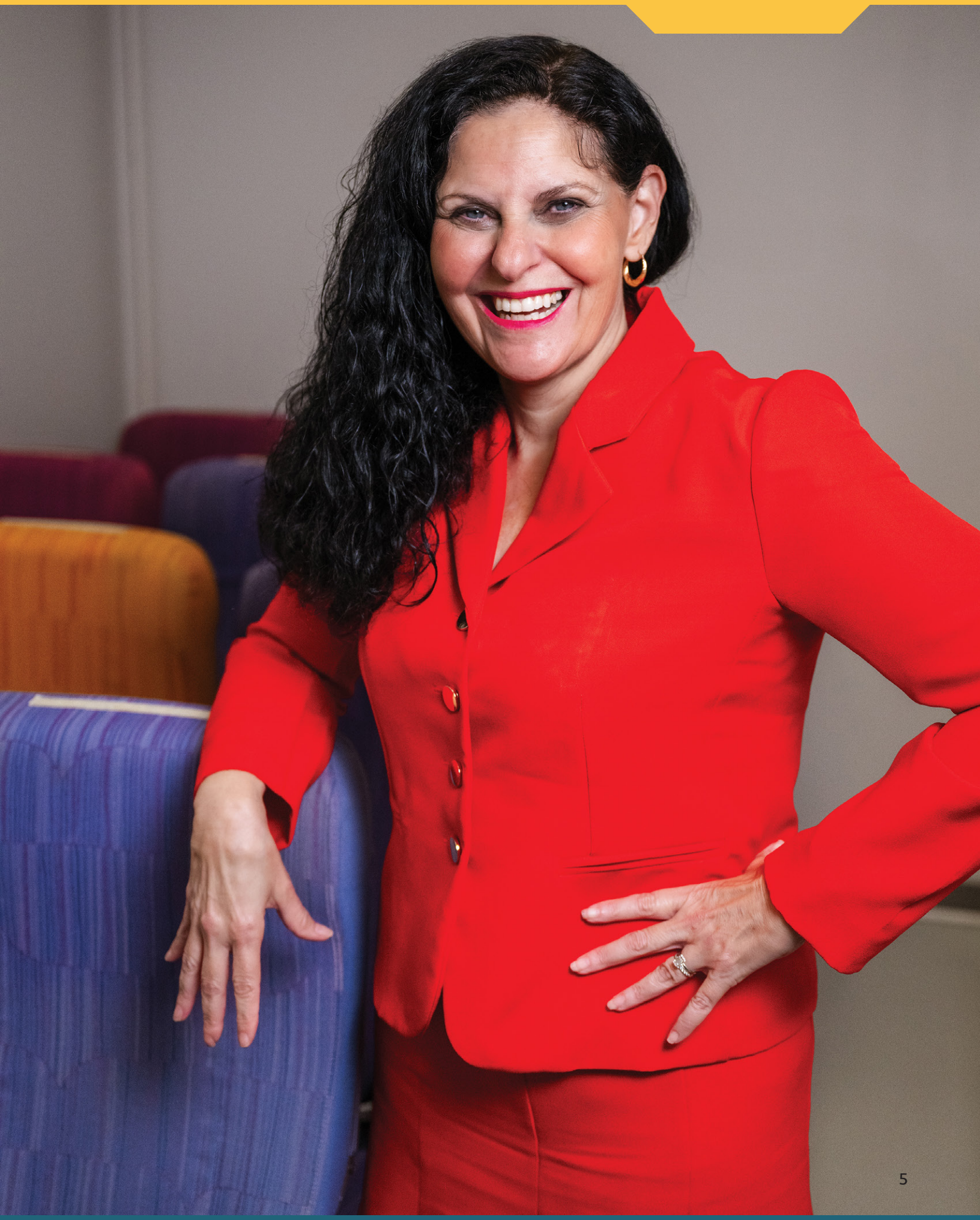
While exciting, it presents new challenges, such as when operations become uncrewed and decision-making and problem-solving by a ground-based operations manager or remote pilot in command (RPIC) become vital in detecting anomalies differently from how a traditional pilot does.

That brings me to the second lesson: Redundancy is at the core of safety. Every "Star Wars" mission had a backup plan, and Rosie was the backup for fixing malfunctioning machines.

In the real world, there are layers of redundancy, from backup systems to human oversight of automation, resulting in safer operations.

The first two lessons lead to a third: trust. In "Star Wars," human characters believed in flying cars and flying support from R2-D2. In the real world, consumers and operators must have that same level of trust for new concepts to succeed.

The takeaway: The biggest challenges aren't just technical—they're human. That's why human factors research will always be the bridge between imagination and implementation.

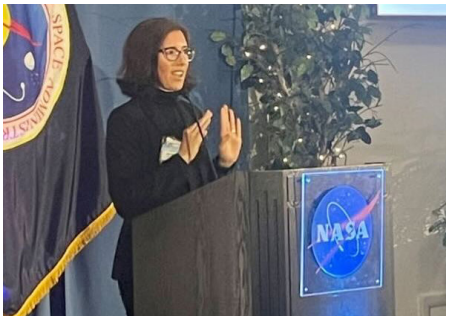


Happenings

CARROLL PRESENTS TRANSCEND ULI RESEARCH TO NASA RAM-AO WORKING GROUP

At NASA Ames Research Center in Silicon Valley, California, March 3, professor Meredith Carroll '03 M.S. briefed the NASA Routine Autonomous Multi-Aircraft Operations (RAM-AO) Working Group on the TRANSCEND NASA University Leadership Initiative (ULI) research she leads with associate professor Siddhartha Bhattacharyya.

During the meeting, Carroll heard briefs from NASA researchers, companies such as Wisk Aero, Reliable Robotics Corp. and Joby Aviation, and toured NASA research labs as well as the Zipline headquarters.



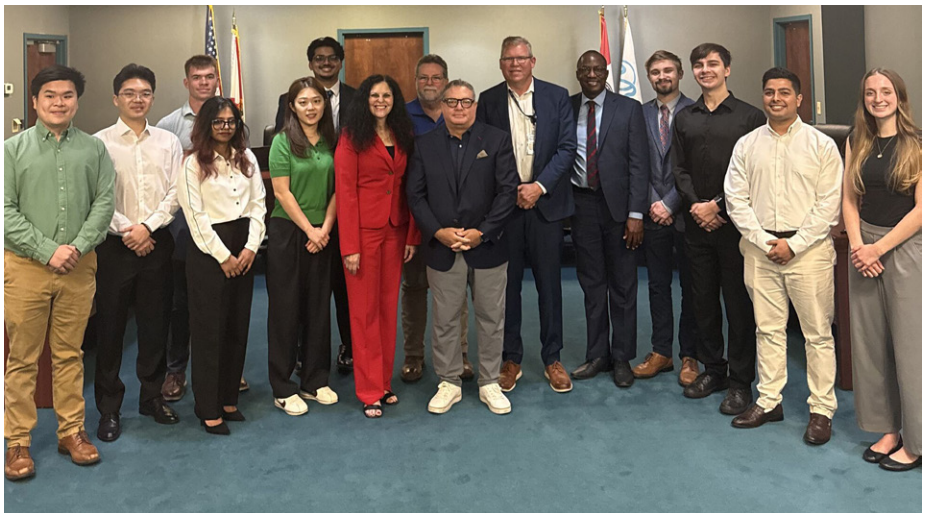
HUMAN PERFORMANCE STUDENTS PRESENT RESEARCH TO MLB LEADERSHIP

Human Performance 1 students took their academic work beyond the classroom, presenting research projects to the executive management team at Melbourne Orlando International Airport.

The visit, organized by professor Deborah Carstens '96 MBA, gave students a professional venue to share work developed as part of the Airport Cooperative Research Program (ACRP). The projects will also be featured in the ACRP University Design Competition, which challenges students nationwide to apply their research to real-world aviation challenges.

The executives offered feedback and direct industry exposure ahead of the competition, giving students a professional sounding board before competing at the national level.

"Learning is far too often theoretical for students," Carstens said. "This project provides them with a way to apply classroom concepts to the real world."



FAA HYPOXIA TRAINING COMES TO CAMPUS

The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) brought its Portable Reduced Oxygen Training Enclosure (PROTE) to Florida Tech's Enterprise Building from April 22–25, giving 221 participants, most of them College of Aeronautics students, a firsthand look at how their bodies respond to hypoxia—a state of oxygen deficiency that can impair judgment and physical function.

The PROTE is a mobile chamber that simulates high-altitude conditions by removing oxygen from the air rather than lowering atmospheric pressure, reducing the oxygen fraction from approximately 21% to roughly 6% and producing physiological effects similar to those experienced at about 25,000 feet. The chamber allows pilots to experience oxygen deprivation in a controlled environment, and each participant was required to identify their physiological symptoms during the experience—a critical skill for flight safety.

The training offered students direct exposure to conditions they may one day encounter in the cockpit, reinforcing classroom instruction with a physical understanding of how hypoxia affects individual performance.

"The PROTE experience was unlike anything I had ever encountered before," said Jayden Mayer, an aviation management with flight senior. "It was both fascinating and slightly humbling to watch my brain slowly stop cooperating in a low-oxygen environment, but it taught me firsthand how important hypoxia awareness really is. This opportunity made me more confident, aware and, ultimately, a safer pilot."

FLIGHT TEAM SOARS AT NATIONAL SAFECON

The Florida Tech Flight Team turned in a standout performance at the National SAFECON 2026 competition in Moline, Illinois.

The team, guided by College of Aeronautics professor emerita Donna Wilt '84 M.S., '95 M.S., '97 Ph.D., as coach and Florida Tech Aviation's Karl Blumfelder '13 as advisor, said it was a memorable combination of challenging events and impactful learning.

"You really get to take your abilities, hone them and show them on the big stage," said Devin Andrade, team secretary.

"I was able to hold myself to a higher standard and push myself to get better," said team treasurer Avery Karasinski.

A strong showing in the National Intercollegiate Flying Association's (NIFA) regional SAFECON event in October earned the team a spot in the national competition, which featured top teams from schools across the country competing in safety and flight evaluation events.

The national competition ranks teams two ways. SAFECON points are awarded to the top 20 of more than 150 competitors, while judges' points are awarded to all participants—a broader and more complete measure of overall performance.

The 2024 season marked the team's first appearance at the National SAFECON since before the COVID-19 pandemic—and the primary goal that year was simply to earn one of the 32 invitations to the national competition.

Since then, the team has improved its judges' ranking each year, moving from 29th in 2024 to 25th in 2025 and 16th in 2026, while also improving its SAFECON ranking from 30th to 24th over the same period.

"In just three years, the team has shown amazing progress and blown through all the targets that they set for themselves," said Interim Dean Rian Mehta '13, '15 MSA, '17 Ph.D. "With the help of Dr. Wilt and Mr. Blumfelder, they have reached new heights. The team is an amazing reflection of our flight school, our college and our university."

Scan for a full list of the flight team's SAFECON 2026 placements:

SPRING CONFERENCE SEASON PUTS COA RESEARCH ON THE NATIONAL MAP

The College of Aeronautics made its presence felt at conferences across the country this spring, with faculty, students and alumni presenting research spanning unmanned aviation, human factors and airport sustainability.

Doctoral student Xiaomeng Sun '18, '20 MSA, presented her unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) research at the American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics (AIAA) SciTech Forum 2026 in January in Orlando, Florida. Co-authored with collaborators from Florida Tech's Advancing Technology-interaction and Learning in Aviation Systems (ATLAS) Lab and NASA Langley Research Center, the study applied a four-step, user-centered design process to develop interface concepts for NASA's MPATH ground control station, aimed at reducing operator workload as drone operations scale up.

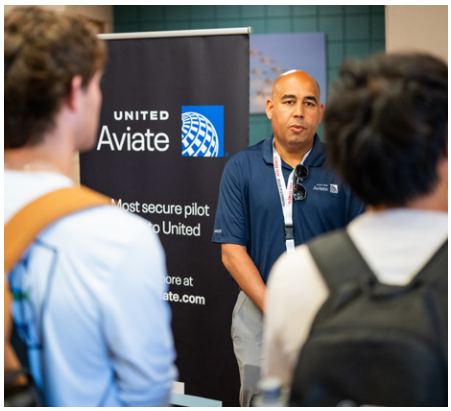
In April, at the Industry, Engineering & Management Systems (IEMS) Conference in Clearwater, Florida, COA faculty, students and alumni authored and presented seven papers covering topics ranging from air traffic control staffing and drone sightings to crew dynamics and airport app usability. Professor Deborah Carstens '96 MBA served as track chair for two Human Factors and Cognitive Engineering sessions. Authors included associate professor Brooke Wheeler, assistant professor Vivek Sharma '18 M.S., '23 Ph.D., former COA Dean John Deaton and several student and alumni collaborators.

Undergraduate student Julia Labick presented her research at the Naval Air Warfare Center Aircraft Division (NAWCAD) 2026 AirTalent Undergraduate Research Symposium in April in California, Maryland. Her project, developed through the ATLAS Lab in collaboration with NAWCAD Training Systems Division and funded by the NAWCAD Capstone Challenge, integrated eye-tracking hardware with a commercial flight simulator to evaluate the technology's reliability for future flight-training research.

Sun and doctoral student Nikhita Agasam '22 MSA, '26 Ph.D., also showcased their research at the 2026 Conference of Florida Graduate Schools in April in Gainesville, Florida. Agasam's research examined sustainability behavior among airport personnel nationwide. Her findings suggest intrinsic motivation and social factors drive green behavior among airport employees more than monetary incentives. Sun brought her UAV ground control station research to the conference, extending its reach to a statewide audience.

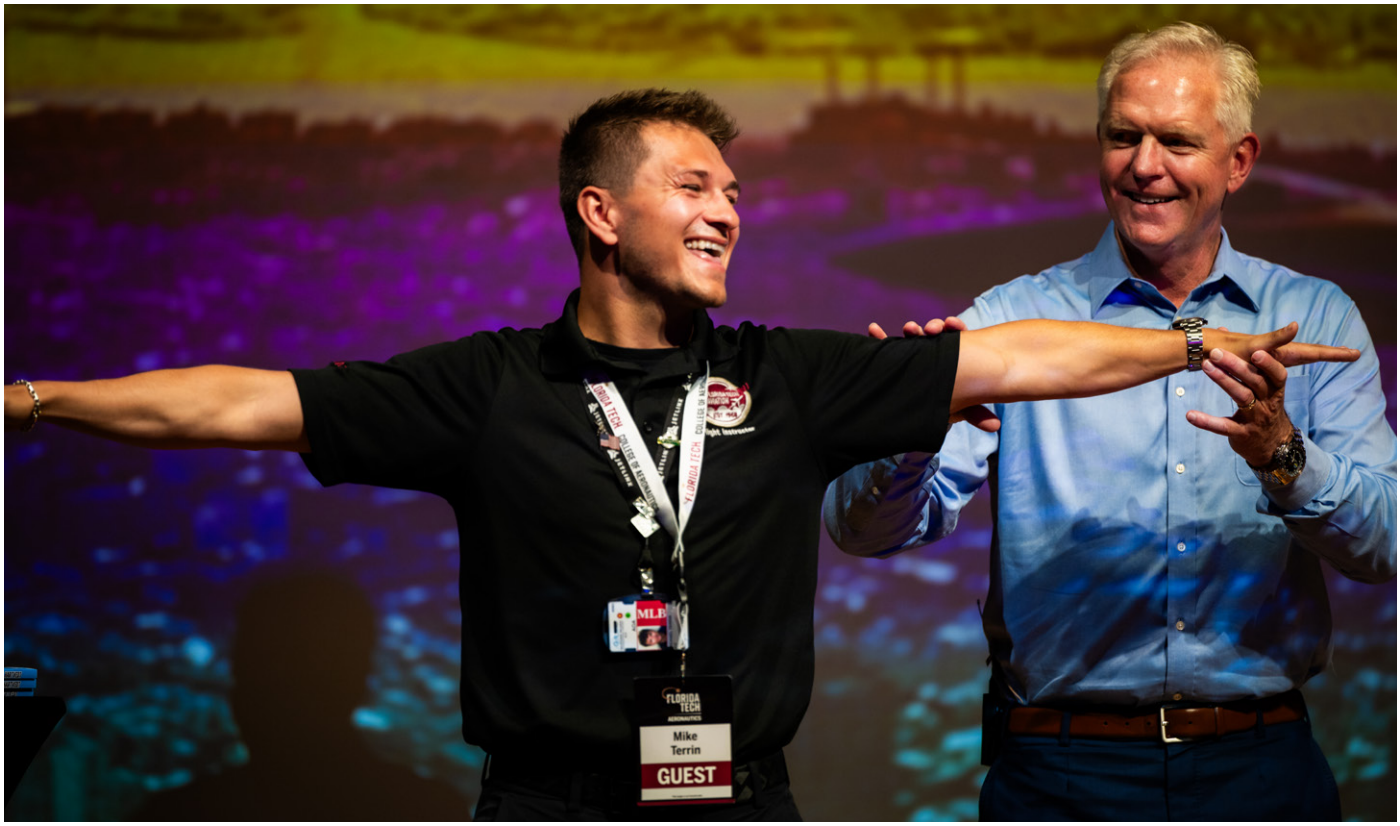
AERONAUTICS WEEK

In April, Florida Tech's College of Aeronautics hosted its second annual Aeronautics Week—an exciting event that brought together hundreds of students, alumni and industry leaders for a dynamic week of learning, networking and celebration.



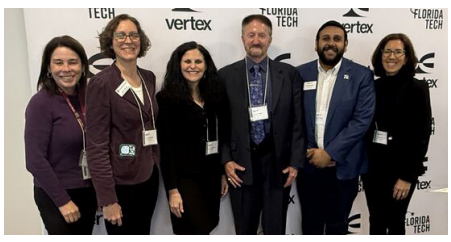
The week kicked off with a Blue Angels Foundation keynote presentation, and later events included discovery flights, alumni speakers, a networking reception on Crawford Green and the Northrop Grumman Engineering and Science Student Design Showcase, where COA students presented their applied research and projects, highlighting their analysis, problem-solving and industry-relevant insights.

"I'm delighted with the continuation of our Aeronautics Week events. Each year it gets better and better with more student and alumni participation," said then COA Dean John Deaton. "It was my honor to bring back this tradition, and we are already planning for next year's event—stay tuned!"



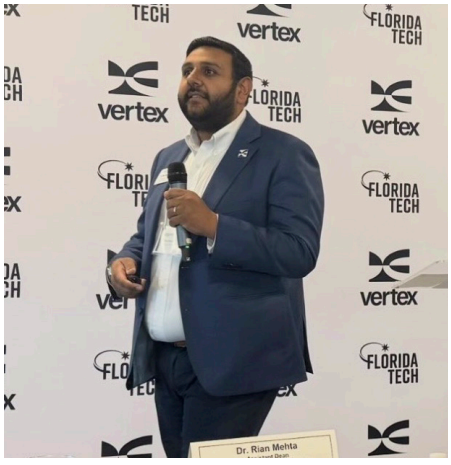
COA JOINS INDUSTRY LEADERS AT FLORIDA AAM PITCH DAY

Vertex: Applied Innovation Hub, in conjunction with several state organizations, hosted Florida Advanced Air Mobility (AAM) Pitch Day Feb. 13. The showcase featured high-growth companies advancing AAM, drones, uncrewed aerial systems (UAS), dual-use aviation technologies, autonomy, sensing, software and enabling infrastructure.



Companies presented their technologies and expertise to industry leaders, investors and state officials through pitches, live Q&A sessions with state leaders and investors and on-site demonstrations—all with the intention of creating collaborative efforts across all stakeholders.

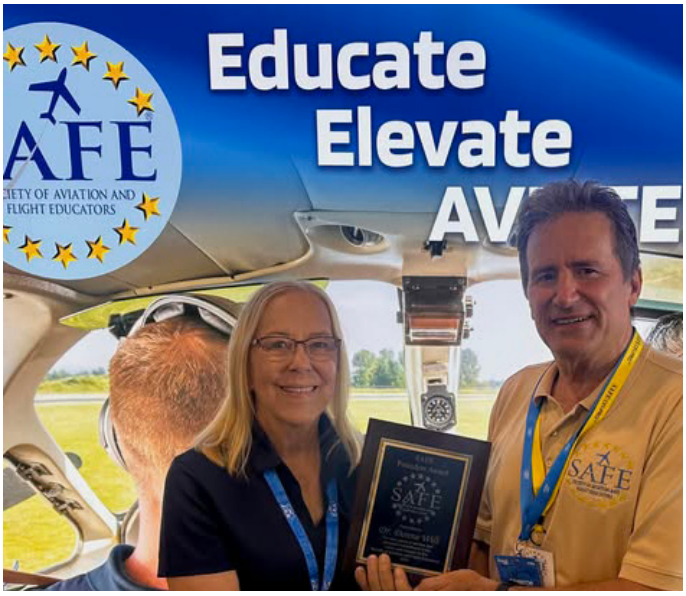
Several College of Aeronautics faculty attended the event, with Interim Dean Rian Mehta '13, '15 MSA, '17 Ph.D., presenting on the college's academic and research work in the AAM space.



And the Award Goes To ...

DONNA WILT '84 M.S., '95 M.S., '97 PH.D.

SAFE, Founder's Award



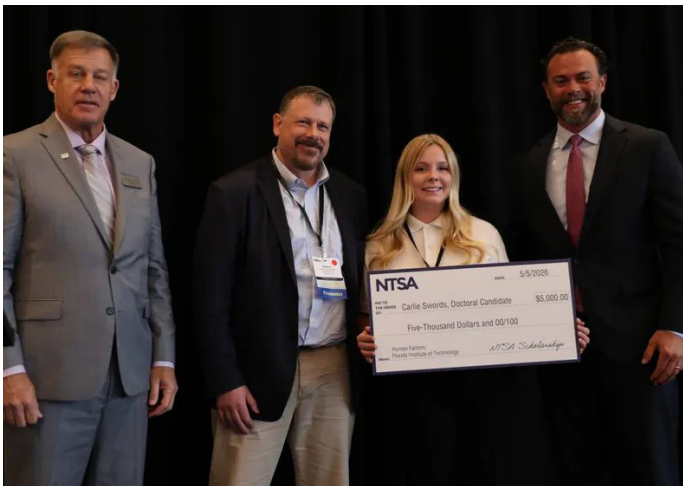
Professor emerita Donna Wilt '84 M.S., '95 M.S., '97 Ph.D., received the 2025 Society of Aviation and Flight Educators (SAFE) Founder's Award.

Wilt served as an early board chairperson for SAFE and previously received the SAFE Service Award for creating the SAFE Mentoring Program. She has served on the Federal Aviation Administration Airman Certification Standards (ACS) committee since 2016 and played a key role in returning minimum controllable airspeed (MCA) to the ACS.

She also contributed to a project to transfer the Aviators Model Code of Conduct to a permanent archive at Florida Tech's Evans Library.

CARLIE SWORDS '25

NTSA, RADM Fred Lewis Postgraduate Scholarship



Aviation Sciences Ph.D. student Carlie Swords '25 received the 2026 National Training and Simulation Association (NTSA) RADM Fred Lewis Postgraduate Scholarship at the 2026 Department of the Air Force Modeling, Simulation & Analytics (DAFMSA) Summit in Colorado Springs, Colorado, in May.

The $5,000 scholarship recognizes graduate students pursuing leadership in the modeling, simulation and training fields and is awarded annually to stimulate student interest and university participation in those communities. The scholarship will directly support Swords' academic and research pursuits in aviation human factors.

"I am incredibly grateful to NTSA for this award and for the wonderful opportunity to attend this year's summit," Swords wrote in a LinkedIn post.

In Memoriam:

KORHAN OYMAN

Korhan Oyman, the distinguished aviation and airport management scholar whose leadership, intellect and vision over a remarkable 22-year career at Florida Tech, passed away Aug. 17. Oyman came to Florida Tech in 2004 as an assistant professor in the College of Aeronautics. He rose through the ranks, serving as division director, associate dean and, eventually, dean of the college (and full professor). He then served as university provost from 2019–2020. From his mentorship of young university leaders to his spearheading the development of critical graduate programs, Oyman's impact at the COA—and the university overall—was substantial.

"Dr. Oyman's passion and care for the success of the College of Aeronautics and its faculty, staff and students was unmatched," said Interim Dean Rian Mehta, who was Oyman's friend and mentee. "He truly poured his soul into COA and Florida Tech and left a lasting impact on the success of our college."

Mehta said Oyman's legacy will live on in both the people and the programs at Florida Tech.

"On a personal level, I am deeply saddened by the loss of not only a mentor but a close friend," Mehta said. "We will look to honor Dr. Oyman's legacy by taking the College of Aeronautics and its students to new heights, something which was the entire focus of his 22-year career at Florida Tech."

KODEY BOGART:
The Sky Is No Limit

By Chloe Drieu

Kodey Bogart '22 M.S., '25 Av.D., has never followed a straight path. Today, she is CEO of KB Aviation Solutions, a consulting firm helping aviation companies build safety management systems, and author of the Helo Girls™ children's book series, which introduces girls to the world of helicopter missions. However, her journey into aviation began somewhere unexpected.

At 17, Bogart joined the military. Two years later, she boarded her first morale flight, and aviation entered her radar for the first time.

"I just absolutely love it," she recalls. "I loved how busy the pilots were, how they were always doing something."

But because of her poor eyesight and military aviation's nearly perfect vision requirement at the time, becoming a pilot felt impossible.

That changed in the early 2000s, when the Army and Navy began researching refractive surgery as a way to help service members meet pilot vision standards. Encouraged by a mentor, Bogart applied, underwent the surgery and passed the flight physicals. By May 2004, she had entered Army flight school, launching a 21-year career as a helicopter pilot.

"It was life-changing," Bogart says. "One small opportunity shifted the entire trajectory of my career."

During her U.S. Army career, Bogart flew the UH-60 Black Hawk on medical evacuation missions during Operation Iraqi Freedom, transporting injured soldiers from combat zones to hospitals. She earned two Air Medals and the Sikorsky Rescue Award, given to pilots who show extraordinary skill and bravery in saving lives.

Over time, she grew equally interested in aviation safety, first as a pilot and later as a flight safety advisor.

"I'm one of those book nerds," she laughs. "I really liked regulations. But more than that, I loved helping organizations get better."

That passion led her to found KB Aviation Solutions, which helps aviation operators of all sizes develop safety management systems, structured approaches to identifying hazards and building accountability. Services include auditing, safety program design, flight data monitoring and compliance training. Bogart also lectures and writes for aviation outlets, focused on building safety systems tailored to each organization.

Bogart's other venture, Helo Girls™, tells mission-specific stories in which female pilots lead firefighting, air ambulance and law enforcement missions, weaving in preflight checks, teamwork and situational awareness. The idea grew from her own childhood, when she rarely saw pilots in books who looked like her.

At an airshow in Lakeland, Florida, Bogart watched a young girl spot Helo Girls™ on display and tell her mother, "Mommy, she looks like me!"

"If a little girl can pick up a helicopter book and see herself in that role, she knows she can do it, too," Bogart says.

Bogart credits her career to persistence, mentorship and resilience. Her advice to young women entering male-dominated fields: "Believe in yourself. Leave the self-doubt behind. ... If you put your mind to it, study and work hard, you can achieve it."

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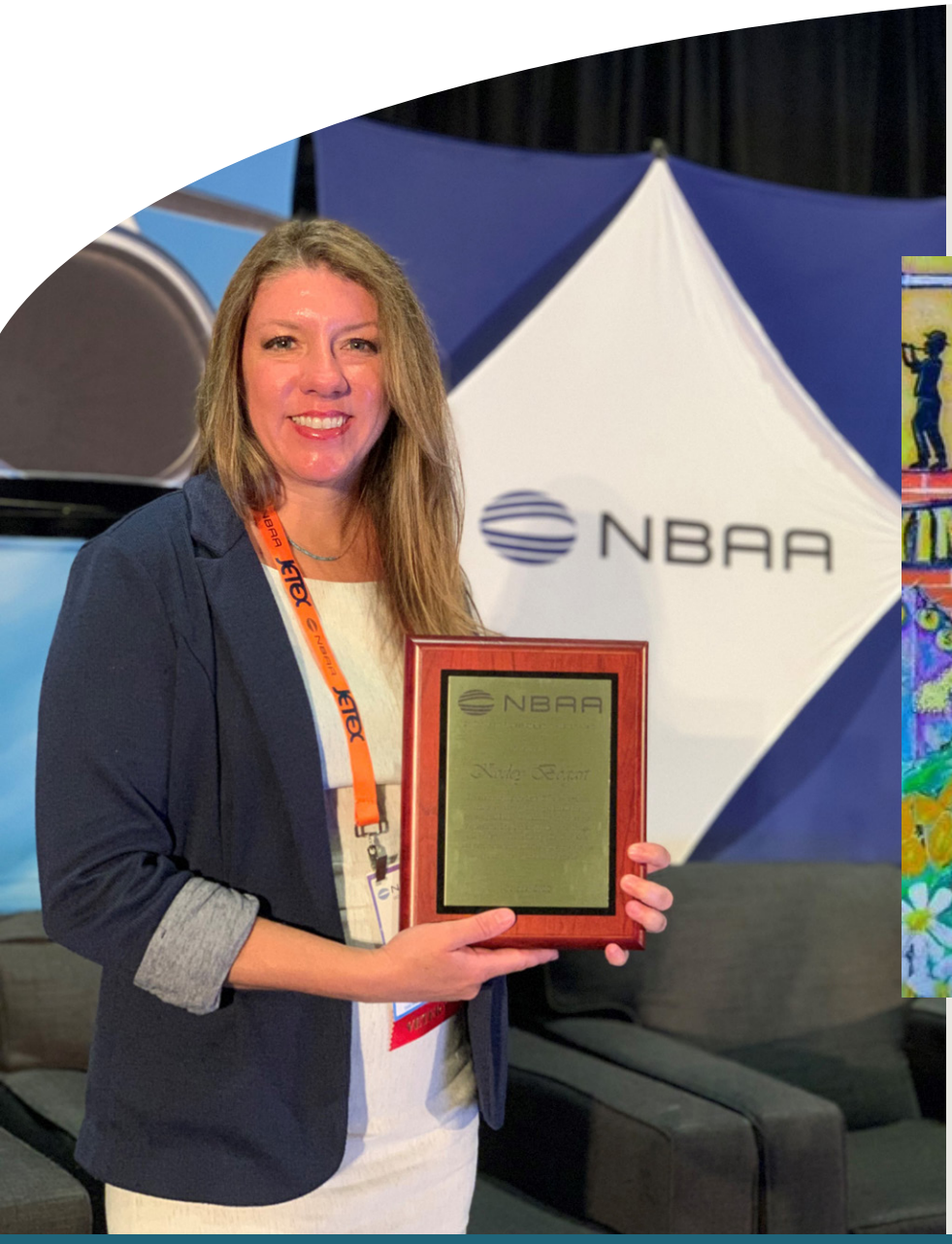
–Kodey Bogart '22 M.S., '25 Av.D.



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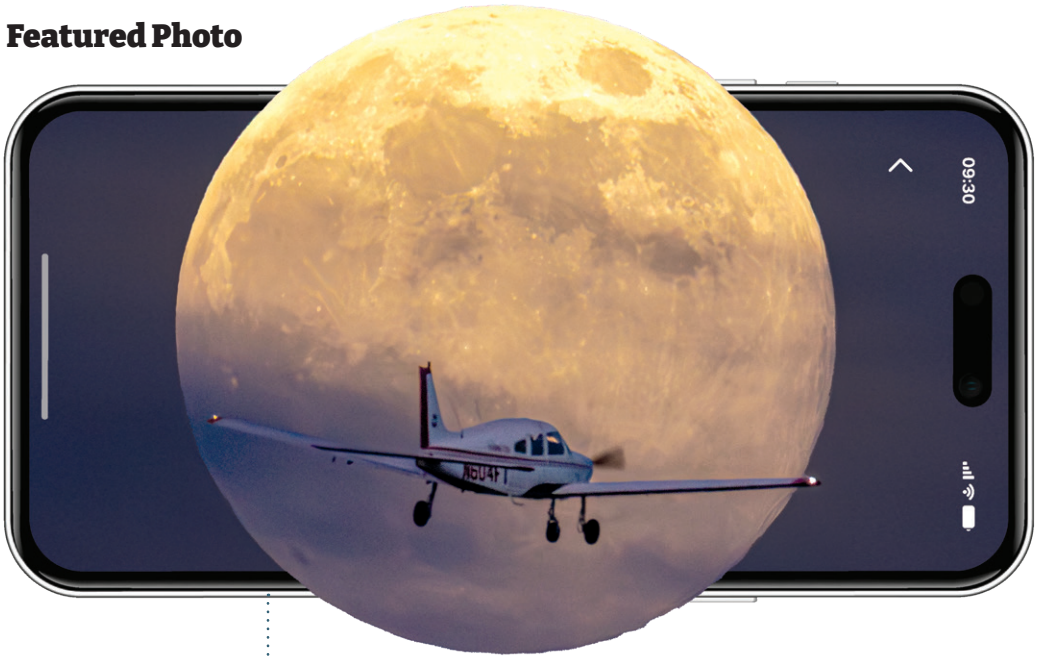

FULL MOON RISING

The Full Cold Moon rises over Melbourne Orlando International Airport Dec. 4, 2025, as a Florida Tech Piper Warrior II climbs out after sunset. Aviation management with flight sophomore Drew Roberts flew the aircraft on a solo night flight. Photo by Michael Seeley.

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