

The Ascent

Spring 2024



INSIDE THE ISSUE

- Panthers on the Rise..... 2
- Alumni Spotlight 3
- Club Spotlight..... 4
- Student Spotlight 4
- And the Award Goes To..... 5
- Happenings 6
- Now Presenting 7
- Featured Photo 8



Message From Dean John Deaton

Greetings,

Welcome to a new semester! We successfully completed the fall semester, even with the numerous challenges that came our way. The most notable challenge was the significant increase in the College of Aeronautics freshman class—most of whom were enrolled in our flight program.

With the stellar team headed by Jay Arcemont, executive director of flight operations at FIT Aviation, we accommodated a large number of flight students with the resources at hand. Of particular interest, we have purchased several additional aircraft, and we anticipate the arrival of four new Piper 100i aircraft by fall, with an additional four coming later in the academic year.

We expect a similar increase in the number of COA students enrolling this fall—again, most of whom will be in the flight program. The future challenge will be in the maintenance department. We have essentially run out of hangar space due to the influx of additional aircraft, students and routine maintenance, so we are working toward the approval of a new hangar in the near future.

I'd like to pass on a few other pieces of exciting news. First, we are upgrading our Air Traffic Control (ATC) Lab and have purchased the latest software that will put us on par with our competitors. As a result, we anticipate this program will grow substantially, given the recent need for increasing numbers of ATC personnel. Second, we are purchasing additional drones for our drone program. They will meet the new required Federal Aviation Administration standards. Finally, we have approval to hire three new faculty members for fall. We are in the process of soliciting applications and will be conducting interviews in the very near future.

Finally, I want to personally thank our COA Advisory Board, the University Marketing team and all COA faculty and staff for their support and help in moving the COA forward amid all the challenges we face as we grow and increase our presence as one of the premier academic and flight training universities in the U.S.



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



College of Aeronautics at
Florida Institute of Technology



@floridatechaeronautics



coa.fit.edu



FLORIDA'S STEM UNIVERSITY

Panthers on the Rise

1 MICHAEL MULLANEY '88

Michael Mullaney '88 was appointed executive vice president of business development for OTG, the hospitality group responsible for transforming the airport dining experience across North America.

2 PATRICK CARRENO '02

Patrick Carreno '02 was promoted to director of aviation for Dallas Executive Airport, Dallas Love Field Airport and Dallas Vertiport. Previously, Carreno served as assistant director of operations and interim director for the department.

3 RENAUD BOIDIN '03

Renaud Boidin '03 M.S. returned to Paris Airports Operator Groupe ADP as head of innovation for the engineering and capital projects division. He will help implement the decarbonization roadmap and achieve the group's sustainability objectives.

4 ISHMAEL CREMER '09, '15 PH.D. GEORGE LOPEZ '17 MANUELA CORTES '18

Ishmael Cremer '09, '15 Ph.D., George Lopez '17 and Manuela Cortes '18 reunited for a float flight to a remote lake in Prince William Sound, Alaska.

5 MAJ. LACEY LOSOLE '13

Maj. Lacey Losole '13 was promoted to major in the U.S. Army and is serving as a tactical officer at the United States Military Academy in New York. Since graduating from Florida Tech, Losole has held various positions, such as platoon leader and battle captain in Afghanistan and company commander of Alpha Troop 2-6 CAV in Oahu, Hawaii.





Alumni Spotlight

Kent Combrink

ZERO TO HERO: PILOT FROM ZAMBIA TRAINS AT FIT AVIATION

Kent Combrink always dreamed of being a bush pilot. Growing up in South Africa on a farm in Zambia, he couldn't wait for the day when he could fly around the rough terrain.

Last summer, Combrink made that dream come true after completing FIT Aviation's flight training program.

"I was able to do what they call 'zero to hero,' which means I came on with no initial training or experience to become a commercial pilot with an instrument rating," Combrink says. "I had the privilege of being able to fly all around Florida into some of the biggest airports in the state, gaining great experience and confidence. My instructors were always dedicated to helping me reach my full potential and pushing me to become a better pilot."

He chose FIT Aviation after doing some research, finding its impressive aircraft fleet and quality maintenance to be selling points.

Since completing the program, Combrink has worked for a charter company, transporting passengers to and from game lodges, and has participated in a three-month mission training program to become a missionary pilot.

"My time at FIT Aviation didn't just teach me how to fly and be a pilot, but it taught me to love aviation," Combrink says. "It taught me the importance of knowing your aircraft and its limits, and how to fly safely. It also showed me the true importance of a team and how close-knit the aviation community truly is."

What has been the highlight of your career so far?

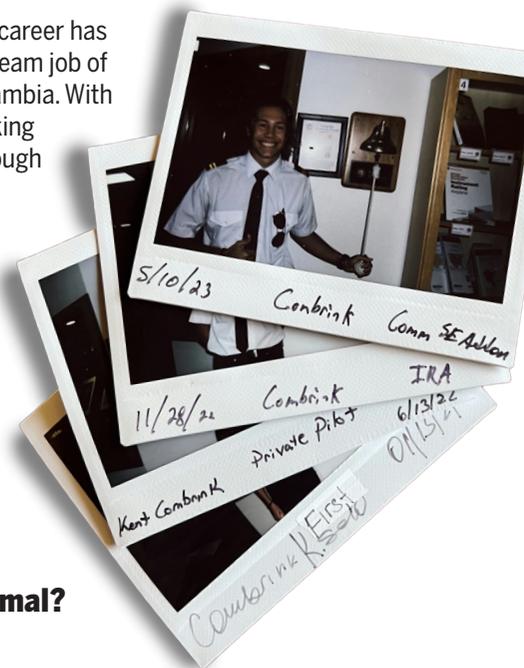
The highlight of my aviation career has been being able to get my dream job of flying bush planes around Zambia. With this, I had the privilege of taking my parents, who put me through flight training, up on a flight and to fly them around.

What is your favorite thing to do on the weekends?

My favorite thing to do on weekends is any outside activity with friends and family. The true highlight of my weekends is going to church and worshipping.

What's your spirit animal?

My spirit animal would 100% be a golden retriever. I'm full of energy, absolutely love people and, for some reason, everyone loves me.



Club Spotlight



Flight Team

Florida Tech's Flight Team is composed of competitive pilots, from all grades and various majors, who are dedicated to learning and growing their flight skills. The team competes as part of the National Intercollegiate Flying Association (NIFA), which is the governing body for all college aviation competitions.

"We enjoy being part of the Flight Team because it allows us to use the skill set that we have developed as pilots in a competitive environment," says Matthew Berris, current team captain. "We also get the opportunity to learn and enhance our skills by being on this team, especially in areas of aviation that we often learn but do not use very often."

The team competes as part of NIFA's Region 9 and takes part in various ground and flight events against other teams from across Florida, Georgia and Alabama. When not competing, the team works to bring the aviation community together through guest speakers, tabling at events and planning its own competitions.

In May, the team will head to Wisconsin to compete in the 2024 NIFA Nationals—the team's first invitation since before COVID-19.

"Training to be a pilot is such a large portion of most aeronautics colleges, and the team is an exciting form of extra learning and practice," Berris says. "Our team forms bonds that continue past competition. Many alumni are still active with the team, thanks to the connections they made from joining. Many of these alumni have moved on to have successful careers in the aviation industry and offer valuable connections to our members. We encourage all students to be part of our team, experience the excitement of competition and strengthen their skills to further their success."

Student Spotlight

Five Questions With: *Maureen Namukasa*

Maureen Namukasa '21 M.S., an aviation sciences Ph.D. student and graduate research assistant in the Advancing Technology-Interaction & Learning in Aviation Systems (ATLAS) Lab, is passionate about aviation human factors, which looks at the human element in aviation and how humans interface with machines. We sat down to talk with her about her career goals, her favorite experience at Florida Tech and her spirit animal.

1: What is your goal for the future?

I plan to graduate and pursue a career as a human factors scientist. I want to conduct impactful human performance research in emerging technologies. I currently work with the ATLAS Lab, an applied research lab that has offered me incredible opportunities to collaborate on related projects, such as advanced air mobility, and interact with leaders in the field of aviation.

3: What has been your favorite experience at Florida Tech?

I thoroughly enjoy how culturally diverse our student community is! You will not complete the day without interacting with a fellow student of a different nationality than yours. It is like a little global village: It allows us to learn about the rest of the world, various foods, social norms, languages, etc.

2: Why Florida Tech?

Florida Tech is a leading STEM education hub for students with goals to advance personally and professionally in similar domains. When I first moved here, I was amazed by the smaller size of graduate classes that help students connect, network and build lasting relationships with their classmates and their professors. Besides that, Florida Tech is strategically located on the Space Coast in a quieter city that is five minutes from the beach, with world tech companies in its backyard and within driving distance to bigger cities!

4: When you're not studying, what do you like to do?

I enjoy volunteering with activities at my local church and the Phi Kappa Phi Florida Tech Chapter. You might also catch me outside hiking, at the beach, walking down the causeway/park or catching up on some nonschool-related reading.

5: What is your spirit animal and why?

A friend of mine thinks I am a sea otter! Apparently, I am adequate in social groups.



And the Award Goes To...

AMAELE COPELAND

Spaceport 99s Award and Scholarship



FIT Aviation flight instructor Amaelle Copeland was presented with an award and scholarship in August from Judi Oswald, International Organization of Women Pilots Spaceport 99s chapter president.

The award recognized Copeland's hard work and dedication to her field, and the scholarship will go toward helping her earn the Certified Flight Instrument Instructor Rating.

JACOB WOLFE AND EUNSEO HEO

Tony Jannus Distinguished Aviation Society's 2023 Scholars Award



Two College of Aeronautics students, Jacob Wolfe and Eunseo Heo, won the 2023 Scholars Award from the Tony Jannus Distinguished Aviation Society.

The award provides financial support to eligible students who are pursuing careers in aviation and are enrolled in colleges or aviation trade schools in Florida.

Wolfe, who is pursuing a bachelor's in aviation management with flight, plans to become a commercial airline pilot. The award will help him complete his flight certificates and training.

Heo, who is pursuing a bachelor's in aviation management and an associate in flight operations and dispatch, plans to become an aircraft dispatcher and an airport designer. The award will help her become a licensed pilot.

FLORIDA TECH'S FLIGHT TEAM

NIFA Region IX Competition Safety Award

Florida Tech's Flight Team won the Competition Safety Award at the National Intercollegiate Flying Association Region IX 2023 SAFECON competition.

The Aerospace Center for Excellence hosted the competition at the Lakeland Linder International Airport in October.

ATLAS LAB

I/ITSEC 2023 Recognitions



Florida Tech's ATLAS Lab, run by professor Meredith Carroll '03 M.S., attended the 2023 Interservice/Industry Training, Simulation and Education Conference (I/ITSEC) in November.

At the event, ATLAS Lab members Kendall Carmody '20, '21 M.S., and Yarisle Adorno '23 were awarded RADM Fred Lewis I/ITSEC Postgraduate scholarships. Carmody also presented the lab's recent research, "Training Implications for Urban Air Mobility Operations."

Former ATLAS Lab lead Summer Rebensky '15, '17 M.S., '20 Ph.D., secured a spot on the 2023 NTSA Top 10 Under 40 and won the best paper award with former ATLAS Lab lead María Chaparro Osman '18 M.S., '22 Ph.D.

DEBBIE CARSTENS

2023 Jimenez Faculty/Research Award



Debbie Carstens '96 MBA, graduate program chair and professor of aviation human factors in the College of Aeronautics, was awarded the 2023 Jimenez Faculty/Research Award from the Partnership to Enhance General Aviation Safety, Accessibility and Sustainability (PEGASAS), a Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) Center of Excellence for General Aviation.

The award, named in memory of Hernando Jimenez, assistant site director for PEGASAS at Georgia Tech who passed away suddenly in 2016, recognizes outstanding faculty and researchers involved in PEGASAS projects who also directly supervise students.

Carstens is Florida Tech's site director for PEGASAS, which has the mission to enhance general aviation safety, accessibility and sustainability by partnering the FAA with a national network of world-class researchers, educators and industry leaders.

"It is such an honor to be given this research award," Carstens says. "The FAA research is a meaningful way for the Human Factors (HF) ASSIST Lab students and me to research how we can improve pilot workload through conducting our studies."

Happenings

ADVANCED AIR MOBILITY SHOWCASE



Causy Aviation Unmanned (CAU), one of few companies in the country with FAA certification to offer drone delivery, showcased its “last mile” delivery services at a special event at Florida Tech Dec. 7.

CAU, which joined Amazon, Alphabet’s Wing, UPS Inc. and Zipline as the only FAA Part 135-certified drone operators in the U.S., offers health care and retail deliveries at several sites in its home state of North Carolina, as well as sites in Texas and upstate New York.

The event also featured presentations from leading companies in the advanced air mobility sector: Valqari, ResilienX, Volatus I&E and Heka. The vendors represented different elements of the broad technology ecosystem—software for safety and security, delivery system development, avionics and control systems and more—that are helping to drive the adoption of this new mobility mode. Like CAU, these four companies are startups at various stages of growth.

The event showed stakeholders in Central Florida, including health providers and public safety agencies, how advanced air mobility could work in their fields, said Chris Fernando ’02, adjunct professor of advanced air mobility and principal at the North Carolina-based aviation consulting firm Hovecon.



STOP BY AND SAY ‘HI!’ AT SUN ‘N FUN

Join us at the 2024 SUN ‘n FUN Aerospace Expo April 9–14 in Lakeland, Florida. We’ll connect with Panthers old and new, as we share what Florida Tech is all about with the community and host a special alumni gathering at one of the world’s largest annual aviation events. We look forward to seeing you there!

BLUE ORIGIN AND OLIVER DAEMEN VISIT CAMPUS

In fall, Oliver Daemen and Richard Hudacek from Blue Origin visited Florida Tech’s campus.

Daemen was a member of Blue Origin’s New Shepard, the company’s reusable suborbital rocket system designed to take astronauts and research payloads past the boundary of space, according to its website.

At the time of the flight, Daemen was 18 years old, which made him the youngest person, first teenager and first person born in the 21st century, to travel to space. During his visit, he met with instructors and staff at FIT Aviation to share his experience as a young space tourist and pilot.



PITTORIE NAMED SEPTEMBER MVP



Warren Pittorie ’15, ’18 M.S., ’22 Ph.D., an assistant professor in the College of Aeronautics, was named Florida Tech’s Most Valuable Panther (MVP) for September. The MVP program recognizes employees who embody the university’s standards for innovation as demonstrated by their excellence and quality service.

Pittorie, who started as a student, then as a flight instructor for FIT Aviation before assuming his current role, recently spearheaded the development and reintroduction of the university’s tailwheel and aerobatic training, offering 141 students the opportunity to improve their piloting skills.

He also maintains a full-time teaching schedule, is a prominent member of the ATLAS Lab research team and participates in the Florida Tech Panama program, through which he travels to Panama City twice a semester to teach in-person ground school.

“Dr. Pittorie does not shy away from speaking with potential new students and encouraging them to consider Florida Tech for their education, and many students on campus today credit him with their choosing Florida Tech as their school,” the Office of Human Resources wrote in its MVP winner announcement. “Dr. Pittorie’s commitment to the flight school, the College of Aeronautics and the university as a whole makes him our Most Valuable Panther.”

FLORIDA TECH ATTENDS FIRST AVIATE PARTNER LEADER SUMMIT



During fall, assistant professor and flight education chair Warren Pittorie '15, '18 M.S., '22 Ph.D., and assistant chief flight instructor Shayne Inniss '16, '19 MSA, attended the first Aviate Partner Leader Summit at United Airlines' Flight Training Center in Denver.

Hosted by United Aviate Academy, a program for aeronautics graduates to have the most secure pathway to careers at United, the event served as an update on the company and an opportunity for several aviation colleges to share information and network.

It was also the first time partner universities were invited to tour the training facility, which is one of the biggest in the country.

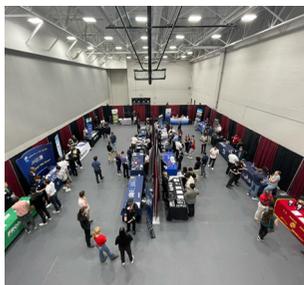
While attending the summit, Pittorie and Inniss met up with Jill Eanes '91, '93 MBA, a member of Florida Tech's Aeronautics Advisory Board and a United captain, who was attending a separate event at the facility.



FALL 2023 CAREER FAIR

The College of Aeronautics hosted its fall Career Fair in October. Held in the Charles and Ruth Clemente Center for Sports and Recreation, the fair welcomed students and alumni to practice their networking skills and learn about various career opportunities.

Some employers in attendance included Envoy Air, Frontier Airlines, Cape Air, CommuteAir, SkyWest Airlines and Amerijet International Airlines.



CARROLL SPEAKS IN LIFELONG SCHOLAR SERIES

In September, College of Aeronautics professor Meredith Carroll '03 M.S. spoke in Florida Tech's Lifelong Scholar Lecture series alongside associate professor Amanda Thayer and professor Jessica Wildman from the School of Psychology.

Presented by Florida Tech's Lifelong Scholar Society, a community of curious minds who are passionate about sharing knowledge, the series features a variety of topics from historical writers and contemporary art to the Florida habitat and space exploration.

September's lecture was titled "Auto-MATE: When Technology Becomes a Teammate."

Now Presenting...

COA students and faculty were honored to present at a number of prestigious events during the past few months, including:

2023 INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM ON AVIATION PSYCHOLOGY

"Airport Personnel Perceptions of Airport Environmental Programs," presented by Ph.D. student Nikhita Agasam '22 M.S. and Human Factors (HF) ASSIST Lab director and professor Debbie Carstens '96 MBA.

"Pilot Perception of Hands-Minimized PIREP Submittal Tools," including Ph.D. students Tianhua Li '20 Ph.D. and Michael Harwin, presented by Carstens.

"Guidelines for Information Display Characteristics for eVTOL Pilot Interface," presented by Ph.D. student Bhoomin Chauhan '19 M.S.

"Usability Analysis of Augmented Reality Glasses for Small Unmanned Aircraft System (sUAS) Missions," presented by Ph.D. student Kendall Carmody '20, '21 M.S.

"Effects of Personality, Affective Domain, and Safety Climate on CFIs' Safety Behaviors in the U.S.," presented by assistant professor Vivek Sharma '18 M.S., '23 Ph.D.

ATLAS Lab director and professor Meredith Carroll '03 M.S. also moderated the symposium's Women in Aviation Psychology and Researcher panels.

2023 UNIVERSITY AVIATION ASSOCIATION CONFERENCE

"Measuring Willingness to Fly Onboard Aircraft Equipped with Two Pilots, a Single Pilot, and a Single Pilot with Artificial Intelligence," presented by Dillon Hanrahan '23, Andrew Angelo '23 and Jeremy McFarland '23, with faculty advisors Sharma and Brooke Wheeler, teaching assistant seminar director and associate professor.

"Academic Workload, Perceived Stress, and Willingness to Pilot," presented by Derek Dolnik '23, Carlie Swords and Shahd Abualhamayl, with faculty advisors Sharma and Wheeler.

"Willingness to Pilot with Vertical Take-Off and Landing Aircraft," presented by Geovany Rodriguez '23, Rayan Khayyat and Jenna Elwood, with faculty advisors Sharma and Wheeler.

"Ice-Olator," presented by undergraduate students Gwenn Dailey and Olivia Perry and Carstens.

"Trends in Personality Traits of Flight Instructors: Analyzing Impact on Self-Efficacy and Risk Perception," presented by Sharma, Carroll and assistant dean Rian Mehta '13, '15 MSA, '17 Ph.D.

"Exploring the Relationship Between Personality and Stress During Communication Delays in Simulated Spaceflight Missions," presented by Shayan Shirshekar '21 Ph.D. and Wheeler.



College of Aeronautics

Florida Institute of Technology
150 W. University Blvd.
Melbourne, FL 32901-6975

Featured Photo



SOMEWHERE OVER THE RAINBOW

A double rainbow overlooking FIT Aviation in November.
Photo credit: Selise Askeland, aviation management senior

**Want to see more great photos from the sky?
Follow FIT Aviation.**



@fitaviation



FIT Aviation, LLC