

March 18, 2015

MEMORANDUM

TO: State Board of Regents

FROM: David L. Buhler

SUBJECT: Southern Utah University – First Year Report on Associate of Applied Science in Professional Pilot with Emphases in Rotor-Wing and Fixed-Wing Aircraft

Issue

The Southern Utah University (SUU) Associate of Applied Science in Professional Pilot with Emphases in Rotor-Wing and Fixed-Wing Aircraft was approved by the Board of Regents May 17, 2013 with an effective date of Fall Semester, 2013. At the time of approval the Board of Regents requested that SUU provide a report following the program's first full year of operation.

Background

The institution has submitted its first year report for the professional pilot program. As reported by the institution, highlights of the first year include:

- Enrollments have exceeded projections. There were 73 declared majors producing 52.19 student FTE. Projections were 60 and 18, respectively.
- A new faculty member and a new advisor were hired to support the program. Program revenues were used to support these positions.
- Employment projections appear to be promising. Twenty-one students completed flight instructor certifications during the first year. These students have been hired to assist with flight instruction for newer students in the program. A few students left the program to take positions in industry soon after they earned flight certification.

The institution noted that adjustments to the curriculum are needed. Specifically, additional elective courses need to be developed and offered to offset the number of higher cost elective lab-based courses.

A representative from SUU will provide a first-year program summary at the Academic and Student Affairs Committee Meeting on March 27, 2014. As part of this presentation staff has requested that SUU provide a response to how it has met and how it plans to meet program challenges to include the following:

- The need to enroll military veterans in the program
- The Veterans Administration (VA) requirement that Upper Limit Aviation be in business for two years before it can qualify as an approved training organization
- The financial and contractual arrangements that SUU made to overcome the challenge identified above
- The strategies that SUU has in place should the VA change its rules to limit or eliminate funding of students in the SUU program

Policy Issues

There are no outstanding policy issues. Southern Utah University has met the expectations set by the Board of Regents in 2013 when the program was approved. A three-year report is expected in two years.

Commissioner's Recommendation

This is an information item only. No action is needed.

David L. Buhler
Commissioner of Higher Education

DLB/BKC
Attachment

First-Year Report
Southern Utah University
Professional Pilot – Associate of Applied Science (AAS)
10/03/2014

Program Description

The Professional Pilot program combines flight training with technical and professional courses essential for success in the expanding aviation and aerospace industry. The program offers courses for students preparing for a career related to rotor-wing or fixed-wing operations within the commercial aerospace/aviation industry. The Professional Pilot program has a specific focus on serving veterans and in assisting them prepare for well-paying jobs in a variety of job sectors. This program is unique in that it is a public/private partnership (between SUU and Upper Limit Aviation) and thereby relieves the state from the high cost of maintaining aircraft, repairing equipment, and purchasing liability insurance. While Upper Limit Aviation delivers the instructional aspects of the flight training and issues the pilot license, SUU provides the remaining curriculum and awards the AAS degree. Professional Pilot students are encouraged to pursue their baccalaureate degree in either Interdisciplinary Studies or General Studies.

The Professional Pilot program was approved by the Board of Regents on May 17, 2013 and the first students entered the program in Fall 2013. The program has had a highly successful first year. There has been a steady flow of new students into the program. The students in the program appear to be satisfied with their experience.

Enrollment and Revenue Data

Departmental/Unit Enrollment and Staffing Data	Prior to Program Implementation	2013-14		2014-15		2015-16	
		Est.	Actual	Est.	Actual	Est.	Actual
Total Department Student FTE <i>(Based on Fall Third Week Data)</i>	NA	18	52.13	74	NA	129	NA
Total Department Faculty FTE <i>(A-1/S-11/Cost Study Definition)</i>	NA	2.50	4.99	4	NA	4	NA
Student FTE per Faculty FTE <i>(from Faculty FTE and Student FTE above)</i>	NA	7.20	10.44	18.5	NA	32.25	NA
Program Level Data							
Total Number of Declared Majors in Program	X	60	73	160	NA	180	NA
Total Number of Program Graduates	X	0	0	30	NA	80	NA
Departmental Revenue							
Total Revenue to Department <i>(Total of Funding Categories from R401 Budget Projection Table)</i>	NA	\$184,490	\$250,299	\$228,400	NA	\$235,152	NA

Departmental Instructional Cost per Student Credit Hour (<i>per Institutional Cost Study Definition</i>)	NA	X	\$156.38	X	NA	X	NA
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Institutional Analysis of Program to Date

Strengths:

Enrollments are certainly a major strength of the program. There were 73 new students admitted for the first semester of the program (Fall 2013). Enrollments have steadily increased each semester. As of Fall 2014, there are approximately 150 students in the program; by Spring 2015, the number of students in the program is expected to reach over 180. There are an additional 40 prospective aviation students who have already initiated the university admissions process for Spring 2015 or Fall 2015.

Due to the better than estimated student growth, SUU has seen fit to add a full-time, 9-month contract, aviation lecturer position for the 2014-2015 academic year. A new academic advisor has also been added to support the large Professional Pilot student population. These new hires bring the aviation staffing of the program to a total of five positions: Program Director, VA Certifying Official/Accountant, Aviation Lecturer, Academic Advisor, and Administrative Assistant. SUU continues to contract with Upper Limit Aviation to provide professional instructors for specialized aviation courses.

Weaknesses:

Although funding resources have supported staffing needs, there is a strong need for classroom and lab equipment. The program is running on meager resources to support student learning in terms of classrooms, lab spaces, and other equipment. Continued support of innovative educational strategies will require additional resources (these include: flight simulators, avionics trainers, educational software, etc.). This equipment is also necessary to contribute to program quality by supporting student learning and enhancing student opportunities upon graduation from the program. SUU has allocated modest funds for the purchase of these items and has changed fiscal policy to allow carry-over of unused funds which will allow for more expensive items to be purchased in the future.

A weakness of the program, which may adversely impact enrollments and student retention, is the lack of elective courses which are not associated with flight labs. Flight labs have expensive flight lab fees associated with them. Between six and ten elective credit hours are required for graduation; only three of those (one course) are credit hours that do not require an expensive flight lab fee. It is desirable that additional elective courses be created and made available to the students so they may choose, at their option, to satisfy AAS graduation requirements at a reduced expense. These courses are being conceived and will be submitted for approval after their development.

In terms of continuous improvement and ensuring that students are provided with relevant experience, the curriculum will undergo some revisions. For example, some additional flight labs, for student flexibility, will be added. Likewise, some current courses will be modified and/or deleted.

Employment Information

Employment information is limited as the first graduate from the program is not expected until after Fall 2014. However, there are 21 current students in the program who have already earned the appropriate flight instructor certifications and are employed in the program as instructors teaching the newer students. Several students left the program before graduating due to job offers they didn't wish to turn down. At least one student is making plans to come back in between his job responsibilities to finish his degree. Because the AAS degree is a 2-year degree a significant number of graduates are expected over the next three semesters and updated employment data should be available at that point.