

CENTRAL TEXAS COLLEGE
Aviation Science Department
Advisory Council Meeting
Fall 2009

Tom Ahearn, First Officer, Southwest Airlines
Mark Constance, Captain, Southwest Airlines
Gloria Derr, Independent Flight Instructor
Jim Reynolds, Captain, Continental Airlines (Retired)
Randy Smedley, Independent Flight Instructor
Becky Sparks, Captain, Southwest Airlines
Jeff Wolf, Captain, Southwest Airlines
Steve Workman, Executive Pilot, Cessna Aircraft Corporation
James Gebhardt, Faculty, Aviation Science, Central Texas College
Curtis Gibson, Department Chair, Aviation Science, Central Texas College
Rick Whitesell, Chief Flight Instructor, Aviation Science, Central Texas College

Initial discussion centered around current difficulties in placement of recent graduates. Committee members advised that the downturn in airline hiring can be contributed to three primary Factors: (1) Downturn in passenger emplanements due to the country's economic recession, (2) FAA regulatory policy which changed the mandatory retirement age from 62 to 65, (3) Companies retiring older aircraft that required three flight officers and replacing them with two pilot aircraft. Reduction in corporate hiring has been caused by a dramatic drop in companies using executive aircraft because of political pressures and perceptions coming out of Washington during the recent economic crisis. Fractional ownership companies like Net-Jets have been particularly hard hit and forced into large staff reduction after years of expansion.

Another problem that committee members discussed was increased pressure by the Federal Government to introduce additional "user charge fees" on general aviation operations in the U.S. The U. S. air carriers have pushed for this for years as they try to reduce their financial burdens. Members acknowledge the problems these fees would cause, especially increased costs and possibly a reduction in overall safety. They recommend that we continue to encourage all interested parties (students, staff, graduates, etc.) to express their concerns to our elected officials and to also support organizations such as AOPA, which represents G. A. interests in Washington.

Committee members were briefed on current overall health of the department, including staff changes, stability of enrollment numbers and status of training aircraft. Changes in funding for flight training by the GI Bill and military tuition assistance may increase enrollments significantly.

Members were briefed on the status of the ongoing refurbishment program the college has been conducting over the last few years. All of the C-152s have received new avionics equipment including three aircraft which have G.P.S. navigation systems. Three C-152s still need to be repainted and receive new interior upholstery, carpeting, seats, etc. Department staff are discussing replacing the G.P.S. equipment in the Archers with Garmin 530s that are in the C-

152s and C-310. This change would help with standardization in training. Downside is cost (\$12,000.00 per aircraft) when compared to resale value of the aircraft.

Continued discussion on equipment issues centered around an additional FAA proposed ruled change which would require students to receive additional training in aircraft with “Advanced Instrumentation” which refers to what the industry calls “glass cockpits.” None of the current fleet of CTC aircraft have “glass cockpits,” but during the 2008-2009 the department did purchase a flight training device (simulator) with glass instrumentation which may meet the changed FAA training requirements.

Committee members asked about any plans to purchase new aircraft to replacing aging aircraft. Staff agreed that this was a need that must be eventually addressed, but also related the difficulties of the administration making these decisions at this time, given the current economic environment and concerns about funding levels from the state.

Members asked what the staff believed would be the effect on the department by Tarleton State finally changing to Texas A&M-Central Texas. Staff felt that it should eventually have a positive effect on enrollment and also enhance the value of the degree received by our upper-level transfer students.

Committee members were briefed on recent departmental inspections by officers of the TSA. Procedures and recording keeping at the airport and on main campus were found to be in compliance, although we did receive a recommendation for a “better” way of filing student training records. Those recommendations have been fully implemented and approved during a subsequent inspection. We continue to look at ways to increase the security of our flight operations.

Committee was briefed on recent extra curriculum activities by our students, including our Flight Team’s performance at recent competitions. CTC earned a spot at the 2010 National Competition, (SAFECON) which will be hosted by Indiana State University. Members were briefed on plans for CTC to host the 2010 Region IV SAFECON Competition. Members were encouraged to participate in these efforts if possible. Additional information on planned dates will be made available as they are determined.

Discussion continued from an earlier committee meeting concerning flight instructor shortages, as well as possible methods to reduce CFI training times. Members encouraged staff to continue to pursue “Examining Authority” for the CFI course, like we have for the Private Pilot course. This ability would greatly reduce training time by eliminating the lengthy scheduling process coordinating testing with the FAA in San Antonio. Costs would also be reduced as CFI applicants would not need to fly college aircraft to San Antonio for testing.

Members were briefed on a curriculum change that is still under consideration. Currently the A.A.S. degree requires that graduates complete the Commercial Pilot Flight course. The change would require completion of the Certified Flight Instructor course which currently is a upper level elected (although taught by CTC). This change would require significant shifting of individual courses, including the addition of a CFI ground school course at the sophomore level.

Because of state restrictions regarding maximum hours for A.A.S. degrees, at least one current aviation course would need to be eliminated. These changes have been discussed with staff at Texas A&M-Central Texas. One advantage of the change should be additional CFIs available for employment with CTC.

Members were briefed on Private Pilot classes that were conducted for the Copperas Cove Independent School District during the Fall 2008/Spring 2009 school year. Efforts were met with limited success but CISD hopes for increased participation during future school years.

Members were briefed that the planned construction project had been completed at the college training hangar on Skylark field. An additional room has been added to the interior hangar space which now holds the college's three simulators, as well as other P.C. based training devices. One room that had housed a simulator has been converted into office space where staff pilot examiners can conduct FAA final practical test for students.

Next meeting tentatively is scheduled for Fall 2010 possible in conjunction with the Fall Flight Competition. Staff continued to invite members to submit names of additional individuals to serve on the advisory committee.