



North Texas Aviation Education Initiative

NORTH CENTRAL TEXAS COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

Focus Group Findings and Recommendations

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FOCUS GROUP FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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FOCUS GROUP FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A. GLOSSARY

This section defines acronyms and abbreviations used throughout the document.

Term	Description
A&M	Texas A&M University
A&P	Airframe & Powerplant
ASU	Arizona State University
ATC	air traffic controller
Embry-Riddle	Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University
FAA	Federal Aviation Administration
GED	General Education Diploma
L-3 IS	L-3 Communications Integrated Systems
MIT	Massachusetts Institute of Technology
MVC	Mountain View Community College
NCTCOG	North Central Texas Council of Governments
OSU	Oklahoma State University
PJC	Paris Junior College
TCC	Tarrant County College
TSTC	Texas State Technical College
UNT	University of North Texas
UT	University of Texas at Austin



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B. INTRODUCTION

Despite the abundance of aviation employers and related employment opportunities in North Central Texas as well as the demonstrated need to train additional aviation professionals, the region lacks a public university with a comprehensive four-year college program for students who would like to pursue an aviation career. The North Texas Aviation Education Initiative, sponsored by the North Central Texas Council of Governments (NCTCOG) and funded by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), is an independent study. This research, analysis and resulting recommendations will provide a basis for the design and implementation of a comprehensive higher education program that meets the needs of both local students and employers, ensuring the long-term success of the regional aviation industry.

Part of the scope of this study included three focus groups aimed to gain insight into the needs and concerns of individuals interested in aviation employment. Efforts were made to be diverse and inclusionary. Participants varied in age, education level, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status. Flyers announcing each focus group were distributed at a variety of locations, including Tarrant County College (TCC), Northeast Campus; Mountain View Community College (MVC), University of North Texas (UNT) and area flight training schools. Participants were included on a volunteer basis and received \$25 compensation for their time. A list of general questions was developed, but the format for each focus group was informal discussion. Each session lasted up to an hour.

Focus Group One (Appendix A) was composed of high school students participating in ACE Camp, sponsored by the Organization of Black Pilots and the FAA. Participants in this group agreed that college education is a necessity and expressed frustration about the lack of aviation-related opportunities in North Central Texas. Many have identified avenues to meet their educational goals, but they must leave the area to do so. Furthermore, having been involved in the ACE Camp and aviation in high school, all participants were familiar with the variety of aviation related companies and careers.

Focus Group Two (Appendix B) was at TCC, Northeast Campus, which offers aviation education as far as Airframe & Powerplant (A&P) certification. Many of these participants are currently involved in TCC's program, but some are exploring other education or career opportunities. The reoccurring concern expressed during this discussion was the expense of education. Furthermore, many of the participants articulated an interest in aviation but were not necessarily aware of opportunities in the field beyond working as a mechanic or commercial pilot.

Focus Group Three (Appendix C) was at MVC. The participant group included people with a variety of backgrounds ranging from a high school student to an individual who was over 50 and looking for a career change. The participants in this group showed knowledge of career opportunities made available through aviation education. Two participants currently studying at Paris Junior College (PJC) noted the promising career opportunities offered by L-3 Communications Integrated Systems (L-3 IS) to graduates of the program. The general consensus of this group was that information on aviation educational and career opportunities is extremely difficult to find. Furthermore, some agreed that counseling in regards to aviation education should start in high school.



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C. FOCUS GROUP FINDINGS

The focus group findings overwhelmingly support the belief that an affordable, comprehensive aviation education program is important to sustain the industry's economic vitality and employment opportunities in North Central Texas. Specific opinions and perceptions that were apparent among all three groups include:

- Currently, aviation education opportunities in North Central Texas are limited.
- High school students are generally unaware of the career opportunities in aviation, unless a family member is employed in an aviation job.
- Most young adults are not aware of the myriad of jobs that are available in the aviation industry.
- The internet provides the portal through which individuals learn about aviation jobs and education programs.
- College career “fairs” are valuable.
- Training schools and colleges must be affordable in order for most individuals to enroll and successfully complete their degrees/certifications.
- Out-of-state tuition at existing schools that offer aviation programs is, for the most part, too expensive, even with student loans and scholarships.
- High school counselors generally are not aware of aviation jobs and schools.
- Mature adults are gravitating to aviation education programs because the field offers good pay and job security.
- Training to jobs programs like offered through PJC and L-3 IS in Greenville are important.

Based on the input from the focus group, the following recommendations are made:

- A four-year college program with a flight component should be created to provide the academic credentials that area aviation employers are seeking in the workforce.
- “Pre-aviation” learning should be initiated in high school—and even junior high school—through math, the sciences and extracurricular activities.
- High school career counselors should be well informed about education and employment opportunities in the aviation sector, given the dominance of the industry in North Central Texas.
- Employers in aviation fields should have a greater presence at college career “fairs”.
- Mentoring programs should be established to support students and young adults interested in aviation.
- A central repository of information should be established that serves both students and employers with information about the pipeline from aviation education programs to active employment in the industry. This should be web-based.
- Academic programs should be advertised to all ages as well as persons being discharged from the military.