



Reporting Points



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Salina Airport boasts high concentration of master flight instructors

Salina, Kan. – If you are looking for top-notch pilot instructors, then your chances get better when you arrive at the Salina Municipal Airport. Three of the 9 Master Certificated Flight Instructors in Kansas are domiciled at Kansas State University College of Technology & Aviation.

Bill Gross, Chief Pilot for Kansas State University – Salina recently achieved the Master Certificated Flight Instructor designation from the professional aviation education association, the National Association of Flight Instructors. Professor Gross's achievement complements two other Kansas State – Salina instructors who already hold the coveted designation: Head of the Professional Pilot program Barney King and Assistant Professor Eric J. Shappee.

"Having three master instructors at Kansas State University – Salina when there are only 9 aviation educators in the state that have earned this title, says a great deal about the level of professionalism within our program," said Marlon Johnson, KSU's Aviation Department Head.

There are approximately 81,000 certificated flight instructors in the United States and fewer than 400, or ½ of one percent, have earned the Master Certificated Flight Instructor designation. The master certification is a national accreditation recognized by the FAA that is earned by candidates through a rigorous process of continuing education and peer review. It must be biennially renewed for the instructor to retain the title.

According to National Association of Flight Instructors VP Sandy Hill, "The Master Instructor designation is a means by which to identify those outstanding aviation educators, those "Teachers of Flight," who have demonstrated an ongoing commitment to excellence, professional growth, and service to the aviation community."

Kansas State University College of Technology & Aviation offers Bachelors of Science as well as Associate Degrees for professional pilots and aviation maintenance technicians. Enrollment continues to increase as the school enters its 11th year at Salina. This fall semester has approximately 1000 students with 242 in the professional pilot training program and 50 in the maintenance program.

The faculty of nearly 20 full-time flight and maintenance instructors teaches from modern training facilities that include four flight simulators. In addition, the university training fleet of 40 aircraft includes Cessna 172s, Beech Bonanzas, Beech Sundowners, Beech Barons, a Beech King Air and a Cessna Citation Jet.

According to Donovan Strifler, a freshman in the Professional Pilot Program, the instructors at Kansas State, "don't just want us to become pilots, but become good pilots." Donovan said the instructors take a genuine interest in the success of the students and are willing to work out flexible schedules to accommodate the goals and objectives of the students. Donovan noted that the class size and individual attention he has experienced so far has created an ideal learning environment.

Other Aviation related entities including the Kansas Army National Guard, Aerospace Systems and Technologies, Inc., Flower Aviation, America Jet, Salina Aircraft Services, Inc., ADM Milling and Blue Beacon International Corporate Flight Departments, and Raytheon Aircraft Company's Salina Division, combine to contribute more than \$120 million in annual payroll to the Salina economy.



From left to right: Bill Gross, Chief Pilot; Eric J. Shappee, Assistant Professor; and Barney King, Head of the Professional Pilot program.

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