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FORUM

**AVIATION SCIENCE? COLLEGIATE AVIATION? AERONAUTICS? AEROSPACE SCIENCE?
INTRODUCING AERONOLOGY IN RESOLVING IDENTITY ISSUES**

Jeffrey A. Johnson

In asking collegiate aviation educators for a term or a phrase that adequately describes their academic field, it does not take much time to discover that widespread agreement is notably absent. If we as aviation educators are unable to collectively identify ourselves and the niche we inhabit in the realm of the entire academic community, then how much more difficult will it be for the remainder of the academic community and the general public to identify us as well? There are three possible solutions for aviation educators to consider in confronting the identity problem. Educators can: (1) conclude that identity is really not a problem, (2) identify a term/phrase by consensus to describe the aviation field, or (3) create a new word.

Identity in the academic setting is of paramount importance and affects many variables. The identity problem creates havoc for educators and students alike. One area affected by identity is student recruitment. Consider a prospective aviation student aspiring to become an airport manager. The student looks at several aviation programs at five institutions and finds the following in the school catalogs: aeronautical technology, aerospace science, aeronautical studies, aviation science, airway science, civil aviation, aviation administration, aviation computer science, and aviation maintenance management. In contrast, a prospective psychology student aspiring to become an industrial psychologist will probably be able to identify a specific industrial psychology program under the auspices of the psychology department.

Creating a new word to describe the aviation/aerospace academic field may be a viable alternative to agreeing on one specific term from an existing plethora of terminology. Tim Brady (1991) argued that although aviation learners exhibit some characteristics described by the andragogical and pedagogical models, the models do not truly fit the aviation learner. As a result, Brady developed the term *pegagogy*, which means "the art and science of teaching aviation students."

The contributions of Brady's research provided an

incentive for combining commonly recognized terms to develop a new term that accurately reflects postsecondary aviation as an academic discipline. For example, *anthropology* is defined as "the study of the origin and physical, social, and cultural development and behavior of humans" (*Webster's II New Riverside Dictionary*, 1984, p. 32); *psychobiology* is "the study of the interactions between mental and biological processes" (*Webster's II New Riverside Dictionary*, 1984, p. 565); and *sociology* is "the study of the organization, institutions, and development of human society" (*Webster's II New Riverside Dictionary*, 1984, p. 665). By combining some of Webster's definitions, the term *aeronology* has been created for consideration by the academic community.

Aeronology is the study of the non-engineering aspects of aviation, aeronautics, and aerospace sciences and technologies. Aeronology includes aviation maintenance, flight operations, air traffic control, aviation business, and other associated technologies in the systematic procurement, construction, and distribution of products and services. Aeronology also could be adapted to other existing terms like *psychology* to form *aeropsychology*: "the study of the mind, emotions, and behavior in the aviation/aerospace environment" (adapted from the term *psychology*, *Webster's II New Riverside Dictionary*, 1984, p. 565). The term *aviaology* also was considered, but one

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scholar humorously noted that it too easily could be interpreted as bird watching. This observation seems to be appropriate as the prefix *avia* is close to *avian*: "of, relating to, or typical of birds" (*Webster's II New Riverside Dictionary*, 1984, p. 50).

The term *aeronology* can be used by the entire academic community at the institutional and departmental levels. Aeronology also can be used at the programmatic level to a limited degree. For example, the *School of Aeronology* can reflect flight, maintenance, and management programs at a given institution, similar to chemistry and physics under the auspices of the *School of Arts and Sciences*. If an institution's aviation education programs are housed in the *College of Technology*, the *Department of Aeronology* may be appropriate to house specific programs (e.g., aviation maintenance technology and aviation flight science). In light of the fact that issues including curriculum offerings may determine the name of specific programs by departments, it would be inappro-

priate to use the term *aeronology* in place of a specific program (i.e., replace *aviation maintenance management* with *aeronology* within a department). At the programmatic level, an exception could be made at the doctoral level. For example, a Ph.D. program in *aeronology* may have several major areas of study, such as aviation business administration. This is analogous to a graduate receiving a Ph.D. degree in psychology even though the major area of study may have been abnormal or industrial psychology.

Using *aeronology* by the aviation academic community has many advantages. Primarily, *aeronology* distinguishes the academic study of aviation/aerospace, whereas *aviation* is all-inclusive. In time, the term could possibly enhance the cohesiveness of the aviation field academically, enhance recruitment, and generate a more uniform perception in the eyes of the public. The term in itself does not provide a catch-all solution to the identity problem, but seems to have some merit. □

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