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Professionalism and the Corporate Culture of Aviation Education

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FORUM

PROFESSIONALISM AND THE CORPORATE CULTURE OF AVIATION EDUCATION

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Those of us who are in some way affiliated with a university-based professional-pilot preparation program boast about our ability to prepare our graduates for careers as professional pilots employed by major air carriers. Some of us even talk about subjects such as crew resource management and imply that the corporate culture at any air carrier can have a significant effect on the safety and efficiency of flight operations. If this is true, then we must recognize that the corporate culture of our educational institutions has a significant effect on the professional preparation of our graduates.

As professional aviation educators our goal must be to create, maintain, and enhance an atmosphere that will promote the understanding, development, and growth of professionalism in our graduates. We should provide awareness by example; that is, understanding by application, and correlation through practice, of the skills, knowledge, and attitudes that are vital to our students' success in the aviation industry.

We have the obligation to prepare our students for careers as professional pilots. This obligation passes beyond the technical arena. We also must prepare our graduates to succeed in the unique industry culture of aviation. The aviation industry is a conservative industry whose public image is vital to its success. A potential employee of the aviation industry not only must enhance the image of public trust, but also must be prepared to enter a unique world that pairs the worldly journeyman with the neophyte apprentice in the front office of a multimillion-dollar transport-category aircraft. This relationship requires only benign acceptance by the captain but requires the application of effective interpersonal relationship skills and attitudes by the first

officer to achieve the ultimate flight-deck team performance.

Hiring practices of major air carriers are increasingly emphasizing the selection of quality employees who demonstrate skills and abilities beyond the technical arena -- characteristics that have proven to enhance aviation safety through good communication and positive team interaction. Employers are increasing asking themselves:

1) Will this individual speak up when necessary?
2) Will this individual resolve conflict quickly and in a mature and professional manner?
3) Does this person have the ability to take criticism and give criticism constructively?
4) Will this person make an effective captain?
5) Does this individual have strong academic abilities?

It is with these qualities in mind that we must provide an educational experience for our students, one that includes the opportunity and the environment for each individual to develop and enhance professional values and attitudes.□

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