These aviation business leaders are at the top of their games—and they’re helping the next generation get its start.
FROM THE INTERIM PRESIDENT

I have the great honor and pleasure of joining Embry-Riddle on a day-to-day basis—at least for a short period of time until a permanent president is recruited. Embry-Riddle first came on my radar screen in 1999 when I was at the University of Georgia. I was asked if I might be interested in becoming a member of the President’s Advisory Board (PAB) at Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University. Knowing very little about the university or the aviation/aerospace industry, I saw it as an opportunity to learn about another very special, niche university and a chance to contribute my expertise (although an “outsider” in terms of the discipline), from the perspective of my knowledge of higher education. The PAB meetings introduced me to the passion that everyone associated with Embry-Riddle feels for aviation, and especially for this university. And, even as a biomedical scientist, I was never made to feel I was an outsider but was welcomed for what I could contribute.

I was then invited to serve on the board of trustees and have greatly enjoyed the experience as I became more knowledgeable about the programs and activities of the university. I have watched Embry-Riddle grow in virtually every way—enrollment, capital facilities, academic programs, research and partnerships, and most importantly, the success of the students and the exceptional culture, exhibit professionalism and forever explore. Our goals are to ensure our future and long-term sustainability by promoting student success, diversifying our funding sources, expanding the research enterprise, developing a comprehensive international strategy and building a sense of “university.” These are goals that whoever is sitting in this chair can continue and develop even further.

Lift magazine has always portrayed the energy and excitement of Embry-Riddle, but it takes firsthand experience on campus to realize everyone’s passion for this institution and the reason we are all here, and to understand why our students, faculty and staff are so special. The other evening we were touring a guest around campus (understand that classes are not currently in session); it was 6:30 p.m. and one of the “maker labs” was filled with students working together on several robots, some of which were to be entered into national competition. This was not an assignment but a voluntary club. Passion. Opportunity. Innovation. Success. These energize all of us. I treasure every day at Embry-Riddle and I know that many of you have felt the same way during your experience here. Being here every day, I’m now excited by the sound of low-flying airliners and Embry-Riddle’s own training aircraft as they take off from Daytona International over the university. It only gets better and will continue to do so. Please keep connected with your extraordinary university!

Sincerely,

Dr. Karen A. Holbrook
INTERIM PRESIDENT

We are indeed in good company and we will continue to get even better as we follow our vision to be the world’s source for innovation and excellence in aerospace education and applied research—and as we live up to our core values to strive for excellence, act with integrity, express passion, live the safety culture, exhibit professionalism and forever explore. Our goals are to ensure our future and long-term sustainability by promoting student success, diversifying our funding sources, expanding the research enterprise, developing a comprehensive international strategy and building a sense of “university.” These are goals that whoever is sitting in this chair can continue and develop even further.

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Sincerely,

Karen A. Holbrook
INTERIM PRESIDENT

IN OTHER WORDS

5. 

Apollo 1 Remembered
Gerald W. Zimmerman (’58, MC, Non-degree) recalls the tragic fire that happened 50 years ago

6. 

(Repair) Worthy
In the FAA-certificated overhaul station, students keep the Embry-Riddle fleet flying

8. 

Mr. Airspace
Sebessos “Sebo” M. Machobane (’94, MC) is transforming the aviation industry in Africa

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Moving the Bottom Line Up
Embry-Riddle students bring new ideas to businesses through pro bono consulting work

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Chatter
News and notes from the world of Embry-Riddle

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Embry-Riddle alumni and friends offer comments and opinions

26. 
Alumni News
A message from the Alumni Association, upcoming events and more

32. 
Class Notes
Find out what your fellow alumni are up to now

MICHAEL PARAS, NICHOLE SOBECKI, EMBRY-RIDDLE ARCHIVES, NASA
Board of trustees starts search for a permanent leader

In its ongoing search for a permanent president to fill the opening created by the retirement of John H. Watret in 2015, the Embry-Riddle Board of Trustees named Karen A. Holbrook, a member of the board since 2007, interim university president. Announced at the board's March 25, 2016, meeting, Holbrook will serve in this role during an executive search for the sixth university president.

John R. Watret, who served as interim university president from June 2015, stepped down from the role. On May 1, he was named the Worldwide Campus chancellor, a position he has held in the past. Brad Sims, who had been the Worldwide Campus chancellor since January 2015, is now chief academic officer at the Worldwide Campus.

"Dr. Watret has demonstrated his executive leadership skills throughout the past nine months. We will consider his experience and proven track record at Embry-Riddle, however, we must continue our due diligence to ensure that we have chosen the absolute best person to lead our university to the next level," says Embry-Riddle Board Chairman Mort Hosseini (Hon. ’83, ’82, DB).

As an Embry-Riddle trustee, Holbrook has served as chair of the Academic Committee and is a member of the Committee on Trustees and the Executive and Investment committees. She currently serves as senior adviser to the president of the University of South Florida. Read more about Holbrook: erau.edu/administration/president/dr-holbrook-bio.

Trustees, faculty, staff and students will serve on a presidential search committee, and Hosseini will oversee the group. Following the conclusion of the search, Holbrook will return to the board of trustees.

Mary Van Buren

ALTIMETER: HIGH POINTS AT EMBRY-RIDDLE

The Daytona Beach Campus Riddle Racers Gold team consisting of pilots Eneye Dillion and Abbie Passmore (’15, DB) placed first in the collegiate division and first overall in the women’s 2016 Air Race Classic. This marks the first time an Embry-Riddle team has claimed first place in both categories.

Anne Bostedt, director of Embry-Riddle’s Undergraduate Research Institute and Honors Program at the Prescott Campus, was elected to serve as president of the Council on Undergraduate Research for 2017-18.

Embry-Riddle was ranked No. 11 by College Choice for 2016 Best Bachelor’s in Engineering Degree Program.

Navy ROTC Midshipmen 1st Class William Driskel (’16, DB) and Adam Guy (’16, DB) were named No. 1 and No. 3 by the NROTC, respectively, in the nation, and given the first and third options to select their ship assignments. This is the first time Embry-Riddle NROTC has had midshipmen ranked in the top 10. Rankings are based on GPA, aptitude scores and physical fitness assessments.

Embry-Riddle researchers led by Professor William Engelman received one of eight $500,000 NASA Innovative Advanced Concepts Program Phase II grants.

Embry-Riddle’s Daytona Beach Campus was designated a National Center of Academic Excellence in Cyber Defense Education (with a focus in secure software development) by the National Security Agency and the Department of Homeland Security.

On Sept. 14, 2015, scientists observed for the first time ripples in the fabric of space-time called gravitational waves. Embry-Riddle professors and several students from the Prescott Campus Laser Interferometer Gravitational-Wave Observatory (LIGO) group were deeply involved in the discovery, which researchers agree records the final fraction of a second of the merger of two black holes— and confirms a major prediction of Albert Einstein’s general theory of relativity. The collision of two black holes had been predicted but never before observed.

"Think of space as a symphony. Astronomy, the study of light in space, has allowed for the observation of this symphony, now, with gravitational waves, we can hear the symphony," says Michèle Zanolin, professor of physics at Embry-Riddle’s Prescott Campus and principal investigator for the Embry-Riddle LIGO group.

The gravitational waves were detected by both of LIGO’s twin LIGO detectors, in Livingston, La., and Hanford, Wash. The LIGO Observatories are funded by the National Science Foundation (NSF). They were conceived and built and are operated by Caltech and MIT. Announced in February 2016, the discovery is credited to the LIGO Scientific Collaboration (LSC), which includes the GEO Collaboration, the Australian Consortium for Interferometry Gravitational Astronomy and the Virgo Collaboration. A developer and user of the algorithm that first observed the event, Zanolin coordinates the superova subgroup of the LIGO and Virgo collaborations.

--- Jason Kadah

LISTEN to the “chip heard round the world,” the sound created by the merging of two black holes: http://lrfm.erau.edu/LIGO.

Golden Eagles are national champs X 10

Embry-Riddle’s Prescott Campus Golden Eagles Flight Team bested more than three dozen university competitors to capture its 10th championship at the 2016 National Intercollegiate Flying Association (NIFA) Safety and Flight Evaluation Conference (SAFECON) competition. Held May 9-14 this year at The Ohio State University, the competition brings together college aviation teams from around the United States to compete in flight and ground events such as navigation, computer accuracy, preflight inspection and more.

Prescott’s Golden Eagles also won the coveted Judges Championship Trophy and the NIFA Events Championship Trophy. Overall, the Golden Eagles and individual team members finished in the top 10 in 17 categories.

"Embry-Riddle is very proud of our Golden Eagles Flight Team," says Prescott Campus Chancellor Frank Ayers. "Competing against the top 40 collegiate aviation programs in the country, these amazing young men and women cemented their record as the winningest flight team in the nation over the last 20 years (since 1993).

The Golden Eagles team is led by Coach Bert Aagesen, Assistant Coach Alex Johnson (’16, PCI), team captains Victor Griffin (’16, PCI) and Sam Morris, and mechanical Engineer Paris Harris. The team is also supported by a host of donors, who contribute to the maintenance and enhancement of its competition aircraft, two Cessna 172s, Eagle One and Eagle Two. These include Frank Mayne, Greg and Christina Fisher, John and Lynne Thelen with matching gifts from Costco Wholesale Corp., and Diana McCelland. Also competing at this year’s event was the Embry-Riddle Daytona Beach Campus Eagles Flight Team, which placed sixth overall. The Eagles team earned the Safety Championship Award, and placed in the top 10 in 15 categories, including the top spot in Women’s Achievement Award for team captain Emmy Dilton. In June, Dilton earned first place in the collegiate division and first overall in the 2016 all-women, cross-country Air Race Classic along with co-pilot Abbie Passmore (’15, DB).

---Melanie Hanis

BY THE NUMBERS

Training Business Leaders

50 Years since Embry-Riddle started offering its first business degree, leading to an MBA in Aviation Management (1966-2016).

3,800-plus Students have received instruction from Thomas Tacker, Ph.D., the longest-serving, full professor in the Daytona Beach Campus’ College of Business (1966-present).

6,000-plus Graduates have earned business and management degrees from Embry-Riddle’s Daytona Beach Campus.

Asia Campus celebrates five-year mark

This year Embry-Riddle’s Asia Campus in Singapore marks its fifth year of providing solutions for the region’s growing workforce needs. Launched in January 2011, the campus has graduated more than 200 new aerospace leaders.

Embry-Riddle Asia has seen a surge in enrollment from 20 students five years ago to more than 500 today and growing. "By closely working with partner institutions based in Singapore like the Singapore Aerospace Academy and ST Engineering Institute, Embry-Riddle Asia delivers doctoral, master and bachelor degree programs with both part-time and full-time options," says Graham Hunt, head of Embry-Riddle Asia. "In addition, the university has established an advisory board encompassing high-profile leaders in Southeast Asia to ensure our degree programs and graduat...
The Harvard of Aviation

Lift is a great read for past, present and future graduates. The stories are powerful and remind us why ERAU is considered “The Harvard of Aviation.” Keep up the good writing.

Frank J. Dougher '85, DB
B.S. Aeronautical Science

Double Taxation Is Troublesome for International Pilots

I am a fortunate beneficiary of an Embry-Riddle education. I am a pilot with Cathay Pacific Airways in Hong Kong and have been for the past five years. This letter addresses the taxation issues faced by U.S. pilots based overseas. As a U.S. citizen working in a foreign country, I have to pay both U.S. income taxes and income taxes assessed by the country in which I live and work about 175 percent for China. There is an IRS foreign earned income exclusion (up to $100,800 for 2015) for U.S. citizens, who meet certain criteria; however, anytime I fly over international waters, this exclusion cannot be applied and I am taxed as if I’m working on U.S. soil. The only way to avoid this problem is to request flights over foreign countries only. Being an American pilot overseas, I also do not receive tax benefits for any retirement fund that I participate in through my company, since the United States does not recognize retirement funds established in other countries.

This is a real problem and will definitely affect any Riddle graduates who seek employment overseas. To my knowledge, America is the only country that practices such taxation on its overseas citizens. For more information on U.S. tax for pilots working overseas, visit https://www.irs.gov/businesses/u-s-citizens-performing-services-in-foreign-and-international-airspace.

Eric Hooper ’10, DB
B.S. Aeronautical Science

Aviation Vulnerabilities Are Real

I read the article “Open Season?” [spring 2016] on aircraft cybersecurity with interest. I spent 27 years with Boeing and retired in 2016 on aircraft cybersecurity with interest. I read the article “Aviation Vulnerabilities Are Real” and was impressed. I think colleges should offer a graduate course in cybersecurity and how to protect against aircraft hacking.

Craig Jones ’77, DB
B.S. Aeronautical Studies

Kudos for Lift, Off the Page

Thank you for putting this presentation (Lift, Off the Page: Aviation Cybersecurity) together and making it available to those of us who could not view it live. I was finally able to watch it and really enjoyed it. It was very enlightening and educational.

Jack Glower ’12, ’14, WW
Certificates, Aviation Safety and Aviation Maintenance Technology

The Apollo 1 crew, from left: Virgil ‘Gus’ Grissom, Edward White and Roger Chaffee. By GERALD W. ZIMMERMAN

BY GERALD W. ZIMMERMAN (’85, MC, NON-DEGREE)

In the 1960s, I found myself entrenched in the U.S. effort to send a person to the moon. An employee for North American Aviation (NAA), later NAA Rockwell, a NASA contractor, I was introduced to Project Apollo as a senior spacecraft electronics technician working on the launch escape and earth landing systems at White Sands Missile Range (WSMR), NM. Later, I transferred to Cape Canaveral, FL, Kennedy Space Center (KSC), and became the launch team supervisor for Apollo 1.

Jan 27, 1967

This is still hard for me to write about, to relive it even after all these years, when three men, Virgil ‘Gus’ Grissom, Edward White and Roger Chaffee—America’s best, brightest and bravest—died. In addition, there were several technicians and supervisors, good people, who died of heart attacks and aneurysms. I don’t know why the good Lord didn’t take me too.

The day started out like most any other with tests being run, and this day the three astronauts were suited up and the spacecraft was to be pressurized to 1 atmosphere, approximately 14 psi above the outside pressure, with pure oxygen. Shortly after this, Gus Grissom started having trouble with his communications with mission control. He became somewhat upset and started to replace his cobra cables, which required him to move around inside the craft. These cables, which supplied oxygen to the spacecraft, also had the communication wiring, plus biomedical monitoring systems. It was shortly after this that all hell broke loose.

A flash fire erupted inside the spacecraft, which simultaneously burned the astronauts to death. We had no warning system to tell the astronauts that something was wrong. The astronauts were killed instantly. In retrospect, we were not prepared for this, but we had warned NASA.

EDITOR’S NOTE: Excerpted from The Life and Times of Gerald W. Zimmerman and reprinted with the author’s permission. A 1959 graduate with an aeronautics and powerplant (A&P) certification from the Embry-Riddle High School of Aviation in Miami, FL, Zimmerman completed the A&P program with a 96 percent cumulative GPA, the highest score ever at that time in the school.

SEND US YOUR STORY In Other Words gives you the opportunity to share your industry-related or personal perspective with Lift readers. Email submissions/proposals to liftmag@erau.edu.
Historic student-powered engine overhaul station keeps the Embry-Riddle fleet flying

BY ALAN MARCOS PINTO CESAR

W

ever a training airplane fires up on the Embry-Riddle Daytona Beach Campus flight line, chances are good that its engine was assem-

bled by one of the students in the aviation maintenance science (AMS) program. It sounds doozy—planes-in-

training relying on engines built by mechanics-in-training—but it’s been the Embry-Riddle way since 1956.

Embry-Riddle is the only school in the world where students work on piston-powered aircraft engines as non-certificated employees of a Federal Aviation Administration (FAA)-certificated engine repair station.

The late Chandler Titus, professor emeritus and the university’s longest-serving employee (1953–2006), established the certificated repair station 60 years ago at Embry-Riddle’s School of Aviation in Miami, Fla. Originally certified by the Civil Aeronautics Authority, the governing body that preceded the FAA, the station was primarily an instructional training by giving students real-world experience, but the repair station also helped reduce the over-

haul costs for the fleet.

University Archivist Kevin Montgomery says the applied learning put into practice by Titus was important in establishing the school as an institution of higher learning and worked to perpetuate the philosophy of its early founders. “Embry-Riddle’s co-founder John Paul Riddle believed that in order to be a proficient pilot, you had to understand your machinery. He was an aviation mechanic before he became a pilot, and all early flight students had to do their own maintenance as well,” Montgomery says.

Program Heyday

In the decades that followed, aviation maintenance science grew into the biggest academic program on campus. With Titus as the repair station manager, students would process 100 percent of the engines from the training fleet as well as all of the alterna-

tives, starters, magnets and carburetors, says Roger Sonnenfeld (’86, DB), AMS repair station operations lead instructor and engine repair station manager at the Daytona Beach Campus.

“Work orders per year were in excess of a thou-

sand. We used to have three sections of engine overhauls. We had five days a week,” Sonnenfeld says. “They were staggered, so while one was in the classroom, the other was in the repair station.”

Today, students overhaul 15 to 20 engines annually from the training fleet, roughly 80 percent of the flight training department’s demand. The rest are sent to an outside repair company.

Eric Walterscheid, a current AMS student, says he and his peers spend many hours learning about engines before entering the repair station. “It was a little shocking, knowing that I’d be working on engines for the Cessnas and Diamonds that students would be flying. It gives me a sense that I need to perform very well. But with the supervision and guidance of our crew leader and inspector, I believe I’m very capable of working on airworthy engines.”

Safety First

Sonnenfeld is confident that the safety of Embry-Riddle’s nascent pilots and flight instruc-

tors is not compromised by the course, which is mandatory for the AMS degree. All of the work students perform is supervised by repair station inspectors—the repair station employs several. An inspector must sign off before engines or other components are returned to inventory for Embry-Riddle’s training fleet, just like at any other repair station.

The facility is regularly audited by a Flight Standards District Office (FSDO) inspector. “The FSDO inspector doesn’t cut us any slack just because we’re stu-

dents,” Sonnenfeld assures. “They’re expected to perform at the same level as anyone in the field. We’ve never had an accident, fatality or any other incident with our aircraft due to an engine overhaul problem.”

Students who complete their airframe and powerplant certifications and show exceptional skill can serve as crew leaders for the repair station, gaining valu-

able work experience while they complete their bachelor’s degrees. “Those stu-

dents get snatched up pretty quick [by employers],” Sonnenfeld says.
Seboso ‘Sebo’ M. Machobane (’94, PC) is transforming the aviation industry for the better in his home continent of Africa.

BY MELANIE STAWICKI AZAM

Seboso “Sebo” M. Machobane (’94, PC) came to Embry-Riddle to become a pilot, but his people skills and his passion for challenging himself drew him back to his air traffic management roots.

Based in Nairobi, Kenya, Machobane is a regional officer for air traffic management and search and rescue for the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), a United Nations agency. In his current job he promotes ICAO policies, standards, recommended practices and air navigation plans across 24 member states in the Eastern and Southern subregion of Africa.

Machobane says his greatest fear is succumbing to “indifference, when excellence can be achieved.” His fight against this fear fuels his efforts to improve the safety and efficiency of aviation in his home continent.

Reshaping the Airspace

And he’s making headway. Machobane is credited with establishing more than 100 new efficient and user-preferred route trajectories for the Africa-Indian Ocean regional air traffic services (ATS) route network, which includes the continent of Africa and its neighboring islands, and working to get a new ATS route network approved. The new route network reduces the former 4,797 nautical miles and cuts carbon dioxide emissions by an estimated 144 million metric tons. Machobane’s relentless effort to develop the network earned him the unofficial title of “Mr. Airspace” in Africa.

“IT took quite a while, because first of all, I had to get an agreement from all the countries involved,” says Machobane, who spent five years on the ATS route project, which received final approval in 2015. At times, tensions were high among the various country representatives, he says. “Sometimes the new routes would result in less traffic for certain airspaces, compared to what they used to get,” he explains.

There was a lot of red tape to get the new route plans accomplished, but the impact was huge. Some flight routes are shorter by 205 miles, Machobane says. “When multiplied over the course of a day, flight changes like that can make or break an airline. There are lots and lots of savings,” he said.

It wasn’t easy, though. Machobane had to deal with high staff turnover in other countries, a lack of follow-through, differing priorities and meager resources.

“Aeronautics in many countries is not a priority; if they have a penny, you can be sure it is not going anywhere to aviation,” Machobane says. “Or they have different priorities. You may say invest in safety, but there is no big return there.”

He accepts that politics and bureaucracy are a part of the ongoing process to make needed improvements, but he doesn’t let them defeat him. “I can be pretty stubborn,” he admits. “If I think something is going to work, I won’t back off. People know this guy is never going to give up.”

Taking Flight

That determination has driven Machobane throughout his career. South African but raised in Lesotho, he became interested in aviation as a child, after a pilot showed him his Cessna airplane during a visit to an airport.

“I was 8. It was fascinating,” recalls Machobane. “I always wanted to do something not many people get to do.”

His plans to become a pilot did not initially work out. He was trained in Nigeria in air traffic control in 1979. Then he went on to work as an air traffic controller for more than a decade in Lesotho.

Unable to kick his desire to fly, Machobane was in his mid-30s with a wife and two young children when he enrolled at Embry-Riddle in 1991. Attracted by the multi-engine flight program offered at the Prescott Campus, he relocated halfway across the world and sacrificed the comforts of home and family to earn an aeronautical science degree. “It was something that I always wanted to do. So I told myself I was going to work like crazy and get my degree done,” he says.

Dave Roy (’88, PC), Machobane’s first flight instructor at the Prescott Campus, remembers he was a model student. “He always kept his focus, even though his family was 10,000 miles away in Lesotho,” Roy says.

One of Machobane’s biggest mentors, Bob Sweginnis, was also his academic adviser at Embry-Riddle. An aerobatic pilot, Sweginnis died in an airplane accident in 2004. “I really appreciate him for imparting his knowledge,” Machobane says of Sweginnis. “The whole science behind flight—this guy could explain it in the best way that I could understand it.”

Although he does not fly himself anymore, Machobane says the education he received at Embry-Riddle gave him a wide-ranging knowledge of aviation that he uses daily. “I’ve been on both sides, so I have a very comprehensive understanding of both (piloting and air traffic management),” he says.

Committed to Improving African Aviation

After graduating from Embry-Riddle, Machobane worked as a flight instructor at Central Missouri State University while earning an M.S. in Aviation Safety and an M.S. in Industrial Safety Management. He then returned to Africa, where he became the commissioner of civil aviation for South Africa, before joining ICAO in 2006.

Roy, who is now the director of communications and safety at Guidance Aviation in Prescott, has followed his former student’s career at ICAO with pride. Machobane has overhauled the African route network to make it more efficient, mediated airspace disputes, analyzed air traffic control incidents and improved airspace safety, he says. He also helped initiate a process of education and training leading to the implementation of Performance-Based Navigation. “Sebo represents an exceptional level of commitment to the aviation and aerospace industry,” Roy says.

As he reflects on his career, Machobane says he is happy to have achieved positive change for aviation in Africa. “What I enjoy most are the results. That is the most satisfying thing,” Machobane says. “I enjoy looking back and seeing the improbable achieved.”

EDITOR’S NOTE: Machobane is the recipient of the 2015 Embry-Riddle Alumni Achievement Award.
Emory-Riddle students are improving the bottom line at businesses around the globe and getting a priceless education in return. In select business classes at both the Prescott and Daytona Beach campuses, the typical textbook case study is replaced by a real-world consulting project that exposes students to all the intricacies and challenges that a classroom can’t. This isn’t just for the students’ benefit: Businesses reap rewards when someone reviews their operations from the outside. Whether it’s analyzing the use of office space, assessing operational logistics or exploring an entirely new business model, Emory-Riddle student consulting groups provide tangible results.

Prescott Campus business students working with Drake Cement in spring 2016 found ways to make better use of its facility in Paulden, Ariz. Drake sells its cement powder by the truckload, and the truck traffic through the facility was having problems. During rush times and trucks stopped on train tracks.

The student team’s analysis showed that rerouting trucks through the facility, installing a series of lights to direct drivers and incorporating a few other improvements could cut the truck throughput time in half. Drake is preparing to put these ideas to use. “Our supervisor in that area thought it was a great solution. We’re looking at implementing it to make that side of the operation more efficient,” says Linda Mitchell, human resources manager at Drake Cement. Drake has two more consulting projects scheduled with student teams for the fall semester.
The Wild West Approach to Learning

About 50 undergraduate students each semester take courses at the Prescott Campus where consulting with an outside company is part of the grade. William Cheek, former business department chair at the Prescott Campus, credits Assistant Professor Rick Gibson for cementing these projects to the curriculum starting in the late 1990s. Gibson relies on the Small Business Development Center at Yavapai College to secure the university’s first business clients, but now a variety of companies routinely request student consulting teams.

Gibson takes a Wild West attitude to guiding students through the consulting projects: Teams work mostly independently, and they can choose to fire underperforming members. “They’ve learned the concepts. I don’t micromanage them; ‘I’ll let them crash and burn. The responsibility adds gravity to the project,” Gibson says.

Costco Wholesale, which rarely hires outside consultants, has worked with Embry-Riddle students on four projects in the past. Though it prefers to keep internal operations close to the vest, John Thelan, senior vice president of depot operations, says letting high-caliber Embry-Riddle students has been a worthwhile exception. “When you’re in the trenches day in, day out, you tend to look at the world in a certain way. Bringing in students who are hard charging and well educated, you get fresh facts, a fresh outlook. It’s a win-win situation.”

Typically, the student team researches an issue and solutions for it, meeting with company representatives as needed throughout the semester. The work culminates in a formal presentation near the semester’s end. “Presenting results can often be stressful, especially when you have to deliver bad news,” Gibson says. “Sometimes you have to tell the client who hired you and tell them, ‘You’re the problem.’”

A team leader on one of the Costco projects, says the company’s representatives were surprisingly receptive. “A few minutes into our presentation, they realized that we knew a lot about their business and gave us a lot of respect for that,” he says. “I give a lot of credit to Professor Gibson, who taught us how to be authentic with the client.”

—AL GAROFALO (16, PC)

An Extension of the Industry Advisory Board

At the Daytona Beach Campus, outside consulting has been a part of the College of Business since the industry advisory board was created in 1991, but activity has increased in the last four years, says Mike Williams, dean of the College of Business. Each faculty member looks for opportunities within his or her professional network—many faculty previously worked in industry, and solutions for it, meeting with company representatives as needed throughout the semester. The work culminates in a formal presentation near the semester’s end. “Presenting results can often be stressful, especially when you have to deliver bad news,” Gibson says. “Sometimes you have to tell the client who hired you and tell them, ‘You’re the problem.’”

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Two titans of the aviation business world—David McKay ('77, DB) and C. Jeffrey Knittel ('80, DB)—grew up in suburban Philadelphia, enthralled by the mystery of flight and inspired by the aerospace heroes of the 20th century.

They traveled south to Embry-Riddle and both eventually established their niche in aviation’s financial sector, using their business savvy to aid in the industry’s growth over the past three decades. Knittel, president of CIT Transportation Finance, today presides over a $20 billion diversified transportation finance organization that includes a fleet of about 350 leased aircraft. McKay is chairman and CEO of United States Aircraft Insurance Group, known as USAIG, one of the world’s largest insurers of business, commercial and fractional general aviation aircraft.

In fact, USAIG insures a number of aircraft operators and manufacturers whose planes are leased by Knittel’s company.

McKay and Knittel didn’t know each other on the Daytona Beach Campus of Embry-Riddle. But they crossed paths some years later, while midlevel executives, at The Wings Club, the aviation industry’s premier social club in Manhattan, N.Y. As they rose up in the industry, they made deals with many of the executives they met for lunch in The Wings Club’s restaurant on the eighth floor of an office building in midtown Manhattan (see sidebar).

In spite of their success, they’ve never forgotten their Embry-Riddle roots. Under their leadership, USAIG and CIT have joined The Boeing Company, United Airlines and Frontier Airlines in Embry-Riddle’s Business Eagles program, which facilitates interactions between industry partners and Embry-Riddle students, providing those essential contacts for graduates as they seek opportunities in the aviation marketplace. Having an aviation background can give job applicants a leg up when seeking employment in the industry’s financial side.

“When we reached out to the industry, David McKay responded lickety-split,” says Bert Zarb, professor of accounting at the Daytona Beach Campus. “He has been extremely supportive of the program, which opens a pipeline for our students to speak with the captains of industry.”

At his corner office in the financial district at the southern tip of Manhattan, where he can hear the thrrob of helicopters from the nearby helipad, McKay says that he continues to look to Embry-Riddle when his company has an opening.

“Embry-Riddle students are passionate about the aviation business,” says McKay, who has influenced the curricula at Embry-Riddle through his participation on several industry advisory boards. “We tell them if they love airspace now, they’ll love it in 40 years. And we’ve found that it’s easier to teach insurance to those passionate about aviation than to teach aviation to those breaking into the insurance field.”
An Itch for Flying
Growing up in suburban Philadelphia in the 1960s, McKay recalls waiting with great excitement for the latest edition of National Geographic, which at the time chronicled the exploits of test pilots such as Scott Crossfield, who flew the X-15 to hypersonic speeds. His passion for flying deepened after his first exposure to primary flight training at nearby Wings Field, where Knittel also had his first up-close look at airplanes.

At Embry-Riddle, McKay started off in aeronautical science. But he was itching to get up in the air, so he transferred into the professional pilot program, which allowed him to obtain his ratings more quickly.

Then he joined the Aviation Reserve Officer Candidate program, which enhanced his expertise and his connection to the U.S. military. He had his heart set on landing a flying job upon graduation in December 1977 and living the pilot’s life. But entry-level job openings were scant, with fighter pilots returning from Vietnam and experienced airline pilots in no mood to retire.

“They just weren’t a lot of flying jobs,” McKay says. “If I persevered, I would have gotten an airline job, but in the meantime, I had to eat.”

He answered a classified ad in The New York Times for a company called Aerospace Management Services International, a subsidiary of USAIG, which was looking for an air safety investigator to work with the National Transportation Safety Board on fatal airline crashes. He was hired and became USAIG’s first employee.

Over the next three years, he combed through the details of 150 fatal accidents for manufacturers, such as Lycoming Engines, Teledyne Continental Motors and Bell Helicopter. His Embry-Riddle academic and flight training provided the background he needed to land the job.

“I worked with former fighter pilots from the military,” McKay says. “I made the case that I could do it because of my academic experience at Embry-Riddle.”

Some of those veterans were still serving in the Air Force Reserve, and through those connections he received his commission as a reserve officer. USAIG granted him a two-year leave to undergo Air Force Reserve training, during which time he trained on supersonic Northrop T-38 and flew Lockheed C-130 transport planes.

“I’d finally scratched that flying itch,” says McKay, who served in the Air Force Reserve for seven years after returning to USAIG and for many years flew his own Mooney M20J. “After the training, I was ready to develop my career in the aviation business.”

Club Connection
In 1942, a group of aviation leaders founded The Wings Club in New York City to help promote aeronautics. Since then, the club has enjoyed the participation of many aviation and aerospace leaders, including David McKay (’77, DB) and C. Jeffrey Knittel (’80, DB). Both have served as club president—Knittel in 2010-11 and McKay, his successor, in 2011-12.

That was a time in which Knittel and McKay transformed the private social club, Knittel expanded the board to include more women and developed programs to attract young professionals. McKay began the process to transform the club into a nonprofit organization dedicated to supporting educational opportunities for college students pursuing careers in aviation, while continuing to build the aviation community at its monthly luncheons with top industry speakers.

Both remain active, with McKay co-chairing the club’s Development Committee and Knittel chairing its Awards Committee. Two of The Wings Club’s six scholarships in 2015 went to Embry-Riddle undergraduates: $30,000 to Jonathan Clark and $10,000 to Matthew Philbin.

“Jeff and Dave are great guys, with big jobs, who are committed to the next generation,” says Tom Fitzsimmons, The Wings Club’s executive director. “They’ve helped change the mission of our group to become a true supporting organization for the field of aviation, and for those aspiring to join it.”
all its insurance lines. He became president and chief executive officer in 2006 and chief executive officer in 2011, and he was named board chairman in 2016.

USAIG, founded in 1928, was the nation’s first aviation insurer, and is wholly owned subsidiary of General Re, which is wholly owned by Warren Buffett’s company, Berkshire Hathaway. With 13 branch offices across the United States and Canada, USAIG has the largest footprint of any aviation insurer in North America. Bruce Whitman, president and CEO of Flight Safety International (FSI), also owned by Berkshire Hathaway, over the past 30 years has seen McKay parlay his keen focus on the mission at hand and healthy sense of humor into a place at the top of the aviation insurance industry. Both Whitman and McKay support twice-a-year simulation training for their customers who operate turbine-powered aircraft, so most of USAIG’s customers train at FSI.

Did you know? Fifty years ago (1966-67), Embry-Riddle started offering its first business courses leading to a Bachelor of Science in Aviation Management. Today, Embry-Riddle offers 22 undergraduate and graduate business-related degrees among its three campuses (Daytona Beach, Fla., Prescott, Ariz., and Online/Worldwide).
Enterprising Solutions

Social entrepreneur Peter McAlindon ('89, DB) changes lives through innovation

By Molly Justice

routine, daily task can inspire big ideas. For Peter McAlindon ('89, DB), that activity was hours of typing and programming. The uncomfortable effect—numbness in his fingers. The solution—the orbITouch, a patented computer keyboard and mouse that requires no finger or wrist motion to operate. It was developed for people who do not have the finger or hand dexterity to use a regular keyboard or mouse.

McAlindon is the founder and CEO of technology company Blue Orb and co-founder of venVelo, a business accelerator and seed capital fund. venVelo was recently named a resident partner at Embry-Riddle Research Park in Daytona Beach, Fla. As such, it will play a key role in supporting startup ventures and advancing new technologies toward commercialization and launch.

McAlindon is currently teaching as the entrepreneur-in-residence at the Rollins College Crummer Graduate School of Business in Winter Park, Fla. He earned a Master of Aeronautical Science at Embry-Riddle and holds a Ph.D. in Industrial Engineering from the University of Central Florida.

A social entrepreneur with a heart for improving quality of life for people with physical challenges, McAlindon recently shared some of his experiences and business advice.

Q: How long did it take to develop orbITouch—from idea to market?
A: Almost eight years. The idea for the orbITouch Keyless Keyboard was first investigated via my doctoral dissertation. After completing the initial dissertation research, the company was born, and we had multiple National Science Foundation Small Business Innovation Research grants that helped us further prove out the technology and to develop our first prototypes. It took another few years to raise capital to complete the tooling and to manufacture the product.

Q: What made you realize that your keyboard/mouse was a real, marketable idea?
A: When a participant in one of my initial studies wanted to place an order for an orbITouch. She offered me cash to buy the first one. She was a retired typing instructor and had carpal tunnel in both hands. After her first few sessions with the orbITouch, she began to cry; when I asked what was wrong, she said she hadn’t been able to type for years due to the pain. The orbITouch allowed her to type again.

Q: How has orbITouch opened up new personal and professional interests for you?
A: Business is about relationships with people. So, too, is life—it’s about meaningful connection with other people. What is meaningful is helping one other when and where you can. The orbITouch has been the vehicle for me to come to know so many great people from all walks of life. It’s been humbling, enlightening and very rewarding on many levels. When you get to know someone and are blessed to help them with one of their needs, the whole world opens up for you and for them. With regard to personal interests, I realized that much more can and should be done to help people with disabilities. Technology helps level the playing field for jobs, education and social well-being. What’s interesting is that everything I do now professionally aligns well with my personal goals to help other entrepreneurs and, in particular, those who serve people with disabilities.

Q: How can entrepreneurs stand out in today’s crowded marketplace—to both consumers and investors?
A: To stand out today, an entrepreneur needs to have feedback and buy-in from as many people as possible during their entire development process. An entrepreneur first and foremost needs to know and understand that there is a market for their product(s) or service(s). The best way to do this is to talk to people early and often about what you are doing, discover how well your idea addresses their true need, and develop a business model to launch and build your business. Similarly, the best way to impress investors is to develop a business model that works, with real customers driving it—that means being in touch with people who have a need and are willing to pay to have that need fulfilled. When you can demonstrate that you have a market for your product, with real customers and interest, investors will take note.

Q: What characteristics/attributes do entrepreneurs need to succeed?
A: You really have to believe in what you are doing and you have to stay with it long enough to make it work. You can’t be afraid to tell the world, one person at a time, about your idea. Without a deep interest and passion for an idea, it’s difficult to work the long hours required to make it a reality. There are several others we can discuss as well—coach-ability, openness to new ideas from other people, not being afraid to fail, being thin-skinned for all of the doubters and naysayers.

Q: Any additional advice, insight for budding entrepreneurs?
A: Don’t be afraid. Stay with it. Reach out to other entrepreneurs. Find a market first, develop a product. Learn from others. Identify and build on a real need.

Peter McAlindon’s invention, the orbITouch, a patented computer keyboard and mouse, requires no finger or wrist motion to operate.
Band of Brothers
Sigma Chi memorial scholarships keep their brothers’ dreams alive

BY MELANIE STAWICKI AZAM

Timothy M. Englehardt loved being a Sigma Chi brother, almost as much as he loved studying meteorology. “As an absolute dream was to be a weatherman in Boston,” says Jarrett Starbuck, president of the Sigma Chi Fraternity, Eta Iota chapter at Embry-Riddle’s Daytona Beach Campus. “He was very passionate about what he did and about the fraternity in general.”

Englehardt, 22, a Boston native, was the go-to guy for any weather-related questions and a senior who was actively involved in the fraternity, recalls Starbuck. He had just completed a summer internship with WCVB Channel 5 in Boston, where he died tragically in a shooting incident on Holy Hill, Fla., on Sept. 13, 2014. Englehardt’s sudden death hit his Sigma Chi brothers hard and left them wanting to do something to remember him. “We wanted to do something for Tim related to what he was passionate about,” Starbuck says.

The result: the Timothy M. Englehardt Memorial Scholarship for Meteorology. Established by family, friends and fellow Sigma Chi Fraternity, Eta Iota chapter members, the scholarship will provide financial support on an annual basis for a meteorology student attending Embry-Riddle’s Daytona Beach Campus.

Family Support
“We appreciate Embry-Riddle helping create this scholarship with the support of the Eta Iota chapter of the Sigma Chi brotherhood to allow students’ dreams to live on,” say Englehardt’s parents, Theresa and Bill Englehardt. “Having Timmy’s legacy continue through this memorial scholarship shapes his very dream of becoming a meteorologist since grade school.” Family and friends also established a scholarship in Englehardt’s name for a graduating senior at Haverhill High School in Massachusetts, where he was a member of the varsity football team and the National Honor Society.

The Englehardt scholarship at Embry-Riddle was announced at the fraternity’s 45th anniversary held March 31–April 3, 2016, at the Daytona Beach Campus. More than 325 Sigma Chi alumni and their guests attended the event, including honorees Therese and Bill Englehardt. Bill was given an honorary pledge pin and lifelong Sigma Chi pin.

Therese and Bill Englehardt. Bill was given an honorary pledge pin and lifelong Sigma Chi pin.

Memorial Tradition
Sigma Chi Fraternity alumni lead John Wrightington (’79, DB) says there is a tradition of honoring the memory of chapter brothers who have passed away. Sigma Chi scholarships were also created in memory of Charles “Chuck” Torrisi (’94, DB) and Ryan Donley (’00, DB).

Additionally, in 2014, the John R. Delafosse Memorial Scholarship was established to honor a founding member of the Eta Iota chapter. Delafosse (’72, DB) was a pilot for 40 years. He died at the age of 64 from pancreatic cancer. His wife, Teresa Delafosse, created the scholarship to help aviation students pay for flight training costs at Embry-Riddle.

“We wanted to do something for Tim related to what he was passionate about.”
—JARRETT STARBUCK

James Wasel (’16, DB) was the latest recipient of the John R. Delafosse Memorial Scholarship. He says the scholarship helped him finish college, “So being the first Sigma Chi recipient. It was something I was truly proud of,” he says. “Everything I learned about leadership I learned from Sigma Chi. You are always striving to make yourself better.”

Wrightington agrees. Community service, leadership and brotherhood are hallmarks of the fraternity, he says. Starbuck says it’s the shared sense of brotherhood that sparked the creation of Englehardt’s scholarship. “It is really hard to describe the connection we have as Sigma Chi brothers,” he says. “Tim was here and we really want to remember and appreciate who he was.”

Sigma Chi memorial scholarships are also important to the Kappa Phi chapter at Embry-Riddle’s Prescott Campus. The chapter is in the process of establishing a scholarship in memory of two deceased brothers.

The Sigma Chi Symons/Tomai Memorial Scholarship will honor Christopher Symons (’07, PC) and Michael Egan Tomai (’05, PC). Symons was a founding member of the Kappa Phi chapter, and Tomai was a brother from the Daytona BeachCampus’ Sigma Chi Eta Iota chapter who transferred to the Prescott Campus and helped found the Kappa Phi chapter.

“Chris and Michael were huge contributors in the establishment of the Kappa Phi chapter,” says Chester Peyton (’06, PC), who is leading the effort to create the scholarship. Symons, who earned a B.S. in Aeronautical Science, died in a car accident while returning home from Coast Guard duty in San Diego on June 26, 2008. He was 23 years old. He earned his chapter nickname, “Choo Choo,” after several brothers discovered he had worked as a train operator at Disneyland in California. He served as an ensign in the U.S. Coast Guard and as a first-class Petty Officer for Piedmont Airlines.

Tomai led the founding members of the Kappa Phi chapter through their first initiation in fall 2005, when the chapter earned its charter. That same year, he commissioned into the U.S. Marine Corps. He served in Operation Iraqi Freedom from 2006 to 2009, and went on to manage special operations capability research and development in the office of the Secretary of Defense’s Irregular Warfare Support Program. Tomai, 30, died on May 12, 2013, in Alexandria, Va.

Plans are to create a term scholarship first, says Peyton, while raising funds over the next five years to establish an endowed scholarship. Donations are being sought from the Kappa Phi chapter brothers and through Embry-Riddle’s crowdfunding site, crowdfunder. Peyton says, “I wanted to organize a scholarship that combined the efforts of all the chapter alumni, which is close to reaching 100 members, to maximize the impact and show the active brothers that membership in Sigma Chi extends past graduation.” Peyton says. “We are paying attention and we do care.”

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Prescott Campus Sigma Chi chapter to honor two founding fathers
Training Them Up

Robert ‘Rob’ Ewing ('94, DB) inspires youth through flight

BY SARA WITHROW

Robert “Rob” Ewing (’94, DB) lives to give young men and women the experience of flight. The founder and director of the Aviation Academy at Admiral Farragut Academy, a private boarding and day school for grades K-12 in St. Petersburg, Fla., Ewing has flight trained at least 500 students since he started teaching there in 1998.

“That first time, for me, I felt connected, like I belonged there,” says Ewing of his first flight. “It was the control, the movement, that feeling of leaving the ground. Obviously, there was the adrenaline rush and the excitement of it, but it was more like nothing else mattered. There were no other problems. It was wonderful, and it’s felt the same ever since. I’ve never lost that feeling.”

It’s a feeling Ewing wants others to have, and he’s dedicated his adult life to that end. Shortly after experiencing his first flight, he moved to Daytona Beach and enrolled in Embry-Riddle’s Aeronautical Science program. Earning his bachelor’s degree in 1994, as well as commercial, multi-engine and instrument ratings, he got married and worked a few odd jobs before finding his true calling.

“I didn’t plan to become a teacher. Teaching found me,” he says. It was while working for the Florida Sheriff’s Youth Ranches that he realized his passion for education. “Seeing that moment when learning takes place, that moment when they say, ‘Man, I didn’t know that,’ and then they suddenly realize now they do know it; you can’t put a price on it.”

Aligning with Embry-Riddle

At Admiral Farragut, Ewing quickly developed his other passion, aviation, into a full-blown program for the school. After earning his flight instructor certification in 1999, there was no stopping him. What started as one high school aviation elective at Admiral Farragut has turned into an aviation program that includes introductory flights at the middle-school level, a ground school with simulator training, and the opportunity to earn a private pilot’s certificate with up to 50 hours of flight time.

Since 2014, Admiral Farragut has participated in Embry-Riddle’s Gaetz Aerospace Institute, which allows junior and senior high school students to take college-credit courses taught by college-credentialed teachers, all while earning their high school diplomas. “I wanted to align my program with Embry-Riddle and create a seamless transition for my students,” Ewing says. A steadfast advocate for his alma mater, over the years Ewing has helped many Admiral Farragut graduates enroll in flight and other programs at Embry-Riddle. “On average, Rob sends two students a year to Embry-Riddle, and we’ve had some years where as many as four have matriculated. That’s quite a significant number considering our senior classes average 65;” says Robert J. Fine, headmaster and president at Admiral Farragut. This year, eight Admiral Farragut graduates applied and were accepted into Embry-Riddle. As of May 2016, three had committed to attend.

“There are seven current students at Embry-Riddle who Rob taught and mentored at Admiral Farragut, and there are nearly 100 more he has encouraged in the past to come to the university, and who have since graduated” says Bill Thompson, executive director of alumni relations at Embry-Riddle. “His continued support of the university and, more importantly, his support of young people entering the aviation industry is commendable.”

Transforming Lives

Liu Bolun, a senior at Embry-Riddle majoring in aerospace and occupational safety, and the safety officer for the Eagles Flight Team, is one of Ewing’s recruits. “When I was a sophomore at Admiral Farragut, Mr. Ewing was my Aero Science teacher,” Bolun says. “One day, I asked him if there was any university famous for an aviation degree. He straightly replied, ‘Embry-Riddle.’ He supported me 100 percent in attending Embry-Riddle. He did everything he could to expose me to aviation.”

For Ewing, that’s what it’s all about, giving students the aviation experience and watching it transform their lives. “It makes an impact on who they are and how they look at the world,” Ewing says. “Once a student soloists and they come back, you can see the change in them: who they are, how they approach their peers and how they look at their future. They have a sense of accomplishment.”

EDITOR’S NOTE: Ewing was named Embry-Riddle’s 2015 Alumni Service Award recipient. He received the award on Oct. 9, 2015, at the Daytona Beach Campus’ Homecoming celebration.
MESSAGE FROM THE ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

As I write this, I am reminded of T. Higbee Embry, who once said, “We start into a new year which we know will be crammed full of history in aviation—packed with events and progress that we can’t even imagine.”

Here we are 90 years later, and I realize with incredible pride the positive impact that Embry-Riddle has had and continues to have on the world’s aviation industry. Eagles are everywhere, and each year we find more ways to connect and network with each other.

This year’s homecoming weekends kick off at each campus with the annual Industry/Career Expos and eagleNIGHT receptions. Held in conjunction with OctoberWest, the Prescott Campus, and its flight line at Ernest A. Love Field in Prescott, Ariz., will also welcome the AOPA Regional Fly-In, which will host hundreds of airplanes and aviators, along with industry presentations. A 90th anniversary tribute celebration, fly-in and static display will highlight homecoming weekend at our campus in Daytona Beach, Fla. The Wings & Waves Air Show will not be held this year. Watch your inbox and check the alumni website alumni.erau.edu/homecoming for updates.

Eagle Strong
The Embry-Riddle Eagle Network is cited time and again by alumni as a key component to their success. I have personally witnessed numerous alumni and students who either found jobs or filled positions through connections that started at an alumni gathering. This year alumni events were expanded globally, with our networks meeting in Italy, France, Germany, China, Brazil, Singapore and India. It’s important to keep your contact information up to date so we can invite you to our alumni gatherings. If you move, let us know. Visit the alumni homepage, alumni.erau.edu, to make address changes and to check for event announcements.

On your next visit to the Daytona Beach Campus, be sure to look us up in the new Eagle Alumni Center located east of Clyde Morris Boulevard (formerly Embry-Riddle’s Information Technology offices), near the track and field facilities. The Alumni Welcome Center at the Prescott Campus, located just east of the main Visitors Center, invites you to visit as well.

Stop by any time and enjoy a cup of coffee with us!

Bill Thompson (’87, PC)
Executive Director

COMMENCEMENT
SPRING 2016

WATCH
Commencement photo slideshows for all three campus graduation ceremonies: lift.erau.edu/videos-fall-2016

GRADUATES RANGED IN AGE FROM:

19 to 68

DEGREES AWARDED (TOTAL)

1,478

- Doctoral degrees: 2
- Master’s degrees: 361
- Bachelor’s degrees: 1,066
- Associate degrees: 49

MOST POPULAR MAJORS BY CAMPUS:

- 108 (DB)
  - B.S. in Aerospace Engineering
- 63 (PC)
  - B.S. in Aeronautics
- 206 (WW)
  - B.S. in Aeronautics

NUMBER OF COUNTRIES REPRESENTED:

53

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NUMBER OF COUNTRIES REPRESENTED:

53

GRADUATING WITH ACADEMIC HONORS:

430

FEMALE GRADUATES: 338
MALE GRADUATES: 1,118

CAMPUS LEGEND

DB
Daytona Beach, Fla.
PC
Prescott, Ariz.
WW
Worldwide Campus

NOTE: ALUMNI PROFILE INFORMATION INCLUDES ALL GRADUATES FROM COMPLETING PROGRAMS OF STUDY AT DOYNTA BEACH CAMPUS, PRESCOTT CAMPUS, EUROPE CAMPUS, PENSACOLA, FLA., ONLINE CAMPUS, DOD/VA, AND OTHER MILITARY PROGRAMS.
A Living Legend by No Accident

Greg Feith ('81, DB) dedicates his life to enhancing aviation safety

BY SARA WITHROW

Standing in a field of debris consisting of airframe parts, bits and pieces of wiring, luggage and bodies—the remnants of a tragic aircraft crash—Greg Feith ('81, DB), former senior air safety investigator and “Go-Team” captain for the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB), sees hope.

“When you’re trying to process that a family or hundreds of people perished in an accident, I look at it—not with an emotional attachment to the victims, but with a sense of purpose—to try to prevent it from happening again. I’ve always used the surviving families and the victims as motivators,” he says.

A renowned international aviation safety and security consultant, media spokesperson and expert witness on the topic, Feith has investigated more than 2,500 aircraft accidents worldwide since he started his career 36 years ago. In January 2016, he was inducted into the Living Legends of Aviation, in acknowledgement of his significant contributions to aviation. The Legends, which include entrepreneurs, innovators, industry leaders, record breakers, astronauts and pilots, nominate and select the inductees each year.

Feith says he’s honored by the recognition, but for him the greatest reward is intrinsic. “I’m not going to save the world, but I know that every single day that I do my job, I’m contributing to making aviation safer. One of my greatest accomplishments is the fact that through perseverance and passion I found something that I absolutely love.”

An Epiphany on a Mountain

Feith’s love affair with aviation safety started in 1980, as a student at Embry-Riddle. He participated in a cooperative training program at the NTSB and was hooked.

“It happened while I was investigating my third accident,” he says. “I’m standing on top of this mountain in Truckee, California. It’s a beautiful blue-sky day and I’m in the middle of a Cessna 210 that had crashed and killed a family of six. I’m standing up there and it hit me. It was like, ‘Greg this is what you’re going to do for the rest of your life.’ It changed my entire career that day on top of that mountain, and I’ve never done anything else except aviation safety. I still say—” I love to fly. I love every aspect of aviation, but I really love accident investigation.”

It’s been a winding 36 years since. After performing two co-op semesters back-to-back at the NTSB, Feith accepted a full-time position with the agency in 1981, becoming the youngest investigator on staff. “They took a chance on me,” he says.

Feith became the roaming investigator, working in locations that were low-staffed or that had an extremely long case. He quickly gained experience. “My timing working for the NTSB in the ’80s, ’90s and early 2000s was such that we had a lot of hull losses all over the world. My upper management had a lot of confidence in my ability as a leader, and that’s why I ended up doing a lot of accidents. At one time, I was working five major accidents (1994-1996).”

Young and single at the time, he volunteered for more risky missions, as well. When Eastern Airlines Flight 880 crashed in 1985 into Mount Illimani in Bolivia at an elevation of 20,000 feet, Feith stepped up to lead the investigation. Fighting extreme cold and the physiological challenges of working in high altitudes, the search team located the accident site to this day the highest crash scene of a commercial aircraft controlled flight into terrain. The wreckage, however, was buried under 30 feet of snow. The team was unable to find the coveted “black box.”

“We were on the mountain 10 days. We would probe the snow until we found something larger than a dining room table. We did dig out the whole tail section,” Feith says. In the end, Feith had to piece the investigation together based on technical evidence. “They drifted off course at night. They didn’t see what they hit,” he says.

Going Beyond Accident Investigation

For Feith, there is a predominant question that drives his work. Why? “We can usually figure out what happened. But the question is why would the pilot make this decision? The why is the hardest part.”

Dan McCune, director of safety at Embry-Riddle, says Feith’s years of experience make him an ideal teacher for flight students and new flight instructors. A regular speaker at the university and an instructor of Embry-Riddle’s professional education safety courses, Feith is always willing to share his expertise. “From the moment he opens his mouth, the flight instructors follow his every word,” McCune says.

“He takes his knowledge beyond accident investigation and applies it to accident prevention,” he continues.

A former member of the Embry-Riddle President’s Advisory Council and the Aerospace Safety and Education Industry Advisory Council, in 2001 Feith was honored with the Distinguished Alumni Award for his contributions to the industry and the university.

“There’s no doubt that he’s passionate about aviation safety. He has a deep passion to make a meaningful difference,” says Brian Roggav, aviation safety program manager for flight at Embry-Riddle’s Prescott Campus.

Since retiring from the NTSB in 2001, Feith has continued to do just that. He volunteers for several nonprofits, including Shades of Blue, an organization that gives underprivileged kids opportunities to experience flight; and he’s launched two safety products: LapKidz, a Federal Aviation Administration-approved child restraint system for infants and toddlers, and the SMART Emergency Location Transmitter (ELT), in partnership with InFlight Labs. The ELT can be activated in flight before a crash to track an aircraft in distress, says Feith, who is also designing a modified version of the LapKidz device to prevent child drowning accidents in bathtubs.

“I don’t just want to talk about the problems—I want to be part of the solution,” he says.

Greg Feith as he investigates the May 6, 1937, airship disaster. Feith, right, next to the wreckage from the 1985 Eastern Airlines Flight 880 crash atop Mount Illimani in Bolivia.

Above, a student cooperative participant with the National Transportation Safety Board, Greg Feith poses for a photo at the scene of the deadly 1980 aircraft crash in Truckee, Calif., that forever changed his career path. Flight, Feith, for right, photography wreckage from the 1985 Eastern Airlines Flight 880 crash atop Mount Illimani in Bolivia.

Left, Greg Feith with celebrity and pilot John Travolta at the 2016 Living Legends of Aviation awards ceremony in Beverly Hills. Caf’ Bistro; a young Feith builds a model rocket with his father.

WANT TO KNOW MORE?

Read about Greg Feith’s secret to career success: lift.erau.edu/greg-feith.

Watch Greg Feith as he investigates the May 6, 1937, airship disaster for the National Geographic Channel.

LIFT Fall 2016 Edition 29
From Private Aviation to Covert Operations
Alumna makes career in the CIA

BY MELANIE STAWICKI AZAM

Patrick A. Hetu-Tkacik, ’83, DB, ’90, WW) never imagined her love of flying would lead her to a job with the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). The CIA was seeking someone with an aviation background, and she was hired in 1986 as a specialized skills officer at the agency. Hetu-Tkacik holds a Bachelor of Science in Aeronautical Science and a Master of Aeronautical Science from Embry-Riddle.

“When I first started, it had to do with aviation, which was my first love,” says Hetu-Tkacik, who has been with the agency 30 years and currently serves as a senior recruitment manager with the CIA’s Directorate of Operations (DO). A pilot, Hetu-Tkacik did not fly for the agency, but was hired for her civilian aviation knowledge. She worked in the DO, primarily at CIA Headquarters in Washington, D.C., but with frequent business trips worldwide.

She eventually became a manager with the DO, also known as the Clandestine Service, which is the arm of the CIA that conducts covert operations and recruits foreign agents.

“When working overseas, I couldn’t acknowledge who I worked for,” she says. “When I am working with folks overseas, it helps me get access to certain people, and it also safeguards me and my family.”

Hetu-Tkacik says contrary to popular belief, it is possible to have a family and an intelligence career. “It was the school you went to if you wanted to make it in aviation;” Hetu-Tkacik says. “When I first started, I was my first moment I went down there, because by the second week of my freshman year, I was already flying,” she says. “By Christmas, I already had soloed.”

Her graduation was equally memorable. “We graduated on the tarmac,” she says. “It started raining and we all took cover in the airplanes until the storm was over.”

Upon graduating, she took a job as a pilot for a corporate charter airline carrying cargo, plus worked as a flight instructor. “I flew a Piper Navajo up and down the East Coast—all day and in all kinds of weather,” Hetu-Tkacik says. “After doing that for a year, I was already flying,” she says. “By Christmas, I already had soloed.”

Family Ties

Although she loved flying, she wasn’t sure she wanted to make it her lifelong career, so she applied to the CIA, where her father had worked for four years in public relations. “The agency offered me a different challenge,” she explains.

In her current role she recruits U.S. citizens for jobs at the CIA in a variety of fields, including aviation. Her background as a pilot helps her daily with management and people skills.

“In 30 years, what I enjoy most about the job is the people,” Hetu-Tkacik says. “It is a camaraderie, like the military, but even more so. We are very family oriented and we really watch each other’s backs.”

Still passionate for aviation, she and her husband are currently building an airplane together. “I still fly and I still love it,” Hetu-Tkacik says.

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Career News

1970s

John Alger ('73, DB) was elected National Chairman of the U.S. Naval Sea Cadet Corps (NSCC) at the annual meeting of members of the Navy League of the United States held in Charleston, S.C., in June. The NSCC is the youth program of the Navy League. He has been a volunteer with the program since 1971, when he was a flight petty officer in the U.S. Coast Guard, became a cadet in the program, and his wife, Jean, resides in Charlotte, N.C., where Alger is employed by American Airlines as senior flight crew training instructor for the Airbus A320.

Mori Hosseini ('78, DB) was appointed to the position for a two-year term to the UF Board at the end of March upon retirement of the University of Florida's vice chair of the Board of Trustees. Hosseini is active in the local Washington, D.C., innovation and member recruitment. Hosseini was appointed to the position for a two-year term on June 9, 2016, following a vote by UF trustees. Hosseini joined the UF Board at the end of March upon appointment by Gov. Rick Scott. Prior to joining UF’s Board, Hosseini served as chair of the State University System Board of Governors.

Mark Phillips ('80, DB) is the director of Florida’s Highway and Main Street Initiative. He was a chief of traffic operations at the Florida Department of Transportation’s Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles. Phillips retired from the Florida Department of Transportation in 2013 after a 24-year career. He was named the inaugural recipient of the Florida Department of Transportation’s Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles Employee of the Year in 2015.

1980s

Andrew Broom ('83, PC) is a pilot at United Airlines, was named one of the airline’s 2015 Pilots of the Year. Andrew Broom ('83, PC) is appointed executive director of the Citation Jet Pilots (CJP) Owner Pilot Association, effective Aug. 1, 2016. He was formerly a flight instructor in the U.S. Air Force and flew combat missions in Afghanistan. He completed his MBA at the University of Texas at Austin and earned a law degree with honors. He continues to fly as a volunteer for the Air Force Association.

1990s

This spring the duo piloted their first United Airlines flight together.

LT. Col. Sean J. Vannoot ('91, DB) returned to US Airways’ (American Airlines’) Flight Training Department (Airbus A-330-343) in Charlotte, N.C., after 12 years of military and marine service. Vannoot is also an emergency preparedness liaison officer in the U.S. Air Force Reserves, with duties in the national Capitol region.

Todd Engelman ('93, DB) is the engineering lead and senior technical advisor to the Air Force Research Laboratory’s Advanced Structural Concepts branch at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base in Ohio.

Jim Reyes ('93, DB) is charter coordinator for Pacific Coast Jet, which is based in San Francisco.

Ismael L. Benilla ('94, WW) is air port director for Milwaukee County’s General Mitchell International Airport in Milwaukee.

Retired U.S. Navy Cmdr. John “J.C.” Coffey ('94, WW) was named 2015 Association for Unmanned Vehicles Systems International (AUVSI) Member of the Year (May 2015). Coffey is the executive director of unmanned systems for Cherokee Nation Technologies (CNT). He is active in the local Washington, D.C., AUVSI chapter, and the award recognizes his dedication to advancing unmanned systems through industry innovation and member recruitment. A retired naval aviator and Department of Defense acquisition professional, Coffey joined CNT in 2014.

Terrence Lewis ('95, WW) was promoted to Boeing 737 and 757/767 captain at United Airlines. He has completed 20 years in the company.

Capt. Arnold W. Guast ('95, DB) who is a pilot at United Airlines, was featured in the airline’s March 29, 2016, Flight Operations Update for mentoring fellow Eagle Scout, Justin Everett ('96, DB). Guast met Everett when the aspiring pilot was 17. Since then he has mentored him in his flight education and career. In 2015, Guast welcomed Everett to the United Airlines family as a first officer pilot for the Collins Foundation Vietnam Memorial Flight at Elington Field, Texas.

Juan González ('96, DB) is director of administration for the Miami hub of American Airlines. He manages budgeting, financial planning and administration for the hub.

Retired U.S. Navy Cmdr. Michael Nor-tier ('99, WW) is the executive director of operations at Eastern Iowa Airport in Cedar Rapids, Iowa.

Lt. Col. Garrett Hogan ('99, PC, '96, WW) received the NATO Munitions Services Medal from the Supreme Allied Commander Europe for meritorious achievement in the areas of allied electronic warfare, intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance.
Durren Tunelson (’15, ’19, WW), an FAA air traffic controller at the Memphis Center in Tennessee, was recognized by the FAA in February for his role in a pilot assist on Jan. 14, 2016. The pilot of a twin-engine Piper Cheyenne, who was traveling with his wife and two children, experienced engine trouble during ascent. Tunelson used his navigational assistance and airport information to the pilot, who ultimately landed the aircraft safely at a small airport in the Cleveland, Miss., airport.

Derick Stanley (’16, ’11, WW), an adjunct professor at Embry-Riddle’s Worldwide Campus and an engineer at The Boeing Company, received the 2016 Black Engineer of the Year Modern Day Technology Award on Feb. 19, 2016.

Capt. Joseph Stenger (’04, WW) is the co-founder of Blatnik III, spun out from the University of Provence, Afghanistan, through Flying Scarrs, a nonprofit organization that he co-founded.

Molly Mae Patter (’87, DB) is campaigning for Mrs. America – America after a tour of duty in Afghanistan with the U.S. Air Force. Mrs. Veteran America is not a beauty pageant; it is based on military service, public speaking, and raising awareness. Potter has been involved in providing necessary resources and highlights women who display strength and courage. Potter has become involved in their military service, an organization focused on assisting homeless female veterans, through the Mrs. Veteran America campaign.

Natalie (Moorer) Thompson (’08, DB), who is an automation engineer for Gulfstream Aerospace Corp., received the 2016 Young Technical Professional National Project National Merit Award. She was also a diversity and inclusion ambassador for Gulftron. Thompson is a senior engineer and co-founder of the Savannah Coastal Empire Professional Chapter of NSBE and a member of Society of Women Engineers, where she is the nominating chair and on the outreach committee.

Jason LaShellle (’15, WW), a management consultant for Boeing’s Full Scale Facility. LaShellle formerly served on the U.S. Coast Guard, where he was in charge of aviation safety integration and quality assurance.

Christopher Salley (’15, WW) is the head of sales and marketing for National Jets Inc., a fixed base operator at Fort Lauderdale Executive Airport. He recently earned his FAA Airline Transportation System Manager Certificate.

Aaron Glassman (’16, WW), and Nicole Du Flo were married Feb. 27, 2016, at the Chrysler Museum of Art in Norfolk, Va. Glassman is an assistant professor in the College of Business and chair of the department of management and technology at the Embry-Riddle Worldwide Campus in Norfolk, Va. Du Flo is his assistant campus director at the Norfolk Campus.
In Memoriam

1940s
Edward A. Curry Jr. (41, BFTS, Non-degree) April 30, 2015

1950s

1960s
Henry “Ray” Raymond Bazo (‘53, MCI) March 6, 2015

1970s
Sid Shelby Baurling Jr. (‘71, DB) Jan. 21, 2016


Erik J. Wood (‘75, DB) Jan. 1, 2016

1980s

Robert “Bob” A. Matthes (‘83, PC) April 1, 2015


1990s
James L. Howell (‘91, WW) June 21, 2015


Ashley Marie Guindon (’10, DB)

The first day on the job as a new police officer with the Prince William County (Va.) Police Department, Ashley Guindon (‘10, DB) was killed in the line of duty while responding to a deadly domestic incident. She was 28.

“It was part of her makeup,” says Chris Bonner, associate professor of homeland security at Embry-Riddle’s Daytona Beach Campus, referring to Guindon’s desire to protect and serve others. Bonner, a retired FBI agent, says Guindon expressed an interest in law enforcement, following a lecture in which he shared some of his career experiences. A member of the U.S. Marine Corps Reserve from 2007 to 2015, Guindon was already serving her country at the time.

She completed a B.S. in Aeronautics with minors in psychology, homeland security and aviation safety. Interning at the Prince William County Police Department with the Special Victims Unit, Guindon graduated from the Police Academy in June 2015. After a leave of absence, she was sworn in Feb. 26, 2016.

More than 100 members of the Embry-Riddle community gathered to honor Guindon at a memorial service March 22, 2016, at Embry-Riddle’s Daytona Beach Center for Faith and Spiritual Life.

A scholarship in her name was established at the university for students seeking a degree in homeland security or global conflict studies, with the intent to pursue a career in public service.

“Ashley was a remarkable young woman. As a police officer and U.S. Marine, she embodied the positive attributes of duty, honor, country and service above self. She was driven to excel,” Bonner says. “It is tragic that she was killed in the line of duty on her first day on the job as a police officer; however, it is more important to note that she died while protecting her community. She will always serve as an example to those who yearn to be at the best that Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University has to offer.”

To contribute to the Ashley Guindon Memorial Scholarship, visit giving.erau.edu/guindon

Communications and Thakos, visited the Prescott Campus in March as part of the annual ACSS Scholarship Award luncheon.

Lt. Scott “Snookey” Brazenhton (’17, DB) visited Embry-Riddle’s Daytona Beach Campus on April 22, 2016. Arriving in an EA-18G Growler, he met with students, showed them the jet and toured the campus.

Retired Lt. Gen. Michael R. Moueller (‘74, WW) was the command speaker for the May 7, 2016, Worldwide Campus commencement ceremony. He is deputy chief of staff for Strategic Plans and Programs at U.S. Air Force Headquarters in Washington, D.C. Moueller leads the development and integration of the Air Force’s long-range plans and the five-year, $804 billion U.S. Air Force Future Years Defense Program.

Major Gen. Stacey D. Harris (‘87, WW) was a featured speaker at the nationwide ceremony honoring graduating students on March 23-27, 2016. For more about Harris: ill.erau.edu/wahblazer.

Ashley Guindon Memorial Scholarship, visit giving.erau.edu/guindon

Other


Edgar D. Mitchell (Mundoc ’96) Feb. 4, 2016

Jonathan Harrington (DB student) Feb. 9, 2016

Sami Altmuhlen (DB student) Feb. 6, 2016

Elisabeth “Betsy” Nelson (Embry-Riddle Professor Emeritus) March 25, 2016

Other

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Carolina Anderson (’13, DB) is the first woman to graduate with a Ph.D. in Aviation.

Beverley Drake (’77, DB, Flight Training; ’02, ’05, WW) is the first Embry-Riddle alumna to be featured on a postage stamp.

Retired Brig. Gen. Dan Woodward (’80, DB) and retired Maj. Gen Margaret Woodward (’97, WW) are the first married active duty Air Force General Officers.

Arlando Teller (’95, PC) is the first in his family to attend and graduate from college.

givingto.erau.edu/first