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# Air Traffic Control CTI Program

Cathy Schattenberg

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**FORUM*****AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL CTI PROGRAM***

Cathy Schattenberg

In order to broaden the employment opportunities in the aviation industry for graduates and to develop a more educated work force in the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), the Collegiate Training Initiative (CTI) program was implemented in October 1997. This program was tested for over five years in post-secondary educational institutes. The CTI program focuses on the graduate having a broad-based knowledge of the air traffic management system, FAA, aviation industry, and principal topics covered in many existing aviation degree programs (FAA, 1997). Graduates of the program are required to attend the FAA Academy to successfully complete the skills and equipment training.

**CTI Student Qualification**

It is necessary to meet certain fundamental requirements in order to qualify for hiring by the FAA as an air traffic controller. A waiver to these standards is not possible; therefore, a student must be realistic about their abilities when entering the CTI program.

The qualification requirements are (CTI Student Handbook Supplement, 1999):

1. Must be an U.S. citizen.
2. Must not exceed age 30 upon date of hiring by the FAA. Because of this requirement, students are encouraged to enter the CTI program early enough to finish all degree requirements and still have enough time for the FAA to hire them prior to their thirtieth birthday. Add at least six months to the graduation date for hiring.
3. Must successfully complete the FAA AT-SAT pre-qualification exam. This exam tests the cognitive skills of the student (see below).
4. Must complete an A.S. or B.S. Degree at a FAA approved CTI institution.
5. Must be recommended by the educational institution based on the assessment of the student's academic record and comprehensive exam while in the CTI program.
6. Must speak clear and fluent English.
7. Must pass a security and suitability background

investigation by the FAA. This investigation will look at the student's traffic violations including driving while intoxicated (DWI) and driving while under the influence of alcohol (DUI). Other areas that may be investigated are: crimes, military discharge under other than honorable conditions, conditions of termination from previous employment, and credit history.

8. Must pass a medical exam that is the equivalent to a FAA Class II pilot medical exam. Areas that are closely examined are cardiovascular, hearing, and vision, including color vision. If the student has poor eyesight, it must be corrected to 20/20 prior to being hired by the FAA. It is recommended that students receive a FAA Class II medical early in the program to insure that they can meet the basic medical requirements for a controller.

9. Must complete an interview with a FAA representative. A psychological examination is also given at this time.

10. Must pass a pre-employment drug test. As a FAA employee, you are subject to periodic drug testing.

**The FAA AT-SAT**

The FAA "Air Traffic Selection and Training" exam is a six and one half hour computer-based exam designed to identify the cognitive skills needed by air traffic controllers (CTI Student Handbook Supplement, 1999). It is recommended that this exam be taken early in the CTI program. Since passing this exam is required for becoming an air traffic controller, taking the test early may determine whether you wish to

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continue in the program.

**The Hiring Process**

Once the student has successfully completed the FAA AT-SAT exam and received a degree from a FAA approved CTI institution, the graduate may then be recommend for employment with the FAA. The graduate will have an opportunity to choose a region within the U.S. that he/she wishes to work in. Factors that the FAA consider when hiring are: college grade point average (GPA), completion of all the above requirements, and CTI qualifications. The graduate may then be assigned to an Enroute Facility or Terminal Facility. The FAA, not the graduate, chooses the facility.

**The FAA Academy**

Once the facility is chosen, the graduate receives a class date for the FAA Academy located at the Will Rogers Airport in Oklahoma City. Those graduates given the Enroute Option can expect to spend 12 weeks training at the Academy. Those with the Terminal Option will spend 15 weeks training. After successful completion of the training, the graduate is transferred to their individual assignment.

The initial annual salary will be approximately \$30,000, including the paid training at the Academy (CTI Student Handbook Supplement, 1999). After completion of the training and with experience, the graduate can expect salary advances. The graduates receive approximately \$63/day in addition to their basic salary for living expenses, while at the Academy. At the end of training, the graduate is required to pass a performance evaluation. This evaluation is challenging, but the Academy trains the graduates to succeed at this exercise.

**The Aeronautical/Aviation Science Degree**

The FAA prefers that their air traffic controllers have a broad-bases knowledge of aviation. The CTI Program incorporates many areas of aviation. Numerous schools are approved to offer the CTI program (see Fig.1). In order to

assure a broad aviation knowledge, schools may require students to take some or all of the following in addition to the air traffic control courses: communications, aerodynamics, navigation, FAA regulations, in-flight emergencies, and weather (FAA, 1997).

University	Location
Beaver County Community	Pennsylvania
College of Aeronautics	New York
Daniel Webster College	New Hampshire
Dowling University	New York
Embry-Riddle Aeronautical	Florida
Hampton University	Virginia
Inter American University	Puerto Rico
Miami-Dade Community	Florida
Middle Tennessee State	Tennessee
Mt San Antonio College	California
Purdue University	Indiana
University of Alaska	Alaska
University of North Dakota	North Dakota

Table 1: Universities offering CTI Program (CTI Student Handbook Supplement, 1999)

For further information, contact Dr. Marv Smith or Keith Parkman at Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University, (904) 226-6000. You may also visit the Embry-Riddle ATC home page at [www.db.erau.edu/campus/departments/aas/atc/](http://www.db.erau.edu/campus/departments/aas/atc/). □

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**Cathy Schattenberg** holds a Bachelor of Science in Aeronautical Science from Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University with minors in Air Traffic Control and Safety.

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