



## ***Oklahoma Aeronautics Commission***

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## **NEWS RELEASE**

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### **Commission Approves Funding for Aviation Education Programs**

**OKLAHOMA CITY** – Many more young people across the state will learn about aviation in the coming year thanks to several aviation education grants and contracts awarded recently by the Oklahoma Aeronautics Commission.

Eight programs across the state will benefit from the grants and contracts, which total nearly \$136,000. Those programs are designed to expose kids to the wonders of flight and get them interested in science, technology, engineering and math education, often referred to as STEM.

“The aviation and aerospace industry is extremely critical to Oklahoma’s economy,” said Victor Bird, director of the Aeronautics Commission, who noted that about 144,000 Oklahomans are employed in the industry, which generates an economic impact of about \$12.5 billion annually, or about 10 percent of the state’s total output.

“Our state is world renowned for its aviation and aerospace industry, and the reason why it has been so successful is because of the quality of our workforce. Therefore, it is extremely important that we steer our young people toward STEM careers so that the industry will remain viable and competitive,” Bird said.

Bird added that with the aging population of pilots across the U.S., including right here in Oklahoma, the aviation education grants will also encourage more young people to become pilots.

The largest aviation education award went to the **University of Oklahoma’s Sooner Flight Academy in Norman**. The 53,000 grant will help provide scholarships and internships to students who enroll in the academy during the summer of 2012. Officials said more than 1,000 students in grades 1-12 will participate in the upcoming academy.

Commissioners approved an aviation education contract worth \$30,000 with **STARBASE Oklahoma for its STEM Enrichment Through Aerospace Education program**. The majority of the contract will provide remote control planes, helicopters and rockets as well as other supplies and materials for cadets in training. During the program, which serves approximately 4,650 students in grades 4-8, students are introduced to engineering through aerospace design projects, STARBASE Oklahoma officials said.

**Ponca City Regional Airport** was awarded a \$15,500 contract from the Aeronautics Commission to assist with their **Northern Oklahoma Flight Academy**. The contract will provide scholarships for approximately 60 students and help in the purchase of supplies and curriculum materials. The flight academy will serve students in grades 4-12.

Commissioners also approved a \$13,383 grant for **Southeastern Oklahoma State University's "Take Flight – Aviation Science Camp"** that will be held in June 2012 in Durant. The grant will help cover flight costs, materials and meals for the approximately 25 students in grades 5-7 who are expected to attend the camp.

An aviation education grant for \$11,100 went to **Metro Technology Center's Aviation Campus and the FAA Mike Monroney Aeronautical Center for their Aviation Career Education (ACE) Camp**. The grant will provide materials and supplies, and help with orientation flights. The ACE Camp serves students in grades 7-9, especially those who attend at-risk schools.

Another contract was awarded to **FIRST Robotics** in the amount of \$5,000 for the **Oklahoma Regional FIRST Robotics Competition** that is set for March 29-31, 2012, at the Cox Convention Center. FIRST, which is an acronym for For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology, encourages high school students to consider careers in science, technology, engineering and math by way of robotics competitions. The \$5,000 contract will be used for general expenses as part of the robotics competition.

Commissioners also approved a \$4,754 grant for **Rose State College's Aerospace Flight Camp** scheduled during June 2012 in Midwest City. The grant will help provide rocketry and astronomy supplies and materials as well as transportation to local museums. The Aerospace Flight Camp is designed for students in grades 6-8.

In addition to the grants and contracts noted above, the Aeronautics Commission also approved an aviation education grant for \$3,500 for **Langston University's National Summer Transportation Institute Program for High School Students**, which will be held in June 2012. The grant will help fund activities during the first week of the program that focuses on the air mode transportation. Program officials said students will learn the principles of flight as well as how to launch rockets. Students will also visit local areas of interest such as the Mike Monroney Aeronautical Center, Will Rogers World Airport and Tinker Air Force Base. Approximately 25 students in grades 9-11 are expected to participate in the program.

Since 2000, the Oklahoma Aeronautics Commission has awarded nearly \$1.3 million in aviation education grants and contracts to various camps, flight academies and other worthwhile education activities across the state. In fiscal year 2010 alone, the Commission provided more than \$170,000 in aviation education funding.

Oklahoma's aviation and aerospace industry is one of the state's largest employers with an annual payroll of \$5 billion. One in 11 Oklahomans derive their income from the aviation and aerospace industry with average salaries of \$55,000 compared to \$30,000 for the average Oklahoman.

Oklahoma is one of seven centers in the world for the modification, maintenance, repair and overhaul of aircraft, boasting the world's largest military aircraft repair facility, Tinker Air Force Base, and the world's largest commercial aircraft repair facility, the American Airlines Engineering Maintenance and Engineering Center in Tulsa.

In addition, Oklahoma has 113 publicly owned airports, placing it fourth nationally for the number of public airports per capita. A total of 42 of those airports are jet capable, meaning their runways are at least 5,000 feet long, the minimum distance needed by most jet aircraft to safely land or take off. Approximately 93 percent of the state's population lives within 25 miles of an airport with a jet-capable runway.

*The mission of the Oklahoma Aeronautics Commission is to promote aviation, which includes fostering the growth of the state's aerospace industry and ensuring that the needs of commerce and communities across the state are met by the state's 113 public airports that comprise the Oklahoma Airport System.*