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## Commission OKs Aviation Education Funding Tulsa-area Programs

**OKLAHOMA CITY** – The Oklahoma Aeronautics Commission has approved \$52,755 in aerospace and aviation education funding that will be distributed among four deserving programs in Tulsa.

The funding is part of more than \$200,000 the agency is providing over the next 12 months to programs statewide aimed at exposing more Oklahoma young people to STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) and careers in the aviation and aerospace industry.

“There is nothing more important that we do here at the Aeronautics Commission than to encourage young people to consider aviation as a career when they finish their post-secondary education,” Director of Aeronautics Vic Bird said. “It’s no secret that our state’s aerospace industry – one of our state’s top economic engines – needs more skilled workers, especially as our workforce approaches retirement age. These worthwhile programs receiving state funding are doing their part to help make sure that that happens. So we are more than happy to join them in that endeavor.”

The Aeronautics Commission’s aerospace and aviation education funding supports Gov. Mary Fallin’s Oklahoma Works initiative that aims to address the skills gap in the state’s workforce by increasing the number of students in the state with workforce credentials or associate degrees. Oklahoma Works brings all of the state’s workforce resources together, connecting employers, employees and job-seekers to information and programs that help build Oklahoma’s workforce.

“Providing more highly trained, highly skilled workers to Oklahoma business and industry is essential to boosting state prosperity and creating more jobs,” Gov. Fallin said. “I am excited to see the Aeronautics Commission’s support of Oklahoma Works and our efforts to get Oklahomans the skills and educational opportunities they need to find great careers.”

**STARBASE Oklahoma** will receive \$28,500 in funding from the Commission that will be applied to the organization’s STEM Above the Earth program, which serves 5,000 fifth through eighth grade students.

STARBASE Oklahoma is a Department of Defense program sponsored by the Oklahoma National Guard and is typically held on military installations across the state or, in some cases, at school sites. It is designed to improve interest as well as the knowledge and skills of students in the areas of science and technology, said Director Pam Kirk.

“We find that students who may not excel in a traditional classroom setting will often times excel in our programs due to all of the hands-on activities built into the programs,” Kirk said.

Kirk said the education funds from the Aeronautics Commission will go toward the printing of activity logs for all fifth-grade students in the program and other items, including radio-controlled planes and rockets.

STARBASE Oklahoma has been one of the Commission’s biggest and longest-running recipients for education funding, garnering almost \$450,000 in grants and contracts since fiscal year 2001.

The Commission also approved \$18,000 in aerospace and education funding for the **Tulsa Air and Space Museum** (TASM) for its Flight Simulator Lab Training program. The funds will provide 15 computers, flight simulators and keyboards so that students in grades K-12 can have an interactive experience that will allow them to “fly” their own aircraft.

TASM Board Chairman Lee Hubby said the museum’s computer lab has taken a beating over the years because of its popularity among museum visitors and students. Most of the computers and controllers are more than eight years old, he said.

“Hands on’ seems to be the magic words these days among kids because of video games and other electronic devices,” Hubby said. “It’s very difficult to get some of these kids to sit still to watch a video. If they can actively participate, it gives them opportunities to learn and experience team work, analyze problems and hopefully be inspired about being in the aerospace industry.”

**Tulsa Community College** will receive a \$4,500 grant for its Aviation Career Academy, Soaring to Success program, which serves students in ninth through 12<sup>th</sup> grades. The program will be held at R.L. Jones Riverside Airport and at TCC’s northeast campus.

Matt Wise, aviation program director, said the majority of funding will be used for such items as student flights, remotely controlled aircraft, transportation and a model airplane project.

“Our camps at Tulsa Community College are very hands on, and we expose kids to various career fields in aviation,” Wise said.

The Commission will also provide a \$1,755 grant to **Tulsa Airports Improvement Trust** (TAIT) for its Educational Tour program at Tulsa International Airport. The contract will provide transportation for 10 groups of students to participate in the airport tour program.

TAIT officials said approximately 250 students will be able to take the airport tour who might not otherwise been able to due to schools cutting field trips from their budgets.

“The goal of our tours is twofold,” said Michelle Evans, TAIT marketing coordinator. “One is to take the children through the travel process itself and also expose them to aerospace careers. Unfortunately, many schools are unable to send as many students as they would like because of budget constraints. So the grant funds will definitely help reach more students.”

Aerospace and aviation education is one of the Aeronautics Commission’s top priorities. Since FY2001, it has provided \$2.3 million in aerospace and education funding to organizations and

programs throughout the state. Just within the last 5 years alone, the Commission has awarded nearly \$1 million in education grants and contracts.

*The mission of the Oklahoma Aeronautics Commission is to promote aviation, which includes ensuring that the needs of commerce and communities across the state are met by the state's 110 publicly owned airports that comprise the Oklahoma Airport System, and helping ensure the growth and viability of the state's aerospace industry.*

**Oklahoma Aeronautics Commission**

**Media Contact: Harve Allen, Public Information Officer**

**P.O. Box 53305, Oklahoma City OK 73152**

**Phone: 1-405-604-6916; E-mail: [hallen@oac.ok.gov](mailto:hallen@oac.ok.gov) <sup>[1]</sup>:**

**Web address: [www.aeronautics.ok.gov](http://www.aeronautics.ok.gov) <sup>[2]</sup>**

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Posted September 2015

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**Source URL:** <http://dodstarbase.org/articles/commission-oks-aviation-education-funding-tulsa-area-programs>

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