

Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University Agrees to Partner with Atlantic County

Will help develop an Operational Plan for Proposed Aviation Maintenance and Technical Academy

Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University (ERAU) has agreed to serve as an academic partner in the development of an operational plan for an Atlantic County Aviation Maintenance and Technical Academy. Atlantic County government, working in cooperation with the Atlantic County Economic Alliance, (ACEA) was awarded a \$120,000 Innovation Challenge grant from the New Jersey Economic Development Authority (NJEDA) to develop a plan for the academy.

The plan will include recommendations for the location of the academy, design concepts, an educational curriculum, a strategy for operations and sustainability and other elements needed to create a state-of-the-art facility. In this capacity, ERAU will work closely with Atlantic Cape Community College (ACCC). ACCC operates an aviation program and is also a partner in the grant.

According to Lauren Moore, Executive Director of the ACEA, "A key goal of the proposed Atlantic County academy is to help broaden and diversify the regional economy to facilitate development of an aviation economic hub centered around the FAA Tech Center, the Atlantic City Airport and the National Aviation Research and Technology Park."

The ACEA is working closely with the SJTA to assist with their efforts to develop air cargo and aircraft maintenance and repair operations at the airport. The success of these operations will be dependent on the availability of a skilled workforce. The Aviation Maintenance and Technical Academy is intended to help meet that need.

Atlantic County Executive Dennis Levinson stated that he is very pleased Embry-Riddle agreed to partner with Atlantic County for this purpose.

"Embry-Riddle is considered to be the finest aeronautical university in the world. We are pleased that they recognize the opportunities our area offers in aviation and we hope this project leads to additional areas of collaboration at the National Aviation Research and Technology Park such as Smart Airport initiatives and STEM education," he said.

According to Levinson, an Aviation Maintenance and Technical Academy would also offer additional workforce development opportunities.

"The skill sets that are learned at the academy would be transferable to the repair and maintenance of wind energy turbines. This would be critical to meeting the state's plans to develop offshore wind energy which will also need skilled workers."

The results of the county study could be used to secure additional grant funding to cover the capital costs of constructing the academy. The proximity of the Joint Base (McGuire, Ft. Dix, Lakehurst) offers an additional market the academy could draw from.

There is currently a growing shortage of aviation maintenance workers in the United States with the bulk of the current workforce approaching retirement age. Boeing estimates nearly 120,000 new technicians will be needed in North America over the next two decades. In a 2017 report, it predicted an ongoing strong demand for aviation industry jobs with no signs of it slowing down.

The development of air cargo and maintenance and repair operations in Atlantic County was a key recommendation in the *Atlantic County Economic Development Strategy* prepared by AngelouEconomics in 2015. The ACEA was vested with the responsibility of implementing the strategy.