Embry-Riddle Gaetz Aerospace Institute Meets with
Atlantic County School Superintendents to Discuss Aviation STEM Initiative

Representatives of Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University's Gaetz Aerospace Institute recently met with Atlantic County School superintendents and educators to outline a proposal to establish Aviation STEM programs in area high schools. The meeting was arranged by the Atlantic County Economic Alliance (ACEA) and Atlantic County government as part of their workforce development efforts. Their goal is to help ensure that high school curricula are in sync with the Atlantic County Economic Development Strategy.

The strategy, prepared by AngelouEconomics of Austin TX, identified aviation as the sector of the county's economy that offered the most immediate opportunity for growth and development. The ACEA, charged with implementing the strategy, has worked with state and local partners such as the FAA Tech Center, the South Jersey Transportation Authority, and the National Aviation Research and Technology Park to establish an aviation innovation hub in Atlantic County.

County Executive Dennis Levinson, a former teacher, stated that he recognizes the growing importance of a good STEM education and the need to improve the skills of the local workforce. "The proposal by the Embry-Riddle team is interesting and has the potential to capture the attention and imagination of our students and channel them into productive careers in the aviation industry where the demand for skilled employees is growing rapidly," Levinson said. "This could be a significant opportunity for Atlantic County schools to develop new and exciting STEM initiatives for our students. This is all part of our collective efforts to move Atlantic County forward in bold, new economic directions."

Colleen Conklin, Gaetz Aerospace Institute Director, said the initiative's goal is to provide high school students with a clear pathway for an accelerated college degree and career in the aerospace industry.

"Successful participants obtain college experience, earn up to 12 college credits and multiple industry certifications before graduating high school," said Conklin, "in addition to gaining a greater sense of possibility."

"Attracting business to our aviation innovation hub requires a skilled workforce. Simply put: Companies follow workers. The proposal by Embry-Riddle can help us begin to prepare students for jobs in emerging industries within our own communities," stated Lauren Moore, ACEA Executive Director.

ACEA Board Chairwoman Brett Matik also noted the significance of Embry Riddle's involvement in Atlantic County. Recently, ERAU agreed to collaborate with Atlantic County as part of a New Jersey Economic Development Authority grant to outline an operational plan for an aviation maintenance academy. "Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University is world renown and we are pleased that it has chosen to partner with Atlantic County to provide us the benefit of its expertise and experience," she said.

Embry-Riddle started the STEM initiative in Florida nearly 12 years ago that now includes 125 high schools in 37 counties. High school classes include private pilot ground school, unmanned aircraft systems, aviation algebra and physics, manned and unmanned technologies, UAS applications in aerial photography, principles of management and more.

The meeting with county superintendents was held in the state-of-the-art Thunder Room of the newly completed 56,000 square-foot building in the National Aviation Research and Technical Park in Egg Harbor Township. This is the first of seven buildings in the park located on 58-acres adjacent to the FAA William J. Hughes Technical Center and the Atlantic City International Airport.

"The initial meeting with Embry-Riddle generated a lot of excitement and interest. Our thanks to the ACEA and NARTP

for bringing us all together," said Robert Bumpus, Executive Atlantic County Superintendent of Schools. "We plan to hold our next meeting of county superintendents in early January to begin fleshing out the details."