



Purdue Raises Funds For New Aviation Building

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Purdue University is today marking the raising of \$6.6 million for a major addition to the Niswonger Aviation Technology Building. The building will be used for future pilots, airline managers, aeronautical technologists and others pursuing careers in the aviation industry.

Source: Inside Indiana Business

WEST LAFAYETTE, Ind. - Purdue University on Wednesday (Oct. 24) will celebrate the success of fundraising on a \$6.6 million project to construct a 18,200-square-foot building addition that will provide a larger, modern learning facility for future pilots, airline managers, aeronautical technologists and others pursuing careers in the aviation industry.

The celebration for the addition to the Niswonger Aviation Technology Building will take place at 11 a.m. at the building's future site, which is next to the existing aviation technology building at the Purdue University Airport.

"Purdue has a long and historic relationship with aviation," said Purdue President France A. Cordova. "For example, alumnus J. Clifford Turpin helped the Wright brothers improve their engines, and famed aviator Amelia Earhart was part of our staff. The university's program is one of the largest and most highly respected in the nation.

"These generous gifts from Scott Niswonger and many other donors will help create a facility so that a new generation of students, faculty and staff can continue to make aviation history."

College of Technology Dean Dennis R. Depew said having the new addition, as well as completing some planned upgrades to the current aviation technology building, will help prepare students for careers in a rapidly changing and growing aviation industry.

"The employment forecast in the aviation industry over the next decade is expected to grow substantially as demand rises," Depew said. "The Department of Aviation Technology is at the forefront of the aviation industry, and the new building and upgrade of the current facility will ensure that our students have the space they need to learn and collaborate with fellow students, faculty and industry leaders in the most effective way possible."

The building is named after transportation and logistics executive Scott Niswonger, who lives in Greeneville, Tenn. Niswonger graduated from Purdue's aviation technology program in 1968. In 2004 he made a \$3 million gift for construction of the new building and partial renovation of the former Aviation Technology Building. He also issued a challenge to raise the rest of the project's \$6 million. To date, Niswonger has contributed \$4.6 million toward the building.

Niswonger is the principal owner of Landair Corp. and chairman emeritus of Forward Air, which he founded in 1981. Landair provides high service level truckload operations to the air cargo industry and other businesses.

The new facility is expected to be completed in the fall of 2009 and will fill the space created by current L-shaped main building to form a square structure. The new addition will be constructed between the two segments of the building, connecting them and providing an entryway to the new building as well as to the existing facility.

In summer 2007, the former Aviation Technology Building was renamed the Niswonger Aviation Technology Building.

Thomas Carney, head of the Department of Aviation Technology, said the new structure will help to centralize operations, bringing various parts of the department in closer proximity.

Faculty, staff and students are now located in five buildings at the Purdue Airport: the former Aviation Technology Building, Terminal Building, Holleman-Niswonger Simulator Center, and Hangars 5 and 6. The five buildings combined contain 144,973 square feet. The new building will provide a 12 percent increase in square footage dedicated to aviation technology.

The Niswonger building will feature a glass atrium that will contain two 85-seat lecture halls for classrooms, incorporating tiered seats and the latest in audiovisual equipment. The building also will include two smaller classrooms, a new computer laboratory and a collaborative suite, which will give students and faculty dedicated space to meet with industry and government officials when they visit campus for project collaboration.

"The aviation industry expects us to provide students with opportunities to work in teams, but we currently do not have appropriate space for this," Carney said. "The new facility will markedly enhance our faculty's discovery and engagement initiatives."

Carney said there also will be rooms available for students to meet for projects, as well as expanded space in the corridors to accommodate class changes. In addition, the new building will house administrative offices and student services personnel.

"It's no accident that our student services complex will be located on the first door to the left," Carney said. "We are sending the important message that our students come first."

The Niswonger building also will incorporate soundproofing to eliminate much of the noise from airplane engines that faculty, staff and students must now endure since they are located so close to active air operations.

Planned upgrades on the current building will include restroom renovation, relocation of some utilities and general upgrades to meet modern building codes.

The department has a number of specialized learning laboratories, including the Aeronautical Technology Airframe Laboratory, an advanced composites laboratory, both electrical and electronics laboratories, an advanced materials laboratory, and the Holleman-Niswonger Simulator Center, which is named after Niswonger and Charles Holleman, a professor emeritus of aviation technology. The department also operates a fleet of 28 piston and turbine aircraft used for professional pilot training.

The first segment of the Aviation Technology Building was constructed in 1934. In 1941 two major additions were made to add test cells, wind tunnels and research tools.

The Aviation Technology Building originally housed part of the airport operations and administration, including the terminal and a hangar in which Amelia Earhart's last airplane - a Lockheed Electra 10E - was outfitted for her ill-fated flight around the world in 1937. Earhart's airplane was paid for in part by gift funds secured through the Purdue Research Foundation.

The first aviation course was offered at Purdue in 1911. In 1955 the Department of Aviation Technology was created. A two-year flight education program began in 1956, and in 1964 the general aviation flight technology program was started with aircraft used in the ROTC program. Today, there are about 620 students enrolled in the aviation technology program at West Lafayette.

The celebration of the completion of fundraising for the Niswonger Aviation Technology Building is part of a two-week celebration surrounding Purdue's Homecoming on Oct. 27. The events focus on ways Purdue is improving education and the quality of life in Indiana.

Source: Purdue University