

**Testimony of Matthew “Monty” Montgomery
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**Submitted to the Transportation & Infrastructure
Subcommittee on Aviation**

Hearing on

**“Eliminating Bottlenecks: Examining Opportunities to Recruit,
Retain, and Engage Aviation Talent”**

July 10, 2024

Chairman Graves, Ranking Member Cohen, and Members of this Committee—thank you for inviting me to participate in today’s hearing, and thank you for your attention to aviation. My name is Matthew Montgomery, but please call me Monty. I am the Department of Professional Aviation Head for Louisiana Tech University. I am also a former military maintainer with over 20 years of active-duty experience as a nuclear weapons technician and over 11 years as a government civil servant working for the Air Force Global Strike Command (AFGSC). Since I was a child, way back in the 1970s, I always loved aviation and am proud to be called an airman.

I would like to bring to your attention the aviation academic training bottlenecks that we are currently facing at Louisiana Tech University. As you may know, our university has a rich history in professional aviation, and we take pride in the quality of our programs.

However, we are currently experiencing several challenges that are impacting our aviation academic training. These challenges include availability of flight training to meet student demand, scheduling effectiveness, availability of qualified professors and instructors, funding, aircraft purchasing backlog, and factors such as designated pilot examiners availability and lack of forecasted hiring trends.

In response to these challenges, Louisiana Tech University is taking proactive measures to address the issues at hand. We are focusing on supporting our current students in flight and aviation management and additionally, we are looking for growth opportunities in providing training to mechanics, air traffic controllers, and in Unmanned Aerial Systems (UASs).

Despite our efforts, there are areas where we need additional support. Specifically, we require assistance in terms of funding, aircraft purchasing, professor pay gap, and better forecasting of industry, military, and corporate hiring trends. These areas are critical to our ability to overcome the current bottlenecks, to ensure we provide required number of airmen when needed and ensure the quality and effectiveness of our aviation training programs to support growth and adaptability.

Louisiana Tech University is accredited by the Aviation Accreditation Board, International (AABI). It is our opinion that all aviation schools should be accredited by an independent accrediting body such as AABI to ensure quality of training and standards. Historically, we have seen dramatic training differences on when we pickup students with their Private Pilot Certificate from other flights schools. Most of the time requiring extensive retraining to get to acceptable flight standards.

Moving onto our Partnerships, we have several partnerships with large airlines including United Aviate and Southwest Destination 225, and regional airlines including Republic Airlines, SkyWest Airlines, and Mesa Airlines. Our campus also supports AFROTC providing Private Pilot training to future officers. While these partnerships provide effective pipelines for our airmen into aviation, we will be looking for additional help from industry partners in our hard to fill vacancies, equipment, and help getting students scholarships and flight funding.

The superior work you have done to pass the FAA Reauthorization Act of 2024 will present opportunities for us to apply for grants and obtain funding needed to bridge these gaps.

However, students still need assistance as our primary dropout indicator for students in aviation is funding. The cost of flight is just too great of a burden for most Americans which is the primary root cause for Louisiana Tech's Private Pilot dropout rate that is historically at 68.2%.

In closing, Aviation training pipelines need assistance to properly meet U.S. demands. We need to forecast better; we need additional funding assistance to procure aircraft and equipment, we need additional assistance filling in the pay gaps, and students need assistance in funding their dreams of flight. Correcting these problems will remove bottlenecks in the production of airmen and better set up the U.S. training pipeline to fill projected needs. For your reference and review, I have also submitted to the hearing record my report titled "Aviation Academic Training Bottlenecks: A Perspective from a Part 141 Flight Training School".

Lastly, I would like to thank each and every one of you who worked on the FAA Reauthorization Bill and passing this important legislation. On behalf of all the airmen you have helped and will be helping, your tireless efforts are greatly appreciated. We needed help and you valiantly heard our call, so thank you!

I am happy to answer any questions you may have.