Diversity Takes Flight

Diversity is a core principle that we all hold near and dear to our hearts at Lewis. Our commitment to this value allows us to provide our students with a warm, welcoming and respectful environment filled with opportunities for personal and professional growth.

For several decades, Lewis University has led the field of Aviation Education – preparing students from around the world to succeed in the aviation industries. The Aviation and Transportation Department has worked hard to create unique, diverse programs that challenge their students and give them prime opportunities to ensure they land a successful job after graduation. Now, a main focus is reaching out into the community and finding students of diverse backgrounds to join these programs.

The aviation industry as a whole in the United States lacks an increase in employment diversity. Studies were done by the U.S. Bureau of Labor that resulted in two major findings: (1) The annual averages show that the total employment is made up of 36% women, 12% African American, 5% Asian and 11% Hispanic or Latino for air transportation and (2) 25% women, 8% African American, 9% Asian and 14% Hispanic or Latino for air mechanics.

"We want to attract and encourage a diverse group of students to be a part of all these great programs we have in our department," said the Chair of the Lewis University Aviation Department Eric Jones.

In the past, the department has partnered with outside organizations such as Women in Aviation (WIA) to ensure that they reach out to potential students of all age, gender, race and ethnicity. Organization of Black Aerospace Professionals (OBAP) is one of the organizations with which Lewis recently applied for membership, in order to encourage African American individuals to consider studying aviation at Lewis.

"This is part of who we are; it is our social responsibility and truly reflects the Lasallian mission," added Jones. "That is why scholarships are so very important."

This department reaches new heights every day, but in order to really soar, it needs your help! If you’d like to make a gift to support the Aviation and Transportation Department, visit alumni.lewisu.edu/LUAAO.
CODY MARKS ’15

Q: Tell me a little bit about yourself.
A: My name is Cody Marks and I am 22 years old from Orland Park, Illinois. I recently graduated in spring 2015 with a bachelor’s degree in Aviation Maintenance Management including a minor in Flight. I earned my Airframe and Power Plant Mechanic’s License (A&P) as well as Private, Instrument and Commercial Pilots Certificates. I was involved with the Lewis Flight Team and competed in a few regional and national competitions.

Q: What lead you to pursue a career in aviation? And what about Lewis University drove you to pursue the aviation program here?
A: I think many people in the industry would agree that the passion for aviation is unexplainable, but obvious. For a lot of people they are born knowing that they want to fly. Me? I didn’t experience aviation until I took my first ride on a jet in high school. From then on, I was hooked. I can remember exactly why I chose to attend Lewis too. I had been playing in a baseball tournament at Lewis and I was a centerfielder for my team. For the first time in my life, I couldn’t focus on the game. Instead, I couldn’t keep my eyes off the airplanes flying over the field. From that day forward I knew this place was a special place – not to mention the University’s deep roots of aviation. For me, the smaller community and class sizes was a great fit and made Lewis an easy choice!

Q: How did the aviation program help to prepare you for your career?
A: Each class, flight and shop lab in the aviation program does a great job preparing students for the challenges of the real world. The teachers all bring a lot of great insight of what the industry was like, as most of them have already worked professionally in aviation. Sometimes you can learn more from the stories they tell than you think! The aviation program was challenging, but I think that by working hard throughout it, the certification at the end is more valuable. At the end of the day, I knew I (as well as my fellow classmates) would be marketable, and had the skills necessary to make a career in aviation.

ERIC SWANSON ’14

Q: Tell me about yourself.
A: As a transfer student my junior year, I enrolled in the Air Traffic Control program at Lewis University. Compressing a four-year aviation degree into two years certainly kept me busy; however, I was able to find enough time to earn my Private Pilot certificate and be involved in many campus activities and organizations including the business oriented fraternity Alpha Eta Rho and the R.C. Flyers Club. In a day and age where professional contacts are invaluable, my association with Alpha Eta Rho – Lambda Rho provided me with an excellent foundation of industry contacts and a great group of friends with whom I still fly. In addition to the business fraternity, I also spent a considerable amount of time with the R.C. Flyers Club, serving as president of the organization for a term.

Q: What lead you to pursue a career in aviation? And what about Lewis University drove you to pursue the aviation program here?
A: I originally planned on entering the aviation industry as an air traffic controller. Due to numerous changes in the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), I began to pursue additional aviation paths such as the commercial operation of unmanned aircraft. I discovered that not only was I qualified to operate these complex systems, but thanks to the instructors at Lewis I could understand the philosophy behind many of the agency’s regulatory decisions. Unmanned aviation – although relatively primitive when compared to modern airliners – is rapidly reaching the same level of complexity and levels of safety faster than ever before. We have truly entered a day of age where many companies offer larger unmanned aircraft systems which are more intelligent and more prevalent in our daily lives. I’m glad that I’m at the forefront of not only the technology, but the regulations as well.

I ultimately decided on attending Lewis University for a few reasons. Since I was primarily interested in becoming an Air Traffic Controller, I knew that completing coursework at an approved Collegiate Training Initiative (AT-CTI) school would allow me the best opportunities. The second reason I choose Lewis was based on the excellent reputation of not only the school, but also the instructors. Many of the instructors I met in the aviation program were friendly, very approachable and incredibly knowledgeable. The combination of these factors, plus the added bonus of being able to walk to the airport, led to my decision to transfer to Lewis in 2012.
Q: *How did the aviation program help to prepare you for your career?*

A: The aviation program at Lewis University helped me understand how aviation is a key mover of the global economy and the incredible effort that is needed to simply fly an aircraft. Most importantly, Lewis highlighted the wide array of jobs that exist for non-pilot roles in the industry. Understandably, when people think of aviation, pilots are usually the first to come to mind. However, for every pilot, there are several mechanics, aviation administrators, regulators, air traffic controllers, meteorologists and more in order to make an airline function. After attending Lewis and meeting those actively working in the industry, the presence of alternative career options proved an invaluable asset. Since Lewis offered a significant amount of alternatives, I feel well-prepared to thrive professionally and maintain my connection with those in the cockpit.

YESENIA MORA-RAMIREZ ’14

Q: *Tell me about yourself.*

A: I am a United States Navy Veteran, a Lewis University graduate, an A&P Mechanic, a wife and a mother of two wonderful boys. I received my degree in Aviation Maintenance Management while I simultaneously began my master’s degree at Lewis. I did nine and a half years of active duty in the Navy where I worked on both P-3 Orion’s and F-18’s. I was fortunate enough to find my passion at a young age and once my time in the Navy was over, I knew I wanted it to follow into my civilian life. As much as I would have loved to have been involved in school activities, my time was consumed by school work and domestic duties.

Q: *Tell me about your success after graduating from Lewis.*

A: After graduating from Lewis, I was immediately hired by Spirit Airlines at O’Hare International Airport. In less than a year, I received the title of Senior Technician by accomplishing all required tasks and qualifications as an employee. The most exciting of which is being Run/Taxi qualified. There is nothing more satisfying than taxiing an Airbus 319/320 in one of the nation’s busiest airports.

Q: *What is your biggest accomplishment?*

A: My biggest accomplishment is making sure that throughout all of my hard work, my children understand that it is all for them. When they sit and talk to me about joining the military or going to college, I know that I have done something right. They have goals and they have plans.

Q: *What advice would you give to the current aviation students?*

A: Hang in there! The program is intense, but you will get through it. Use your resources. The professors are there to help you succeed. Study hard and take it seriously; this is your career after all. At the same time, enjoy it. You will miss the classes, your classmates, and the staff when you are gone. Also, drink coffee, a lot of coffee.

FIND US ON FACEBOOK! Lewis University Aviation Alumni Organization (LU-AAO)

**Make an Impact**

Did you know that you can direct your annual gift to the Aviation department? Your gift can be directed towards the department or one of our many existing annual or endowed scholarships. A full list of the scholarships can be found at: alumni.lewisu.edu/scholarships

**Want to volunteer?**

If you would like to learn more or join a committee, please contact the Office of Alumni Relations at alumni@lewisu.edu or (815) 588-7542. See all current alumni volunteer opportunities at www.alumni.lewisu.edu/volunteer.

**Upcoming LU-AAO Events**

Are you attending EAA AirVenture in Oshkosh this year? Join the Lewis University Aviation Alumni Organization for a reception and watch one of the shows with other Lewis alumni! Join us Thursday, July 28, 2016 from 1:30-3:30 p.m. at Charcoal Pit II, 1485 W 20th Avenue, Oshkosh, Wisc. There is no cost to attend the event.

The Class of 2020 will be starting their studies at Lewis, and LU-AAO will host a Welcome Reception on Saturday, August 27, 2016 from 3:00-4:30 p.m. at the Harold E. White Building.

For more information or to RSVP please visit alumni.lewisu.edu/LUAAO or call (815) 588-7542.