



Cutline: Students work on a plane at Laurel Oaks Career Campus in Wilmington through a unique partnership with Southern State Community College

## **Southern State Enrolling Students in Aviation Program**

Southern State's North Campus in Wilmington will be closing, but the college's Aviation Program will continue its presence at the Laurel Oaks Career Campus in Wilmington with fall semester resuming on August 24.

Being an aircraft mechanic is hard work, and the job can include long hours and a lot of travel – but Scot Pembleton, who coordinates the aviation program partnership between Southern State Community College and Laurel Oaks Career Campus, said he guarantees a job to anyone who finishes the program.

"I guarantee every student a job in the industry," Pembleton said. "For every graduate, I have about 10 jobs waiting for them, and they all start at about \$50,000 per year. Some have walked out at \$100,000 per year."

Pembleton said this demand is due to a nationwide shortage of qualified aircraft mechanics in a field where cutting corners can leave hundreds of lives being uncertain.

Shawn Tomlin, an aviation instructor who wrote the curriculum for the program, said the two schools' relationships with several large airlines affords students many opportunities.

Amy McClellan, who oversees the program, said the program is Delta-preferred, which gives students a direct line to one of the nation's largest airlines. "Delta looks at our students more because of that preferred status," she said.

Many students go on to work at Cincinnati/Northern Kentucky International Airport, while others stay close to home working at Airborne Maintenance and Engineering Services. "If they're willing to move, they can get a job anywhere," McClellan said.

McClellan said two years is all it takes to prepare students for licensure in airframe and power plant certification. Six additional classes make a full associate's degree, McClellan said.

Coursework includes hands-on classes in fuel systems, fluid lines, basic electricity, turbine engines, reciprocating engines, welding, painting and many other areas of study, McClellan said.

The program's faculty also gives it an edge, McClellan said. "We have tons of experience in our instructors," she said. "They do a lot of things that are aside from the educational piece."

According to McClellan, finance is the greatest challenge for students entering the program.

"We go in the summertime, and there's often not a lot of funding for a summer semester," she said. "But there are things to do with financial aid that can minimize out-of-pocket cost."

For more information about Southern State's Aviation Program, please email Amy McClellan at [amcclellan@sscc.edu](mailto:amcclellan@sscc.edu), or call 800.628.7722, Ext. 3510.

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