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## Ready to take flight

*Airframe, powerplant school at airport gaining momentum*

By DAN HEATH, Staff Writer

The effort by CV-TEC and Clinton Community College to create a FAA-certified Part 147 Airframe and Powerplant school at Plattsburgh International Airport continues to move toward a planned take-off by late 2007.

The initiative received invaluable attention as representatives signed a memorandum of understanding with the Ecole Nationale d'Aerotechnique, North America's largest aeronautical institute, at the recent Quebec-New York Economic Summit in Albany.

Clinton Community College President Dr. Maurice Hickey said ENA Director Lucie Cousineau expects that school to get as much out of the collaboration as PAI.

"To see the genuine enthusiasm from her is exceedingly refreshing," Hickey said.

The agreement will facilitate faculty and student exchanges and collaborations, while providing students at both schools access to certification in Canadian and American standards.

Cousineau's position as president of International Council for Aerospace Training (CIFA) will provide avenues for PAI students to achieve certification in aeronautical standards from other regions, such as Europe and South America.

"The summit positioned PAI and this partnership better than if we had been in charge of everything," Hickey said. "We were acknowledged by the premier and governor in their lunch addresses as to the importance of PAI to the economy of the North Country, the state and the province."

CV-TEC Director Dr. Barry Mack said PAI can only benefit from being the focus of so much attention at the economic summit, which he said was a historic event.

"It positions us in a very favorable light to receive funding and support from government offices," he said.

One of the rewards came when it was announced Sen. Betty Little had arranged \$200,000 in state funds for a new hangar to house instructional aircraft.

"It's great to be a part of this collaboration between CV-Tec and Clinton Community College, government officials and the private sector. And now, it's officially a cross-border project with a memorandum of understanding being signed. I am pleased to have the opportunity to be helpful," Little said.

The Clinton County Legislature is in the process of donating equipment to the institute. PAI consultant Larry Trow was instrumental in determining which equipment would meet the institute's needs.

A variety of equipment, including light-all units complete with generators for working outdoors at night, air start units for starting aircraft, hydraulic test stands which were used to operate flight controls and landing gear and ground heaters for outdoor work during the chilly North Country winter, is housed under one of the alert status hangars on the northern end of the flightline.

Some of that equipment will be used as-is, but other pieces contain different forms of engines and hydraulic equipment for students to work on.

"This was important in giving us a leg up. It's all equipment we would've had to acquire for the school," Mack said. Efforts continue on acquiring rotary wing aircraft (helicopters), which are also required to meet Part 147 curriculum requirements. Two possible sources of used helicopters have been identified, and discussions to bring those aircraft to Plattsburgh are ongoing.

Efforts are also underway to identify which buildings will house the school, with the effort currently focused on the southeast end of the flightline. The legislature has also agreed to a 50-year lease commitment and waiver of maintenance fees for the institute buildings.

Mack said PAI representatives were at the state school boards convention, which ran Oct. 27 through 30, to exhibit progress and showcase PAI as one of this region's best practices.

The two partners have recently talked with Dr. Colin Read, the dean of Plattsburgh State University's School of Business and Economics, who has a background as an airframe and powerplant technician.

They are looking into the possibility of developing further articulation of that already planned between CV-Tec and Clinton Community to include study at Plattsburgh State.

"Colin's arrival is one of the truly serendipitous events in life," Hickey said.

If successful, it would provide a complete career ladder, allowing participants to enter the workforce at any stage, while others could continue studying toward management or teaching positions.

Mack said Wyeth has already expressed some interest in having employees enter the school. With a three-year phase out of jobs at the Rouses Point plant, there could be time to make that happen.

The school's curriculum is under development according to FAA-Part 147 Airframe and Powerplant Regulations. CV-TEC's portion also requires approval by the New York State Education Department, while Clinton Community's portion requires approval by the SUNY system.

High-school juniors and seniors from CV-TEC's 17 school districts can receive aeronautical training and experience while receiving college advanced placement credit. Completing CV-TEC's general and Airframe: Part 1 programs will earn students its graduation certificate.

They will have the option of earning an Associates Degree from Clinton Community during a third year of study. Adult students with a high-school diploma, GED or who have graduated from a post-secondary institution may also enroll. Their full-time enrollment in the general and Part 1 program will be followed by a seamless progression into the Airframe Part II and Powerplant training.

There are three components required by the FAA in earning certification as an airframe technician and as a powerplant technician. All students must complete a general course of study, after which they can continue certification as an airframe technician, powerplant technician, or both.

FAA regulations require students to complete a minimum of 1,900 hours of learning.

In addition to Airframe and Powerplant technicians, the curriculum could be expanded to offer training in fields such as ground support services, or even as air-traffic controllers, jobs that should become available when Plattsburgh International Airport becomes fully operational.

There are already a number of aviation-related firms on the flight-line, such as Pratt and Whitney, the Wood Group, Precision Jet Management and CommutAir, all capable of providing jobs for institute graduates.

Opportunities also are available with the Department of Homeland Security station.

The partners also see the institute's potential as an incubator for other technical education related to the aviation field. Skill sets learned in attending PAI can be used on other industries not specifically related to the aeronautical field, such as Composite factory, a Plattsburgh-based company involved in the development and manufacture of ceramic or polymer-based composites.

Mack said as the initiative rolls along, securing federal and state support for facility renovation funding remains important, as plans still call for the school to open by the end of 2007.

"We should be hearing from the federal government sometime by late fall," Mack said.

CVTEC Coordinator James McCartney III said despite the massive amount of funding going to hurricane relief efforts, PAI representatives have not been told they are out of the running for funding at this time.

He said the Town of Plattsburgh has indicated interest in sponsoring a grant through the Industrial Development Agency, which institute officials are eager to follow up.

Plattsburgh Airbase Redevelopment Corporation has donated equipment and is slated to deliver more avionics-related equipment.

McCartney said one Federal Aviation Administration official provided feedback on PAI's progress, indicating they are taking a wise course by obtaining equipment and funding before moving forward on curriculum development. It will be easier to develop that curriculum once they know everything they have to work with.

Mack said community support has been tremendous. The effort to partially disassemble and move a DC-3 airplane donated by Jim Drollette of Champlain Air is just one example.

A crew from Conroy and Conroy contractors were on hand with equipment, including a crane and flatbed trailer, to remove the planes wings prior to its move from Clinton County Airport to Plattsburgh International Airport early Sunday, Oct. 23. Jean Chauvin of the Chauvin Agency brought in tractors to tow the plane, while the New York State Police handled traffic control.

"In my 30 years, the level of support for this collaborative effort is unprecedented. The community obviously wants to see this happen," Mack said.