



MEDIA RELEASE

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New Partnership between Rockford Airport and Rock Valley College's Aviation Maintenance Technology Program Takes Flight

Program expected to quadruple annual graduates

Rockford, Ill. – In a move designed to promote economic development and position a more strongly aligned workforce, the Greater Rockford Airport Authority (GRAA) and Rock Valley College (RVC) have combined efforts to create an expanded Aviation Maintenance Technology Program. The agreement, having been in the works for months, promotes the shared community vision and value of workforce development and economic growth that is vital for the region's future.

A motion to approve the proposed lease agreement will be presented to the RVC Board of Trustees and the GRAA Board of Commissioners during meetings on Tuesday, February 25 and Thursday, February 27. Both meetings are open to the public.

Rockford is one of the largest epicenters of aerospace activity in the country. In order to leverage this industry and further grow and attract new businesses, GRAA and RVC recognized the need to grow the region's educated workforce.

"We have been in extensive discussions with RVC for some time and are very excited to formally announce the results of these conversations. This trusted partnership aligns with the region's need to create a workforce that meets the unique manufacturing needs of existing employers within the community and companies seeking to locate here," said Mike Dunn, GRAA Executive Director.

As a part of the proposed lease, GRAA will lease land to RVC to build a state-of-the-art 40,000 square foot Aviation Maintenance Training facility on Airport grounds to house the RVC educational course of study for aeronautical maintenance and repair. Currently, the program is taught in a 9,800 square foot building. The new facility will allow RVC to significantly increase the quantity of students both participating and graduating from the program.

"Important partnerships with great impact take careful planning and consideration, and we are proud that months of discussion have culminated in an agreement that will serve RVC students, the airport, and the entire region with such significance," said Michael Mastroianni, RVC Interim President. "We couldn't be more grateful for the support and collaboration of both the GRAA and Winnebago County."



“The partnership between RVC and GRAA will keep Winnebago County internationally competitive and strengthen our already solid reputation as Northern Illinois’ aeronautical manufacturing headquarters,” said Winnebago County Board Chairman Scott Christiansen.

There has been great demand for program entry as evidenced by the program’s waiting list. Graduates of the Aviation Maintenance Technology Program are prepared to assume positions as airline or general aviation engine and/or airframe mechanics. The program is certified to provide approved instruction leading to FAA Airframe and Powerplant certificate examinations. Additionally, three new certificates will be added to the program offerings: Avionics, Non-destructive Testing and Composites.

“Our economy is evolving at a rapid rate and in order to close the nation’s skills gap our educational system needs to be as dynamic as our economy. In Illinois, this new partnership between Rock Valley College and the airport is a critical investment in the future of the Rockford region and will provide a great opportunity for students in the area to train for careers in the growing aviation industry,” said U.S. Senator Dick Durbin, original cosponsor of the *Community College to Career Fund Act* which would create a competitive grant program to fund partnerships between two-year colleges and businesses that focus on valuable job training-related efforts.

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