

Title of Grant: Career Studies Certificate Development for LSA Pilot/Mechanic and Flight Instructor

S2008 – 172P –PF

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Abstract:

This grant funded the development of two career studies certificates in aviation. Included in the two certificates were a series of aviation courses developed in accordance with the rigid Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) guidance. The intent is to develop the lecture-based courses so that they may be delivered either on site or via distance delivery. The skill-based (flying) courses will be developed in conjunction with a local flight school providing the instruction, minimizing exposure (risk) to the college.

Actual Outcomes:

I was able to submit the proposed courses to the Blue Ridge Community College (BRCC) Curriculum Committee and the Aviation Maintenance Technology Advisory Committee and secure approval for both Career Studies Certificates as proposed above. The FAA has apparently approved the LSA program and has even listed BRCC as one of the course providers (see http://www.faa.gov/aircraft/gen_av/light_sport/media/repairman_course_listings.pdf). As of this time, however, BRCC has not obtained a letter of authorization from the FAA, AFS 610 Light Sport Standardization Branch, despite repeated requests both in writing and over the telephone.

The VP of Instruction is holding the Flight Instructor Career Studies certificates pending approval of the insurance question. Initially, BRCC teamed up with Fly Shenandoah Aviation, a local Cessna Pilot Center that went out of business this August and currently BRCC is exploring a partnership with Professional Air Solutions to offer the flying courses. At this time, Professional Air Solutions is in the process of obtaining quotes to meet the 1 million dollar insurance requirement set up by the Commonwealth of Virginia.

In addition to obtaining curriculum approval, the syllabi, theory-based exams, and initial lectures have been developed. Blackboard templates have been laid out for the Light Sport Career Studies courses and for Private Pilot Ground School. To avoid any issues with the Federal Aviation Administration, course offerings have been delayed.

Students and Community: Anticipated outcomes for the students, college, and community have not been realized at this time. Without FAA approval, BRCC is reluctant to schedule courses. There has been interest expressed from various individuals within the commonwealth as well as outside.

College: I was able to schedule a meeting with Carol Giles, Manager, Aircraft Maintenance Division, AFS-300 here at BRCC regarding among other things Light Sport Aviation Maintenance Training. This has brought BRCC some national attention and we have been assured that our expertise will be sought out in regards to future maintenance training concerns.

VCCS: Findings and methods will help other colleges to develop reproducible research plans for blended skill-based curriculum using the latest developments in computer aided instruction. There is also a lesson to be learned here in dealing with a federal bureaucracy such as the FAA. Time moves slowly!

Personal and Professional Goals: Other than successfully developing two career studies certificates and marshalling them through the college curriculum committee and scheduling a meeting with FAA officials here at the college, this has not be a very fulfilling experience.

Other Colleges:

None.

Discussion and Critique:

1. At this point I am waiting for a letter of authorization from the FAA on approval of the Light Sport courses prior to offering any courses or preparing any journal articles.

2. Again, I had to change companies, when one flight school closed their door due to the high cost of aviation fuel, among other factors. I have been working with the other flight school to secure a favorable insurance quote.

3. The implications of my research project would be to revolutionize the way aviation maintenance technology training is transmitted as well as opening up the very restricted training venue to a greater majority of people.

Evaluation:

Considering my initial expectations and the reduction of my funding request to approximately half, I feel that the Commonwealth has received acceptable value for their investment. I never anticipated the economic downturn or its dramatic effect on aviation. As far as the framework of my grant, all of the pieces have been outlined and set in motion. It will just take some additional time to see fruition.

Dissemination:

I plan to prepare a media blitz as soon as the FAA Letter of Authorization is received and courses can be scheduled for the LSA Career Studies Certificate. I am still hopeful that the insurance issues can be resolved and BRCC will move forward on the Flight Instructor Career Studies Certificate. Once that has been resolved, I hope to prepare journal articles in the Aviation Technician Education Journal, Aviation Maintenance Technology and Aviation Maintenance Magazine. I also plan to share the information at VCCS sponsored conferences and will prepare a presentation at Aviation Technician Education Council annual conference.