

A FRESH APPROACH TO THE AVIATION BEAT

By: David Smith

Embry-Riddle Aero-nautical University's Aviation and Aerospace Communication course has helped students exercise creativity, gain writing experience, and learn about aviation as they matriculate. Suzanna Brooks, Anna Haller, and Joe Yoffe are all seniors in the ERAU Communications undergraduate degree pro-gram. Com 322, taught by Professor Steve Master, allowed students to work in groups (of three or four) and develop newsletters with a theme related to aerospace/aviation.

Topics ranged from aviation crashes and safety; economics of aviation; entertainment and aviation; holiday travel; and the relationship of government and the aviation industry.

Of the three, only Ms. Brooks had prior experience with aviation reporting.

Although he was not very knowledgeable on aviation, Mr. Yoffe credited the instructor. "Professor Master did a good job with allowing flexibility," he said.

As encouraged by Master, a website was created by Ms. Haller's group, monthly introductory videos by Ms. Brooks", and Mr. Yoffe's progressed from print to digital publication.

"My most enjoyable story to write," Yoffe said, centered on funny tales from pilots at ERAU. Another article retold the tragedy of the Manchester United football team's plane crash in 1958.

Ms. Brooks also had fun with an article inspired by an annual simulation of an aircraft accident by Professor Anthony T. Brickhouse of the ERAU College of Aviation. She also wrote about Homeland Security and Airport Security, and Human Factors in Space.

Ms. Haller first article was about the economic impact of aircraft design. The next two sought to address how regulation affects flight instruction and the process airlines undergo to prepare for the holiday season.

Among the parties inter-viewed by the students were airport executives; ERAU flight instructors, students, and professors; and residents of the United Kingdom.

While the variety of topics wasn't coordinated among the groups, the general perception of the course and its importance moving forward was nearly unanimous.

Ms. Brooks said she hopes to use the newsletters to display the type of work she's done.

She plans to use it in her portfolio even though she "may not be looking at this type of job," after graduation.

Ms. Haller, who will "probably be going to work in aviation," viewed the course as an entry into another style of writing and knowledge base. As a newcomer to aviation, she said the research component would be good preparation for her career.

Mr. Yoffe said the course helped him build upon writing skills learned at ERAU, keep an open mind about writing, relate topics to human elements (tragedy and humor, and stress the importance of timeliness with projects.

The class was composed of five groups. Each produced three monthly newsletter that featured articles, blogs, feature stories, and other writings. The course will be taught again before the end of the 2009-2010 academic year.