

# An Alliance of Higher Education and Industry

## AVIATION AND LOGISTICS PROGRAMS THRIVE AT AREA COLLEGES

**THE GROWTH OF ALLIANCE★TEXAS** during the past 20 years has boosted the regional job market and provided a paradigm shift for educational institutions, as area universities and colleges develop programs to meet employers' workforce needs. Two areas where there have been significant demand are the aviation and logistics industries, which have become a core employment center at AllianceTexas.

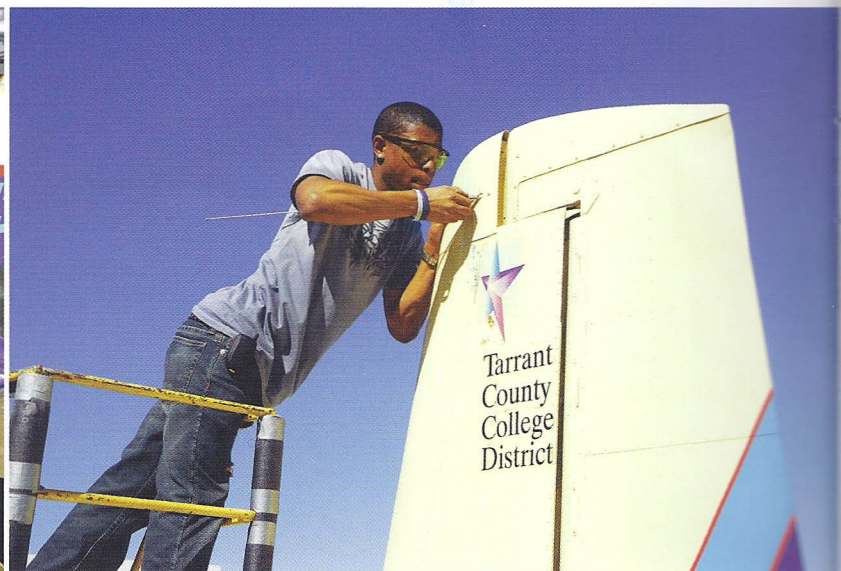
To ensure a viable and educated workforce remains in place to support employers at AllianceTexas, Hillwood has taken a leadership role in coordinating programs for each of the region's leading

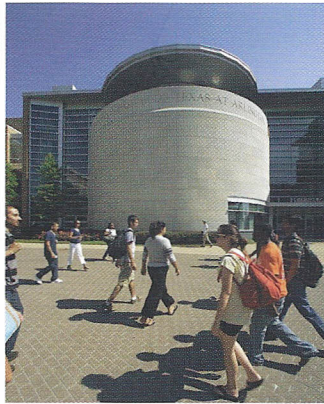
higher education institutions, including Tarrant County College (TCC), the University of North Texas (UNT), Texas Christian University (TCU) and the University of Texas at Arlington (UTA). Tom Harris, senior vice president at Hillwood Properties, has been working with both employers and colleges and universities since the inception of the airport and believes that it is one of the key components to the overall success of AllianceTexas.

"Our focus has been on developing strong relationships with each of the region's higher education institutions and

facilitating dialogue with our employers here," says Harris. "With our long-term vision of developing an employment center at AllianceTexas, it is crucial that an alignment between the goals of business and educational leaders be in place to ensure that a qualified workforce is developed for the future."

While area higher education institutions have had logistics programs in place for several years, aviation is an emerging field that has recently been getting a lot of attention. According to data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics and the U.S. Department of





**Opposite page:** Tarrant County College supports the area workforce with graduates of its two-year aviation mechanic degree. **Above left:** Students earn logistics undergraduate degrees through the University of North Texas' Center for Logistics Education and Research. **Above middle:** The University of Texas – Arlington is a strong research university and offers the resources of the Texas Manufacturing Assistance Center to area companies. **Above right:** Texas Christian University offers a logistics undergraduate degree through its Supply and Value Chain Center. Many of the courses are held in the Smith Entrepreneur Hall, pictured above.

Transportation, Texas has more than four times the number of aviation jobs than the national average, and that annual wages for aviation employment are consistently 17 percent higher than average U.S. wages. Backed with this data, higher education institutions are taking note and developing programs to meet the demand for a skilled workforce.

TCC currently provides students with a two-year aviation mechanic (A.A.S.) degree or certificate of completion in four separate areas of specialization that include airframes, power plants and avionics. Once completed, the program can lead students directly to positions at Fort Worth Alliance Airport, such as at the American Airlines Maintenance & Engineering Base, FedEx or with Bell Helicopter, among others. The program has been very successful, and TCC is considering a major expansion of the program that would include building a facility at Alliance to serve as its base.

AllianceTexas also has become home to one of Texas' premier aviation and technology workforce development initiatives – the NanoMaterials Design and Commercialization Center (NDCC). With its location centered directly in the heart of the nation's second largest Aerospace, Defense and Advanced Manufacturing (ADAM) sector, the NDCC is a consortium of aerospace, defense and higher education organizations whose mission is to facilitate the creation and commercialization of high-performance materials solutions for

the aviation industry. The organization includes the leading aerospace and defense companies in North Texas, like Lockheed Martin and Bell Helicopter Textron, as well as its leading research universities (UTA, University of Texas at Dallas, UNT and TCC, among others).

According to Joe Maly, director of the NDCC, the initiative was benchmarked against the North Carolina Research Triangle, which has been a national model for connecting research universities, companies and workforce development systems. "The NDCC will be an important conduit for expanding research funding for area universities that have been pushing to become Tier One research institutions," says Maly. "However, the program really goes beyond the research component and will be a tremendous boost to the regional workforce development effort. One aspect of the program is that first-year science and technology college students will get the opportunity to take advantage of the NDCC Scholars program, which will give them an opportunity to spend time with ADAM companies at Alliance as an intern and see real-world applications of their classroom studies."

In the fall of 2010, UNT is also launching an aviation logistics degree program that will focus on two career tracks – one for students interested in becoming commercial pilots and another for students interested in careers related to passenger and freight movement. Regardless of

the track, students will receive a broad aviation background that can be applied to numerous career opportunities in the field. The program is part of the university's nationally ranked logistics program that has benefited from its close association with AllianceTexas through the years.

In fact, because of the growth of the logistics industry at AllianceTexas, logistics training has become an important part of many university business degree programs in the region. Today, UNT and TCU each boast degree programs and conferences that provide students and professionals with state-of-the-art training in this emerging field. In addition to on-campus classes, students are also able to get internships at adjacent AllianceTexas facilities, where they can receive hands-on experience from the leading companies in the industry.

Harris, who has worked with each institution to establish the programs, sees the growth of logistics training as the catalyst for future efforts. "If you look back at our earliest efforts more than 20 years ago, and see how far we have come, I believe you'll find it to be one of the finest examples of cooperation between higher education and industry anywhere in the country. The success that we have had in incubating the vital logistics workforce that we have today provides a great model for building an even more diverse group of skilled workers (like the aviation sector) for the future." ■