



Utah Rotor Pathway Program Receives Perpetual SWI Grant

State's Strategic Workforce Investment program supports rotorcraft faculty, equipment for Utah high schools on a yearly basis.

The Utah State Legislature recently approved a Strategic Workforce Investment (SWI) grant to Southern Utah University (SUU) to support the growth of the Utah Rotor Pathway Program (URPP), a government–industry–education partnership preparing Utah students for high-growth occupations while helping meet regional industry workforce needs.

The perpetual grant will provide funding in the amount of \$320,000 annually.

The grant monies will enable faculty to teach ground instruction at Utah high schools and offer maintenance instruction in a hybrid, online–in person environment.

The URPP was launched in fall 2019 with just 2 high schools participating. Since that time, the program has grown and now, students from 13 of the state's 29 counties can participate.

"I'm grateful to the Utah State Legislature for awarding the SWI grant to the Utah Rotor Pathway Program," says Ryan DeJong, SUU assistant chief flight instructor and chair of the URPP. "This funding will allow the program to continue to grow and be a conduit for students to take advantage of the exciting career opportunities our industry provides."

Adds URPP Vice Chair Nick Johnson, pilot for Intermountain Life Flight, "I appreciate the state legislature for its leadership on workforce development. The helicopter industry needs more pilots and mechanics. The SWI grant will allow Utah students an opportunity to discover an industry welcoming them with open arms."

Cade Clark, VP of government affairs at Helicopter Association International and program secretary, thanks the leadership of both the state legislature and the governor's office for their efforts on behalf of the URPP. "We've benefited from the leadership of [Utah] Gov. [Spencer] Cox and his strategic vision of workforce development implemented by his team at Talent Ready Utah in the Governor's Office of Economic Development," Clark says. "The people of Utah should be proud their state is investing today to build the workforce of tomorrow."

Clark hopes the URPP will serve as a national model for education and training programs that prepare students for STEM careers: "This type of program creates a win for everyone involved: students get the education they need for in-demand careers while industry creates a workforce development pipeline that enables it to grow. I salute everyone involved for being willing to step up and be part of a solution."

A first-in-the-nation program, the URPP brings together industry, universities, and high schools to provide both helicopter pilot and maintenance training at the secondary school level. Moreover, industry partners offer high school students added benefits such as mentoring, internships, and interviewing opportunities upon their completion of college.