

Utah Rotor Pathway Program Expands

The Utah Rotor Pathway Program (URPP) is excited to announce that 15 more high schools have signed on to pursue coursework in the field of helicopter aviation. This brings the total number of participating high schools to 32.

“When the program was officially launched in the fall of 2019, we had two high schools on board. We now have expanded out to 32 schools in 13 counties,” says Ryan DeJong, Southern Utah University assistant chief flight instructor and chair of the URPP. “While the pandemic has certainly affected our plans for growth, we’re doing our best to form new partnerships with schools across the state.”

“Aviation provides exceptional careers, and the helicopter industry in particular has tremendous growth opportunity,” says URPP Vice Chair Nick Johnson, pilot for Intermountain Life Flight. “This program connects the next generation of helicopter pilots and mechanics with the exciting world of vertical flight. It’s no wonder we’re seeing this amazing progress of the program.”

The URPP is now offered in the following Utah counties: Beaver, Davis, Iron, Kane, Morgan, Piute, Sanpete, Sevier, Summit, Utah, Washington, Wayne, and Weber.

The Utah State Legislature recently approved a Strategic Workforce Investment (SWI) grant to support the growth of the URPP. The perpetual grant will provide \$320,000 in funding annually. This resource will be used to support the program in providing students with hybrid courses in helicopter ground and maintenance instruction.

“I want to thank the state legislature for its support of this program and building on the progress we’ve made thus far,” says Cade Clark, VP of government affairs at Helicopter Association International and program secretary. “Governor Spencer Cox and his team at Talent Ready Utah in the Governor’s Office of Economic Development have also been incredible stakeholders in this program. The people of Utah should be proud their state is investing today to build the workforce of tomorrow.”

The URPP is a first-in-the-nation program that brings together industry, universities, and high schools to provide both helicopter pilot and maintenance training at the high school level. Industry partners offer secondary-school students added benefits such as mentoring, internships, and job interviews upon their completion of the college-level aviation program.