

SPRING 2025

# SAC NOTAM



THE OFFICIAL STUDENT PUBLICATION OF THE JOHN D.  
ODEGARD SCHOOL OF AEROSPACE SCIENCES

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**EDITOR**

Riley Zarm



With the end of yet another spring semester, the regular terms of the 2025-2026 academic year close out, as does another successful term for the Student Aerospace Advisory Council. We appreciate the continued support from the student body of the John D. Odegard School of Aerospace Sciences – without your engagement with the Council, whether via suggestion boxes on campus, at the airport, or online, or showing up to our Sunday meetings, we would not garner the meaningful feedback which you provide so we can work to improve the student experience.

This semester, SAAC has continued to provide our key deliverables, from continuing work on the airport shuttle, engagement through the Collegiate and Industry Mentorship Programs, an enjoyable Hawk Talk from Professor Martin and Professor Venhuizen, an insightful Dean's Forum as the new Flight Operations Center materializes, and a successful CFI Appreciation event at the airport. SAAC takes great pride in these programs and events to engage with students, faculty, and instructors to learn what can be improved throughout the College (and what continues to work well). We were also excited to digitize the showcase of new certificates and ratings, and we hope that you will share your successes with family and friends through the certificate-granting process.

We hope that you find benefit in the opportunities SAAC provides to earn feedback. Our primary goal is interfacing between students and College administration, and I would like to thank the SAAC Officers who have made the Spring 2025 semester meaningful. Looking ahead, work continues to better engage with the first-year class and provide the best student experience throughout the construction process at the airport. Exciting things are on the horizon for UND Aerospace, and I hope you'll all join me in patience and enthusiasm as the new Flight Operations Center comes to life.

It has been an incredible privilege of mine to serve as SAAC President this term. I wish everyone continued success - don't be a stranger.

The very best,

**ETHAN MATHEWS | PRESIDENT, SAAC**

# Faculty Spotlight

## From Student to Chief Flight Instructor

***“They’ve trained here, they know the material—they just need to believe they belong”***

by Evelyn Jordan

In 2000, a young aviation student walked through the doors of the University of North Dakota with a vision—not knowing that just two decades later, she would lead the same institution as Chief Flight Instructor. Paula Bruse’s story, shaped by persistence, adaptability, and a deep passion for flight education, serves as both a roadmap and an inspiration for aspiring aviators navigating the ever-shifting landscape of commercial aviation.

Graduating in 2003 from UND’s Commercial Aviation program, she found herself amid a competitive field of nearly 200 applicants for a coveted flight instructor position. Only eight were hired—and she was one of them. Her choice to stay at UND instead of the airlines stood out. But with the industry in a hiring slump, and many students unsure about their next step, she leaned into opportunity rather than uncertainty.

In 2005, she advanced to Lead Instructor. The next few years were turbulent for aviation.



Paula Bruse, Chief Flight Instructor

The 2008-09 global recession, driven by broader “world life threats,” upended job markets across industries. But rather than stepping back, she expanded her experience. In 2008, she worked with Air China students, instructing in the King Air.

Her career continued to soar. In 2011, she was promoted to Assistant Chief while simultaneously pursuing her master’s degree in aviation—a move that highlighted her dedication to growth as both a leader and a lifelong learner. By 2016, she had achieved a remarkable milestone, becoming the only female Japanese-equivalent Designated Pilot Examiner in the world for UND’s JCAB program. Most recently, in April 2024, she assumed the role of Chief Flight Instructor, bringing her full circle from student to leader at the very institution where her journey began.

# Faculty Spotlight cont.

## Inside the CFI Interview: What to Expect

For those hoping to follow in her footsteps, understanding the interview process for a CFI role at UND is crucial. Candidates can expect a 15-minute interview that blends technical knowledge, teaching ability, and personal insight. A consistent feature is the teaching scenario—often a preflight maneuver briefing using provided lesson plans. However, applicants must also be ready for unscripted technical questions: “How does an airplane turn?” or “What’s the formula for pressure altitude?” These questions test raw knowledge and the ability to explain concepts on the fly.

Another key component is a video analysis: candidates must correct what went wrong as though they were in the right seat. Increasingly, personality-focused questions and conflict scenarios—like handling disagreements with authority—are being added to the process.

## Misconceptions and Common Mistakes

One major misconception is that the CFI interview is too difficult. In reality, many candidates simply lack confidence. *“They’ve trained here, they know the material—they just need to believe they belong,”* Paula says. She encourages students to have a polished script for the common “Tell me about yourself” question and recommends bringing a portfolio to the interview. Many candidates, she notes, do not advocate for themselves enough—being too humble when asked, “Why you?”

## Stand Out: Freshman Year to Interview

Aspiring CFIs can begin building their resumes as early as freshman year. Involvement in aviation clubs, gaining customer service experience, or even simply maintaining strong academics can all signal commitment and maturity. A poor grade in a tough course like AVIT 414 isn’t a dealbreaker—resilience and how one recovers matter more.

*“Never lie,”* she stresses. Whether it’s a failed stage check or rough term, honesty paired with reflection shows integrity—A quality UND deeply values.

## The Role of Soft Skills and Culture Fit

Personality and cultural fit weigh heavily. Traits like professionalism, adaptability, and a student-focused mindset are non-negotiable. During the interview, small things—a firm handshake, eye contact, handing out your resume—make a big impression. The school also seeks input from ground school professors and airport staff to round out their view of a candidate.



## Networking and the Future of CFI Hiring at UND

Building connections with faculty early is key. *“Ground school is where reputations are made,”* she says. Relationships forged in class often become informal references later. And while hiring once topped 80–100 instructors at a time, today’s numbers are more modest—closer to 20, depending on the season and industry trends.

The CFI hiring process is evolving, becoming more holistic. As the industry slows and hiring tightens, the emphasis shifts to quality over quantity. For students hoping to join the UND instructor ranks, the message is clear: start early, work hard, and show who you are—not just as a pilot, but as a future leader in aviation.

# Peer Mentorship at UND

by Lucas de Jager



## At JDOSAS, students are no strangers to rigorous academics and competitive enrollment.

Coupled with fast-paced flight training deadlines, students, particularly first-year students, often find themselves lost in the nuanced areas of the collegiate experience. However, behind the highly-driven culture lies a resource much deeper: Community. Two mentorship programs, the **Collegiate Mentorship Program (CMP)** and **Industry Mentorship Program (IMP)** are making sure no student feels like they're just another name on a list.

### Collegiate Mentorship Program

Launched in the Fall of 2022, CMP is a re-engineered and re-energized version of SAAC's original peer mentorship initiative that began in 2020. The earlier version struggled to gain traction. But what came out of those growing pains was a program more responsive to the unique challenges UND students face. In 2022, as the aviation industry was rebounding from the pandemic-era chaos, students needed more support than ever. That's when SAAC, under the direction of Kallen Wachi, went back to the drawing board—looking at how other organizations such as NGPA, PAPA, and various airline mentorship programs were designed and operated.

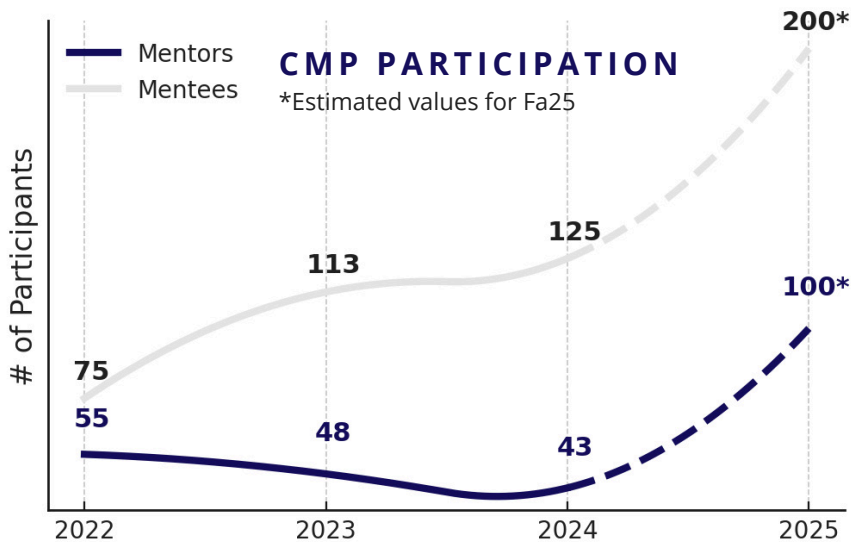
***“Morale was low. First generation college and first-generation pilot students especially needed more support,”***

—Kallen Wachi, CMP Co-founder

CMP was designed to bridge those gaps by pairing freshmen with upperclassmen across all aerospace disciplines. From air traffic management to atmospheric sciences and UAS, CMP helps students “learn the ropes” early: how flight launches work, what to expect in each course, how to handle flight scheduling dynamics, and even how to navigate academic course planning. Unlike most mentorship programs, CMP is student experience centered.

## Mentorship cont.

Aerospace mentors are given the latitude to offer academic advice, industry context, professional development, and perhaps most importantly, relatable lived experience. Mentors serve to offer curated guidance needed for their mentees. The mentor-mentee relationship is led by the mentee, meeting as often as desired and discussing whatever subjects are most pressing.



### A Program with Purpose

Just a few years in, SAAC has refined the **interview**, **vetting**, and **training** process to ensure high-quality mentorship. In 2022, the program onboarded 55 mentors to serve 75 mentees. The program has since seen impressive growth and last fall 43 mentors were onboarded to serve 125 mentees. Prospective mentors can request to be assigned as many mentees as they desire, with most providing services to 2 mentees, but some up to 5.

The **interview process** puts 'a face to the paper.' Councilmembers take time to understand what makes each mentor unique. Identifying relatable qualities such as degree program, career interests, or even hobbies and geographical origins, these connections help build trust and relatability.

The **vetting process** is simple: Kal explains that *"We want people who say, 'I wish I had this when I was a freshman'—not people looking to pad their resume."* Many current CMP mentors were once mentees themselves, now giving back through the same program that helped them find their footing.

The **training process** is thorough but digestible. Mentors are briefed on their roles, mandatory reporting protocols, and university resources. Further, they're informed that their job is fluid: a mentor may study with their mentee, another may grab brunch, and another may play pickleball. There's no one-size-fits-all model—that's the point.



Jacob Halmos, UND '28

As one current mentee, Jacob Halmos (Class of '28), put it:

***"CMP helped me make connections and find my place in the Aerospace College. It's been the gateway to my future here. I don't think I would've made the connections I've made without my mentor's guidance."***



## Mentorship cont.

### Industry Mentorship Program

While CMP focuses on the 'now,' IMP helps students look toward the future. Started in 2019 by Will Hughes and the Aerospace Alumni Advisory Board (AAAB), IMP was a simple idea: provide an opportunity for alumni to become meaningfully involved with current students. It started small—Zoom meetings during the pandemic. But the idea grew. Today, IMP connects students with professionals in almost any specialized sector of aviation including those in the NTSB, corporate, airline management, and more.

Despite growing pains similar to CMP, the most successful iteration of IMP has been curated group calls with industry mentors discussing their unique career paths and fielding student questions. The program's mission is to *"facilitate, grow, and organize opportunities for students to learn from those ahead of them—so they don't have to learn the hard lessons the hard way."*

### What's Next—

The future for both CMP and IMP is bright. Councilmembers are collaborating for more year-round promotion of CMP, particularly in dorms and classrooms. Work is also being done to link CMP and IMP together to provide a seamless transition from the first day at college to the first day on the job. Both programs remind us that community at UND isn't just about networking—it's about belonging, growing, and building a legacy of support that stretches from classrooms to cockpits.



Scan me for CMP!



And me for IMP!

## Inside the Airline Interview

***"You have to fail sometimes. That's how you learn."***

by Nawin Bravo

The journey to an airline often prompts images of structured training paths, ATP minimums, and polished interviews. But for **Captain Karen Ruth** of Delta Air Lines, the career path was anything but linear. A 1982 UND graduate, Ruth now flies the Airbus A330 and has served over 20 years as a hiring and recruiting captain, shaping the careers of hundreds of pilots. Throughout her career, she built a reputation on adaptability and professionalism, qualities she believes are more essential now than ever. For many aspiring pilots, the interview process can feel

daunting. Ruth emphasized that the key to standing out is not scripted responses, but authenticity.

*"They don't want a canned answer. They want real situations [...] It doesn't have to be aviation. Talk about a time you had to lead, resolve conflict, or adapt quickly. They want to know how you solve problems under pressure,"* said Ruth.

One of the most common misconceptions is that interview panels are out to challenge candidates. Ruth disagrees.

*"Not all companies are confrontational. Most of the time, they're trying to get to know the candidate and put them at ease."*

# Airline Interview cont.

Still, avoidable mistakes can derail an otherwise qualified applicant. Ruth mentioned that chewing gum, using breath mints, crying, and swearing are all behaviors that have sunk otherwise strong candidates. Some candidates may try to be overly informal and "break the ice" to ease tension, but Ruth advises against it. She further cautioned that professional attire remains essential, noting how a blazer comes in handy if nerves kick in...

*"Don't be too casual. Don't try to be funny [...] No green or brown suits. Stick with dark blue or gray. And don't go off the grid with your tie,"* Ruth said.

## Earning a Competitive Edge

To stand out in interviews, Ruth recommends that candidates take the initiative to share their experiences instead of waiting for specific questions.

*"Awards, volunteering, leadership, those things make you human,"* she said. *"If you don't tell them, they'll never know. The candidate is supposed to be giving. Don't wait for the interviewers to ask."*

## What Airlines Really Look For

Beyond qualifications, carriers seek pilots who reflect core values and professional maturity. Cultural alignment plays a significant role in hiring, something Ruth considers a deciding factor. She mentions that it is *"very important for you to consider the company's values, opportunities, people, stability, and work life balance. Is it something you love?"* In her view, these values and a connection to the airline's mission ensure long-term success.

*"Communication, decision making, teamwork,"* Ruth said. *"And include everyone who's part of the process. Everyone has a voice."*

Candidates should never forget that the interview process starts long before entering the room. Conversations in the hallway can carry farther than expected, and the last impression you want to make is a disruption to someone else's interview.

*"When you're waiting for your interview, don't be talking very loudly,"* she advised. *"Give equal time to every person on the panel. Be professional."*



Captain Karen Ruth





## Airline Interview cont.

### The Jump from College to the Airlines

The transition from college training to airline operations is significant for student pilots. Ruth described it as a steep learning curve that can catch candidates off guard. To manage the shift successfully, she recommends early preparation.

*"You're expected to understand things quickly. Don't just memorize, understand the material [...] Study ahead. Get a copy of the syllabus because they're going to assume you already know the terms."*

### The Power of Mentorship

Throughout her career, Ruth benefited from the guidance of trusted mentors, a factor she believes is just as vital today. Networking should be meaningful, not transactional.

*"Two mentors are the reason I'm here," she said. "Surround yourself with people you want to be around. Don't let others pull you down."*

*"Give everyone a chance, but be careful," she said. "Talk to others who have interviewed. Ask for feedback. Feedback is a gift, even if it tells you're not ready yet."*

*And always be honest... "Don't make anything up. You're one of them. Own your story."*

### The Interview Starts Long Before Takeoff

According to Ruth, professionalism is not limited to the interview room. It starts with how candidates present themselves online and on paper. *"Make your social media private, if needed, and clean it up."* Concerning your documents, Ruth advises, *"Complete all the boxes. Keep your formatting consistent. Proofread. Have someone else review it."*

She encourages candidates to share accomplishments with pride and shares some extra tips for applications.

*"Brag a little. List everything you're proud of. Get permission for your references. Track your addresses from the last 10 years. Organize your materials with tabs, especially for emergencies and check ride history."*

When things go wrong, she says, integrity matters most. *"It's okay to have a check ride failure. But never lie! Because they will find out."*

### The Future of Hiring

With pilot retirements set to accelerate in the coming years, Ruth sees ample opportunity for the next generation. *"There's always going to be a need for pilots,"* she said. *"Stay current. Stay qualified."* For aspiring aviators at every stage, her closing message is a reminder that professionalism is learned, not inherited.

*"You have to fail sometimes. That's how you learn. You get better with every scar."*



## MEMBER UPDATES

At the end of this academic semester, we say goodbye to members **Kal Wachi**, **Evelyn Jordan**, and **David Manzke**, who will be completing their terms on the council. We thank you for your service to the Aerospace College.

In their place, we are pleased to welcome **Frankie Samuels**. Congratulations on your appointment, Frankie.

## LEFT TO RIGHT, Spring 2025

**Lucas de Jager**, Director of Industry Relations  
**Kallen Wachi**, Treasurer  
**Nawin Bravo**, Council Member  
**Riley Zarm**, Director of Student Outreach  
**Ella Hedman**, Director of Programming  
**Ethan Mathews**, President  
**Dr. Robert Kraus**, Dean  
**Zachary Hagengruber**, Vice President

**Evelyn Jordan**, Secretary  
**Logan Harden**, Council Member  
**David Manzke**, Director of Technology  
**Franka Boesch**, Director of Public Relations  
**Greyson Orne**, Council Member

JOIN US FOR A MEETING  
Sundays @ 4:00PM | Robin 136



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**Have a suggestion?  
Let us know!**



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