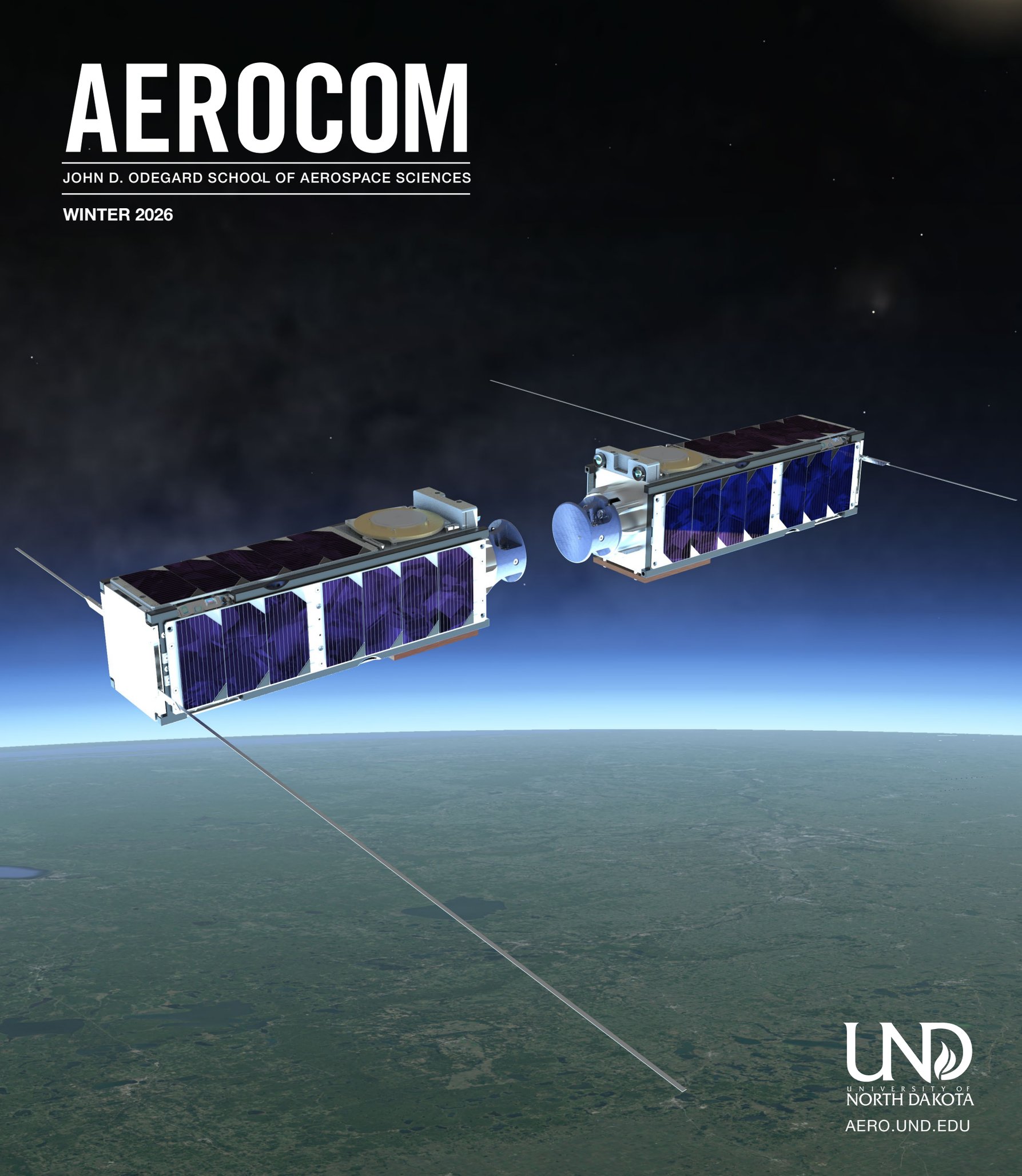
AEROCOM

JOHN D. ODEGARD SCHOOL OF AEROSPACE SCIENCES

WINTER 2026



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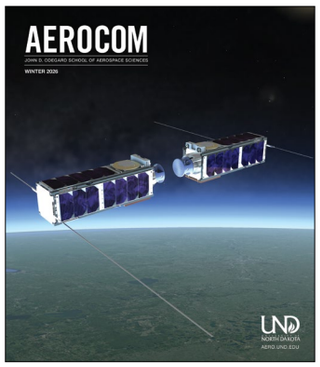

ON THE COVER

UND-ROADS satellites over Grand Forks

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MEET OUR CONTRIBUTORS

ARJUN JAGADA '25

Arjun Jagada is a flight instructor and supervisor of flight at UND Aerospace. He is also a board member of the Laura Taber Barbour Air Safety Foundation. Originally from Dallas-Fort Worth, Texas, he graduated with triple majors in Commercial Aviation, Aviation Management, and Aviation Safety and Operations this spring. Arjun has held a variety of leadership roles at the university, including President of the Student Aerospace Advisory Council, Vice President of the Student Aviation Management Association, and Student Ambassador in the Aerospace Dean's Office. Additionally, Arjun has expressed his passion for aviation through photography, capturing the spirit and operations of UND Aerospace as our lead photographer for the past three years.

AVERIE EIXENBERGER

Averie Eixenberger is a junior at the University of North Dakota, where she is pursuing degrees in Commercial Aviation and English. Originally from Idaho, she previously earned an Associate of Arts in General Studies from Idaho State University. Averie is deeply engaged in campus life, actively participating in various student organizations, and has recently been elected President of UND's Chapter of Women in Aviation. During her freshman year, she launched her own podcasting business, Rosethorn Productions, and continues to grow it alongside her academic pursuits. For the past two years, she has been a writer for JDOSAS, where she combines her passions for storytelling and aviation. Averie aspires to become an airline pilot while also contributing to the field of aviation journalism.

NATHANIEL LOWELL

Nathaniel Lowell is a sophomore at the University of North Dakota, majoring in Commercial Aviation. Originally from Lake Forest, California, Nathaniel found a passion for photography in 2019, working as a freelancer and plane spotting around the country. Since joining UND Aerospace as a student photographer in March 2025, he has captured striking moments throughout the year, including vibrant auroras and powerful lightning storms. In addition to his creative work, he recently earned his private pilot certificate and is now working toward his instrument rating at UND. In his free time, Nathaniel enjoys traveling and exploring new places!

Welcome to the Winter 2026 issue of Aerocom. This season brings no shortage of achievements to celebrate across UND Aerospace. Building on the Frozen Force Air Race Classic Team's collegiate victory in June, we now proudly add another national championship to our tradition of excellence. The UND Aerobatic Team concluded the year ranked first in the nation for the twelfth time and will receive its trophy at Oshkosh this summer. Looking ahead, we are excited to support the NIFA Flying Team as they prepare for their next competition in May.

Many of you have been following the livestream of the Flight Operations Building construction. The steel structure is now rising steadily, and we remain on schedule for an early 2027 opening. Interest in our flight donor societies continues to grow, and I invite you to learn more in this issue's center spread.

At the winter commencement, we celebrated a milestone for our Air Traffic Control enhanced CTI program with the graduation of our first student, Anthony Lake. We look forward to many more successes as this program continues to evolve.

We were also delighted to learn that John D. Odegard will be inducted into the National Aviation Hall of Fame next September. His vision continues to shape every facet of UND Aerospace, and we plan to send a strong contingent to honor his legacy.

This fall, we recognized UND Sioux Award recipient Jill Newby, who recently retired following a distinguished career with United Airlines. Several women from the early years of our program returned to join the celebration, inspiring the next generation of female aerospace leaders.

Our UAS faculty, staff, and students remain deeply engaged with multiple state and federal government agencies advancing counter-UAS capabilities. In January, we completed a significant renovation of the Robin Hall basement, establishing the UAS Flight Operations Research Center of Excellence (UFORCE). This space now provides dedicated areas for drone maintenance, research initiatives, and integrated educational opportunities.

As our programs continue to grow, so too does our faculty. We are pleased to welcome several new colleagues and to recognize Hyungwoo Jo, who transitioned from airport operations in 2024 and completed his Ph.D. in record time.

In November, we hosted our second Space Operations Summit, drawing an impressive lineup of speakers and a strong turnout. Meanwhile, our Space Studies program continues its innovative work, as the two UND satellites launched into low Earth orbit prepare for their mission to align, locate one another, and establish connection this April. UND has also entered a new agreement with Voyager Technologies to further expand research in interplanetary space exploration.

Given the season, this issue highlights cold-weather research from Atmospheric Sciences and Earth Systems Science and Policy—areas uniquely suited to our North Dakota environment.

In December, I had the honor of visiting Tokai University in Japan to commemorate the 20th anniversary of our partnership. Their students continue to complete all flight training at UND, including Japanese JCAB checkrides, demonstrating the global reach and reputation of our programs.

Finally, we invite you to join us at several upcoming events this spring: an alumni and friends gathering in Atlanta on March 11th, and a Twin Cities Aerospace alumni event on June 18th at the Premier Jet Center at Flying Cloud Airport. We look forward to sharing more of the exciting progress happening at UND Aerospace.

ROBERT KRAUS | DEAN, JOHN D. ODEGARD SCHOOL OF AEROSPACE SCIENCES

UPCOMING EVENTS

JANUARY

12-16 AIAA SciTech - Orlando, FL

25-29 AMS Annual Meeting - Houston, TX

FEBRUARY

5-8 NGPA Winter Warm Up - Palm Springs, CA

7 Alumni & Industry Reception - Palm Springs, CA

MARCH

9-12 VERTICON - Atlanta, GA

12 Alumni & Industry Reception - Atlanta, GA

19-21 Women in Aviation Conference - Dallas, TX

APRIL

18 View UND Aerospace Saturday Open House - Grand Forks, ND

23 SAMA Conference - Grand Forks, ND

24 SAMA Career Fair - Grand Forks, ND

24 Atmospheric Sciences Scholarship Banquet - Grand Forks, ND

23-26 Aviation Family Weekend - Grand Forks, ND

MAY

16 Spring Commencement - Grand Forks, ND

JUNE

18 Alumni & Industry Reception at Premier Jet Center
Flying Cloud Airport - Eden Prairie, MN

JULY

19 EAA AirVenture - Oshkosh, WI

22 Alumni & Industry Recepetion - Oshkosh, WI

First Place
Forrest Scholin

2025 IAC NATIONAL COLLEGIATE CHAMPIONS
UND AEROBATIC TEAM

2nd Place
Zach Paluch

2025 TEAM PHOTO

Team Members	Hometown	Favorite Maneuver
Coach Michael Lents	Algonac, MI	Hammerhead
Dillon Johnson	Maple Grove, MN	Hammerhead
Zachary Paluch	Colorado Springs, CO	Quarter Clover
Allison Sutherland	Little Rock, AR	Looping!
Elisabeth Nelson	Winnebago, MN	Spins
Kathleen Thompson	Rochester, MN	Avalanche
Forrest Scholin	Monterey, CA	Avalanche
Devin Graves	Seattle, WA	Spins
Jacob Harris	Gainesville, VA	Humpty Bumps
Andrew Coughlin	Snoqualmie, WA	Hammerhead
Patrick Keating (Not Pictured)	London, UK	Immelmann

2025 AEROSPACE HALL OF FAME

On Friday, September 19th, alumni Arne Vasenden, Steven Stock, and Alan Palmer (not pictured) were inducted into the UND Aerospace Hall of Fame.

Alan Palmer – 1984 Graduate

Alan Palmer's time at UND began when he sought to complete the degree he had put on hold when he was drafted. Upon graduation, Palmer served in many roles at UND, including Chief of Flight Simulator Training, Chief Flight Instructor, Senior Aviation Manager, and eventually as Director of Flight Operations until 2010. He then became the director of the UAS Center for Education, Research, and Training, helping put UND on the map as the first university in the nation to offer a 4-year degree in UAS operations. Palmer retired from UND in 2017.

Steven Stock – 1987 Graduate

Steven Stock began his career as an aerographer's mate, a meteorological and oceanographic expert for the US Navy. In this role, he quickly excelled, supporting critical missions by analyzing weather patterns and briefing combat personnel, eventually earning the Naval Achievement Medal for his forecasting work. During a visit to UND while on leave, Stock discovered the new meteorology department. Stock became a highly active research associate in the meteorology department, playing a key role in the development of Terminal Doppler Weather Radar (TDWR), which helps detect hazardous wind shear and microbursts near airports to improve flight safety. In 1991, Stock began a career as a meteorologist at Northwest Airlines, earning the company a reputation for having one of the most advanced weather departments in the industry.

Arnold Vasenden – 1980 Graduate

When Arnold Vasenden arrived at UND with his instrument rating and both single- and multi-engine commercial certificates, he began his freshman year in the flight instructor course. After UND, he relocated to South Africa to work on weather modification before beginning a new chapter conducting marine mammal surveys. Vasenden would go on to fly several aircraft, including the Lear 35, Gulfstream II, Lockheed T-33, McDonnell Douglas DC-9, and Boeing 737. Vaseden later founded his own company supporting emergency response missions, leading to collaborations with the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency and the development of the Airborne Spectral Photometric Environmental Collection Technology (ASPECT), which the EPA uses for hazardous substance response. Vaseden then played a key role in the Perlan Project, helping to launch a specialized sailplane into the stratosphere and setting the world record for the highest glider tow at 47,100 feet.

Nominate a UND Aerospace Alum!
aero.und.edu/events/hall-of-fame.html

JOHN D. ODEGARD
CHOSEN FOR NATIONAL AVIATION HALL OF FAME

Founder and namesake of UND's aerospace college will become second North Dakota aviator to be inducted

John D. Odegard – the visionary behind UND's School of Aerospace Sciences that now bears his name – has been selected for induction into the National Aviation Hall of Fame.

Odegard will become the second North Dakota aviator to be enshrined in the NAHF, located in Dayton, Ohio. UND alumnus Carl Ben Eielson received the honor in 1985.

A native of Minot, Odegard founded the college in 1968, starting with just two aircraft. It has since grown to become UND's second-largest degree-granting college, with more than 2,000 students, 500 faculty and staff members, and one of the largest fleets of civilian aircraft in North America.

In addition to its renowned Commercial Aviation program, the John D. Odegard School of Aerospace Sciences now offers undergraduate majors in Air Traffic Management, Atmospheric Sciences, Unmanned Aircraft Systems Operations, and Aviation Safety & Operations, among other programs, plus graduate programs in fields ranging from Space Studies to Earth System Science & Policy and more.

In 2015, Odegard was honored with the Theodore Roosevelt Roughrider Award – the state's highest civilian honor. He is also the subject of a 2007 book titled "Flight of the Odegard," authored by Patrick McGuire.

A name 'synonymous with aviation excellence'

North Dakota Gov. Kelly Armstrong praised Odegard's visionary spirit and contributions to the state's burgeoning aerospace industry.

"From launching UND's aviation program in 1968 with just a dozen students and two donated aircraft, to 1998 when the School of Aerospace Sciences was renamed in his honor, to the hundreds of future pilots from all over the world training there today, the name John D. Odegard has become synonymous with aviation excellence in North Dakota and throughout the nation and world," Armstrong said.

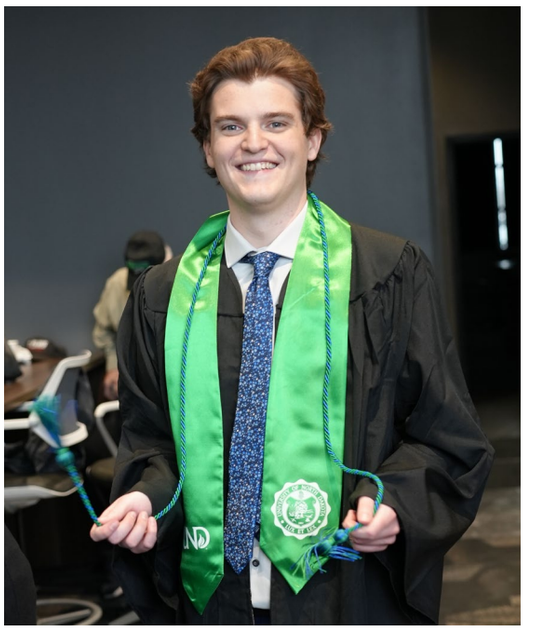
"His vision became the catalyst for a world-class aviation school in America's heartland, and his memory lives on in every student inspired by his incredible legacy to take flight and reach for the stars," the governor continued. "With his well-deserved induction into the National Aviation Hall of Fame, John continues to put North Dakota on the map as a thriving hub for aerospace training, education and innovation."

Robert Kraus, dean of the Odegard School, agreed. "We are honored by John Odegard's selection for enshrinement in the National Aviation Hall of Fame," Kraus said. "His visionary leadership and the pioneering programs he established set enduring standards in aviation education, flight training, and research – cementing our reputation as a global leader in aerospace excellence."

The National Aviation Hall of Fame was founded in 1962 as a non-profit corporation in Dayton, the "Birthplace of Aviation." With his induction, Odegard joins a distinguished list of only 270 honorees – a list that includes the Wright Brothers, Amelia Earhart, Charles Lindbergh, William Boeing, John Glenn, Neil Armstrong, Billy Mitchell, and Jimmy Doolittle, among others.

The induction ceremony will take place on Sept. 24, 2026, in Washington, D.C.

UND'S FIRST GRADUATE
ENHANCED FAA ATC PROGRAM



The University of North Dakota's John D. Odegard School of Aerospace Sciences has reached a historic milestone with the graduation of Anthony "A.J." Lake, UND's first-ever graduate of the Enhanced Air Traffic–Collegiate Training Initiative (AT-CTI) program.

Lake was awarded his bachelor's degree in Air Traffic Management at UND's Winter Commencement ceremony on Dec. 19. But at the same time, Lake also graduated from the Federal Aviation Administration's Enhanced AT-CTI pathway, and his achievement places UND among the earliest institutions in the country to successfully graduate a student from the FAA-approved enhanced pathway.

Robert Kraus, speaking at the Winter Commencement reception in the Aerospace school's Robin Hall, took the time to congratulate all UND Aerospace graduates, including the University's first enhanced AT-CTI graduate.

"First, I want to say congratulations to all of our students who are graduating today in a couple of hours, and thank you for coming out to this reception where we can get to share a few more minutes with you," Kraus said. Then he added a unique recognition:

"Today we also recognize our first graduate of the FAA Enhanced AT-CTI Program at UND."

Unlike traditional AT-CTI graduates, students in the enhanced program who meet rigorous performance benchmarks can bypass the FAA Academy in Oklahoma City, Okla., and proceed directly to air traffic control facilities for on-the-job training, Kraus noted.

"This is all our hard work coming realized," said Craig Carlson, associate professor of aviation and assistant chair of UND's Air Traffic Management program. "We built the Enhanced AT-CTI program, but we set a very high bar; and until a student successfully completed the program, we didn't know for sure it could be done.

Lake, a native of Faribault, Minn., said the chance to enter the workforce months earlier than the traditional route motivated him to pursue the enhanced program.

"I'm saving three or four months of time, for sure," Lake said. "It feels like a real accomplishment. I came out of it smiling — and there was a round of applause from all the associates and professors who were in the room, so that was great."

Lake will soon receive a list of FAA tower assignments that he can choose from. He hopes to begin his career in the Upper Midwest, potentially near the Twin Cities area.

Carlson expressed his personal gratitude to Sen. John Hoeven, R-N.D., for the top leadership role the senator has played in moving the Enhanced AT-CTI program forward.

Hoeven, for his part, expressed his own praise for Lake and the UND program. "Congratulations to Anthony Lake on becoming UND's first-ever Enhanced AT-CTI graduate," Hoeven said.

"We worked to secure UND's role in this new AT-CTI program to help address the air traffic controller shortage, and it's gratifying to see UND's first graduate from the program. At a time when the nation faces a critical need for highly trained ATCs, Anthony's willingness to lead the way sets a powerful example for prospective students and helps strengthen the future of the aviation industry."

GENERATIONS OF WOMEN AT UND AEROSPACE

The history of women in the aviation industry has been marked by resilience and grit. No one embodies those traits better than those from the University of North Dakota, whether they be alumnae or current students.

This past September, many generations of UND Aerospace women had the opportunity to meet and reconnect when alumna Jill Newby received the Sioux Award for Distinguished Achievement & Leadership, an award that honors the University's most esteemed alumni. The event provided space to reflect on the history of women in the program and to acknowledge the obstacles they have overcome.

2025 ALUMNI HONORS: JILL NEWBY, '83

Jilly Newby grew up with her eyes towards the sky. Her father, a WWII pilot, sparked an interest in flying from a young age. When she took the ACT and was sent an assessment of her strengths, her recommended career was that of a pilot. So, when she initially started college in Bemidji, she knew exactly which elective to pick.

"I thought, as long as I need an extra class here, I'll try Introduction to Flight, not really reading it because you know, you're an idiot when you're a freshman, you don't read anything," Newby joked. "The class, it wasn't ground school – you had to solo. It said it had to be arranged at the airport, and I thought, "Why would I have to take a class at the airport?" And then I found out what it was, I said, "Oh my God. It only took me through soloing as it was only an introduction. I ended up getting my private and the rest was all over at UND."

When Newby graduated from UND in 1983, very few women were becoming pilots. But with multiple signs pointing her towards aviation, she wrote to airlines asking for advice on how to become a pilot. They sent her back applications to become a flight attendant.

"For women, it's up to us to be the ones to do that stuff, to make the door open for the next generation," expressed Newby. "It's getting slightly better. I don't want to make it all sound rosy and that it was all wonderful because it certainly wasn't. But it is getting better."

During her time at UND, Newby became involved with everything, whether it be clubs, internships, or flight instructing. She worked in the Dean's Office, giving tours to prospective students, participated in clubs like Alpha Eta Rho, and flew as a part of the Flying Team.

"There wasn't a 'Woman in Aviation' club when we were there," expressed Newby. "But I was on the flying team there, and there were, maybe, five women on the team. We called ourselves the Flying Squirrels. I mean, we went to Nationals down in Monroe, Louisiana, but it was a tight group of women because there just weren't that many."

When she got a shot to interview with United Airlines, her time at UND would give her an extra edge. She credits her time at the University and the connections she made for many of her career successes.

"I worked for John Odegard—I knew him very well," said Newby. "In fact, when I got hired at United, during the interview, they said, oh, I see you went UND and asked me something about John Odegard. I went, 'Oh, yeah, well, call him, man. I mean, I worked for him.' It's funny how many UND people are out there."

As one of the first 30 women to be hired as a pilot for United, Newby faced prejudice and obstacles throughout her career. But she persevered, knowing that her efforts would help the other women that she mentored to succeed.

"I mean, I got told by one guy, 'you know, you're taking my son's job. You should be home, you know, you can be a flight attendant. You're taking food off the table from a man's family.'" Newby recalled. "I mean, one van driver literally asked the captain on the van drive down to Washington, 'Wait, you fly with her all month?' And he said, 'Well, yeah, it's, you know, great.' And the driver goes, 'But what happens on those five days? I mean, they can't possibly let her fly an airplane then.' I've heard it all. I was the first woman on the 767 fleet at United in 1989. That was a whole eye-opener to me. It was not a pleasant experience. I decided that no woman around me would ever have to experience something like that. We've now moved forward, and things are a lot better."

Not only is Newby inspiring as a pilot, but also in what she has done outside of flying, including serving as a mentor to those hoping to become pilots by providing advice, writing recommendation letters, and more. Newby expressed that she wants to serve as a role model for others, just as her mother was for her.

"She was always a very strong woman," said Newby regarding her mother. "I think she was born at the wrong time—she would have done something given the opportunity. But now, it's worth trying to make up for it, and hopefully, your kids will have better opportunities than you and so on, and so on, so that's always the goal. Especially as women, we kind of have to stick together. Many would like it a lot better if you just stayed home and were a good housewife, cook, and cleaner. So, instead, you should kick the door open. And there's plenty of mentors out there now, so I feel like that should help."

Newby retired this year after 40 years with United Airlines and is looking forward to spending time outdoors and at local farmers' markets. She advises students who aspire to a career like hers to stay motivated and keep going.

"It's the best career in the world," stated Newby. "Stick with it, you know, it's like anything. You have to stick with it, and there are going to be days that are great, and days that aren't, just like we train for days with the worst-case scenario. Also, have fun. Laugh. Have fun and laugh. That kind of sounds superficial, but it's true. Everybody's so serious now."

THE FORMATION OF THE UND WOMEN IN AVIATION CHAPTER

When Elizabeth Bjerke began her freshman year in 1996, she joined a small student organization for female pilots at UND. It wasn't until she became president of the organization in 1998 that the club would be formed into a chapter of Women in Aviation International.

"At the time, we were pretty small, because, you know, we had probably 7-8% female students on top of a much smaller student population at that time," expressed Bjerke, who now serves as Associate Dean of Aerospace and faculty advisor to the UND Women in Aviation chapter. "I remember begging Kent Lovelace, who was chair of the aviation department at that time, to be our faculty advisor for this new Women in Aviation chapter. We got our bylaws passed, and then as soon as I graduated and joined the faculty, Kent was very happy to give me that faculty advisor role. So, I started the chapter in 1998 and actually became the faculty advisor shortly thereafter in 2002."

The new organization of Women in Aviation offered a few incentives to members, including expanded opportunities for underclassmen, a focus on women in all parts of the industry instead of just pilots, and an annual conference where members could meet other women in the industry and find opportunities to advance their careers. When the UND club was formed, it was one of the first collegiate chapters of the international organization.

"It's been amazing to see how it has grown and the activities that we have done throughout the years, as well as some of the traditions that we have maintained," expressed Bjerke. "We have been holding our pancake breakfast since well before I was a student. We've been making candles as a fundraiser for close to 19 years.

And just the number of female students we have in the club now is amazing. We used to kind of finish the year begging any underclassmen to take on officer roles, whereas now we have a slate of, you know, 4 or 5 nominations for each officer position, which is great to see. We've been sending over 30 girls to the conference every year, which is also amazing to see them interact with the industry and with our alumni at our Alumni Event. It's just been amazing to watch it grow. We've also been giving out a scholarship remember for over 20 years, so very exciting times at UND for the Women in Aviation chapter."

WOMEN IN AVIATION TODAY

Today, UND Aerospace has welcomed the largest class yet, with a record-breaking percentage of women at over 25%, an impressive figure, considering the industry average of female pilots at 10.8%. The UND Chapter of Women in Aviation has grown significantly over the past 5 years, with approximately 150 members this year.

"When I joined WAI my freshman year, some of our biggest meetings had 20 girls, and we could fit comfortably into one of the small classrooms," said Kaelyn Wiltse, vice president of the UND WAI chapter. "Now, we've had to get creative and move our meeting locations outside of the aviation halls because of how big our group has grown! Walking into our first meeting this year and seeing over 120 girls was almost emotional. It reminded me of why I joined the club in the first place—to be a part of something bigger than myself and a community of girls who support one another and want to help each other succeed. I'm so proud of what WAI has become, and I hope to see not only the numbers continue to grow, but also the success of those involved."

The chapter has provided students with a space to grow and meet others, as well as provided opportunities and connections that have furthered their careers. Members of the organization have gone on to work in a variety of different roles in the aviation industry, with many becoming leaders of their fields.

“That is probably one of the neatest things as a faculty member because lots of times we live vicariously through our students,” said Bjerke. “You know, we hope that we set them up and we prepare them for that future career that they want to see in aviation, and as my role as faculty advisor with our Women in Aviation chapter, I’ve gotten to know those officers through the years, and oftentimes stay in touch with them. They’ll reach out for letters of recommendation, and I can say, even just thinking of past presidents, many have gone on to very successful careers at the airlines. We’ve had military pilots, F-35 pilots, some have gone into aircraft sales, some are working within the FAA, some are going into academia as well, so it’s really just neat to see the impact that our graduates have had and will continue to have on the industry. It’s always great to reconnect with our past Women Aviation chapter members when we go to the national conference every year at our alumni event, and really see where they’ve gone with their careers.”

Looking forward, the chapter hopes to see continual growth for both the organization and for the presence of women in the aviation industry as a whole.

“Hopefully still going strong at the University of North Dakota,”said Bjerke when asked about where she sees the organization in 10 years. “It gives that great club atmosphere for students to get to know one another and to help with the mentoring students to be successful in the program. We are hoping to see it continue to grow. We are now just over 20-25% female students in the aviation program at UND, which is amazing because when we started the chapter back in the late 90s, we were closer to 5% or 8% of female students, so I think having that support network in place as well as bringing those alumni back to speak to the students is great. One of our great events on campus every year is our Faces of the Industry event. That really was an initiative brought out by officers in the Women Aviation chapter back in 2020, so again, a lot of great things, and I can see it continuing to grow, and I hope I can continue to be a part of the chapter into the future.”

The event this September provided the chance to reflect on how much the industry has grown and to recognize some of the women who helped bring change for the new generation. With several members of the current student organization in attendance at the event, Jill Newby addressed them directly in her acceptance speech.

“And for all the young ladies out there, life is short,” Newby said. “You should do what you want the way you want to do it. Don’t let anyone tell you anything different because that is really important.”

Make an impact for UND WAI students through the WAI scholarship fund!

pd.undalumni.org/give-wai-und

INTRODUCING
DR. HYUNGWOO JO

Originally from South Korea, Professor Hyungwoo Jo found his passion for aviation when working as a mechanic. He received a degree in Aircraft Mechanical Engineering while in South Korea and learned more about aviation in the process.

"The more I saw the aircraft, the more I wanted to fly," said Jo. "That's when I found the University of North Dakota and started my undergraduate here after my initial degree in aircraft mechanics."

He arrived on campus in 2017 to begin his flight training and worked through his ratings to become a flight instructor. It was then he discovered a love for education and chose to pursue a master's in education, becoming an adjunct faculty member in 2022. A year later, he would accept a full-time faculty position.

"I have a passion for aviation and education. I strive to provide education for quality pilots who can continue to contribute to our industry. That's what motivates me to continue my studies and to preserve, create, and deliver the highest quality education in aviation."

As a doctoral researcher, Jo successfully defended his dissertation to earn his doctorate of philosophy in education, health, and behavioral studies, focusing his research on enhancing training methodology in aviation education.

His new teaching method uses technology-assisted learning to help students improve their landing skills by comparing their scanning behavior with that of their instructors. Per FAA recommendations, this "scan" should include looking outside the aircraft 90% of the time and at their instruments 10% of the time.

"The research had two phases, and the first phase was recruiting 10 students and 10 flight instructors to identify any statistically significant significant differences in scanning behavior between students and instructors," Jo said. "There were enough differences that, as a result, we could move on to the next phase to get student pilots to model their flight instructors through a training method I created. It uses three lessons—one briefing and two flights—designed to model flight instructor scanning behavior and acquire a better understanding of their own cognitive awareness during critical phases of flight."

After completing his teaching module, Jo found that student pilots improved their scanning ratio significantly, aligning much more closely with the FAA-recommended ratio used by their

flight instructors during the landing phase. As an instructor himself, Jo explained that this critical phase of flight was an area that students could benefit from through visual modeling and comparative feedback.

“When I first began my Ph.D. program, I knew I wanted to create something in aviation education, and I knew one of the most critical phases of flight and the one that contributes the most to aviation accidents was takeoffs and landings,” said Jo. “In my experience as an instructor, students struggled the most with landings; therefore, I wanted to help students learn more about landing tasks to reduce accident rates while contributing to the industry safety. I wondered what students were looking at because that’s what they were probably processing, so I started looking at something that could track their eyes.”

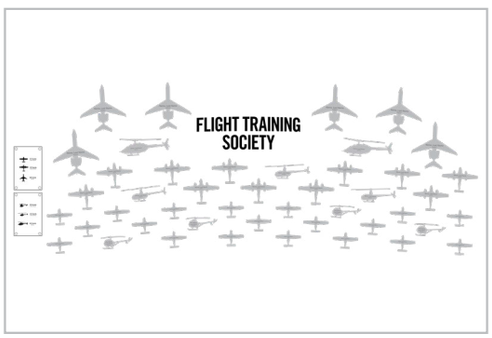
Before the training, students were shown to fixate outside the cockpit approximately 96% of the time, only occasionally glancing at their instruments. After Jo’s training modules, this ratio reduced to 90%, vastly improving their awareness during this phase of flight. Jo expressed hope that this teaching methodology could be expanded to other phases of flight and was glad to work with so many people as part of his research.

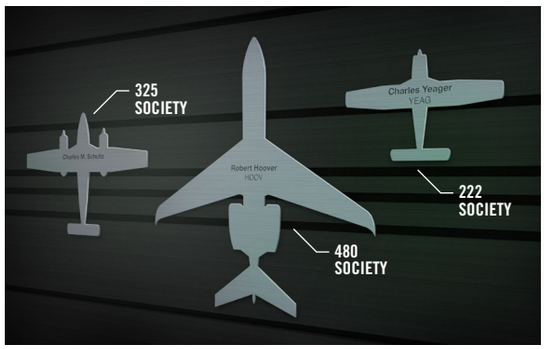
“This was not a sole work,” expressed Jo. “It was a collaboration of many. I’d like to acknowledge my Ph.D. advisor, Zarrina Azizova – she significantly contributed to the expert guidance and academic mentorship, and ensured the practical relevance. Plus, the research was supported by JDOSAS—I am grateful for their commitment to advancing innovation in aviation education and fostering my research. And then flight instructors, students, and course managers were integral—their collaboration played a critical role. Lastly, I want to thank Mr. Jeremy Roesler and Ms. Paula Bruse for their support in implementing the operational and logistical aspects of this study. It was teamwork, I was an instrument in this research, and I hope to be able to continue to work together to enhance aviation education and to provide the highest quality of aviation education in the world.”

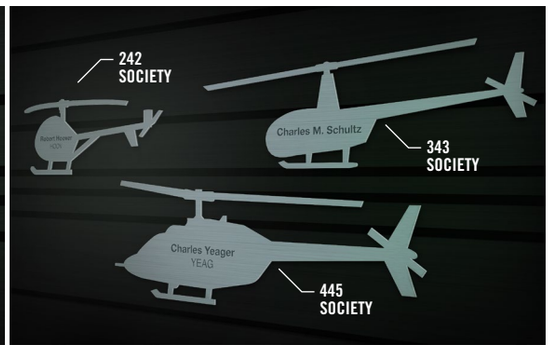
UND AEROSPACE
FLIGHT OPERATIONS UPDATE

Your gift today will help build a Flight Operations Center worthy of our world-class program, giving future students the resources they need to soar.

Despite the challenges of a true North Dakota winter, construction on our new Flight Operations Center is moving forward with impressive momentum. Each week brings exciting progress on a facility designed to transform the student and flight instructor experience at UND Aerospace. The new center will bring instructional spaces, briefing areas, and collaborative gathering spots together under one roof, creating a more efficient, student-centered environment for flight training. From streamlined operations to modern spaces that foster connection and learning, this facility represents a major investment in the success of our students and the future of our program. You can follow the transformation in real time through our livestream on YouTube, offering an inside look at each stage of development. We're thrilled to share this journey not only with our current students and staff, but also with alumni, partners, and friends who support our mission. We are equally excited to celebrate the early success of our newly established Flight Training Society, which has already welcomed more than 65 members. The generosity of these donors is helping bring our vision of a next-generation flight training center to life. Thank you to all who have contributed to this project. Together, we are building a facility that will elevate flight training for years to come.







Donor plaque mockups. Actual size and arrangement will vary.

Flight Training Society

Giving Levels

	Level	Amount	Recognition
	102/143 Society	$102 - $999	Name appears on digital signage
	222 Society	$1,000 - $9,999	Single-engine plaque on donor wall*
	242 Society	$1,000 - $9,999	H300 plaque on donor wall*
	325 Society	$10,000 - $24,999	Twin-engine plaque on donor wall*
	343 Society	$10,000 - $24,999	R44 plaque on donor wall*
	480 Society	$25,000+	Jet plaque on donor wall*
	445 Society	$25,000+	Bell 206 plaque on donor wall*

Give today!

Scan the qr code or visit **pd.undalumni.org/give-flight-ops**

Don't forget to include your CFI ident in the comment section to be included on your plaque.

UND IN ORBIT

AEROSPACE GAINS FULL CONTROL OF SATELLITE

With the launch of two satellites, a new frontier of space sciences at the University of North Dakota now orbits around us. With UND now fully in control of day-to-day operations, students have the opportunity to gain real-world experience as satellite operators.

Getting a satellite into orbit is no easy task and requires time, research, and collaboration. After years dedicated to the project, the satellites were launched aboard the SpaceX Falcon 9 Transporter 14 Rideshare mission this past June.

“UND had plans to place a satellite in space for many years,” said Dr. Pablo de León, professor and chair of Space Studies at UND and project manager for this satellite mission. “Several projects were initiated over time, but for a variety of reasons—most notably the challenges associated with achieving orbit—they could not be completed. A few years ago, the North Dakota State Legislature awarded UND dedicated funding to support the development, construction, and launch of satellite infrastructure. This funding made it possible to finally move the project forward.”

With funding secured, the project could continue into its next phases, undergoing several changes from how it was originally proposed. Those involved learned to evolve with it, keeping open minds to new ideas.

“The initial idea was to place a single satellite in space and operate it,” said de León. “During discussions among faculty, one of our professors, Dr. Marcos Fernández Tous, noted that he had been in contact with a company called AVS, which was establishing a presence in New York State and was developing small satellites. We reached out to them, and through discussions of possible mission architectures, the idea emerged to develop not one but two low-cost satellites. These satellites would have the capability, after being launched separately, to locate each other in space and physically dock with one another.”

The ability for spacecraft and satellites to physically dock has real-world applications, as satellites of the future will require refueling while in space. The satellites would be able to demonstrate this ability to locate their target and make contact—an ambitious goal for the team, which was new to this type of mission, but determined to move forward.

“Gaining expertise in this area would uniquely position us to undertake more complex missions in the near future,” expressed de León. “The experience of executing such a sophisticated operation—finding another spacecraft and physically docking with it—would position UND as the only university with this specific expertise.”

The launch, however, was not just the work of UND alone. Collaborations with Cornell University and AVS helped to get the satellite operational.

“Previously, Cornell University designed a similar mission but was unable to achieve the objective of rendezvous between the two satellites,” said de León. “Despite this, they were extremely generous in sharing their system designs, which helped reduce our development timeline, as well as detailing the software and hardware challenges that prevented successful docking. Although this presented a steep learning curve for our team, it enabled us, in collaboration with AVS, to implement the necessary changes and attempt a new mission using two redesigned satellites, which we named UND-ROADS. ROADS stands for ‘Rendezvous & Operations for Autonomous Docking and Servicing’. With our in-house orbital mechanics expert, Dr. Ron Fevig, serving as the

ROADS mission manager, his contributions were instrumental in successfully placing the two satellites into orbit and advancing the mission to its current stage."

Now, UND is in control of the day-to-day operations of the satellites, with AVS assisting with critical operations. The project opens opportunities for students to gain hands-on experience as satellite operators.

"The two satellites provide space operations experience for UND faculty, staff, and students," said Ron Fevig, associate professor of Space Studies and the project's technical leader. "These satellites are intended to demonstrate autonomous docking between the two smallest satellites to ever do so. They are also intended to demonstrate Doppler tracking and also serve as a communications repeater to amateur radio operators worldwide."

The project provided many opportunities for those involved, including the chance to work with industry partners. Faculty, staff, and students gained new skills and experiences while getting the satellites operational.

"It was a wonderful professional development opportunity to go to AVS-US twice, once in March and again in April of this year, to work with AVS engineers and other staff and students from UND," expressed Fevig. "It was incredibly satisfying to travel to AVS Headquarters in Spain to witness the launch and deployment of the satellites remotely and communicate with the satellites a couple of hours later. Student Jacob Stanley joined me on that adventure."

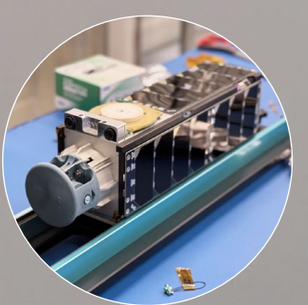
The opportunity to work directly with satellites strengthens the Space Studies program at UND Aerospace to help meet the demands of a growing job market. The ability to learn these useful skills while still in school makes students more competitive upon graduation.

"The roles of satellite operator and mission control specialist are in extremely high demand today and will become even more critical in the near future, with significant implications for both commercial space activities and military operations," said de León. "UND is well-positioned to become one of the first universities to offer this type of training using its own space assets, thereby educating the workforce in a capability that is essential to the future of U.S. leadership in space."

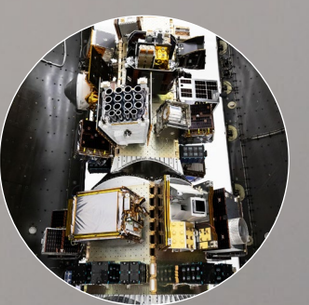
As space operations grow and change, this next phase of UND aims to meet the growing demand for aerospace education. These satellites represent a continued dedication to preparing students for future career needs across all areas of aerospace.

"Obtaining this type of expertise is critically important in the 21st century, as an increasing amount of critical infrastructure will be deployed in space," expressed de León. "The ability to navigate securely in the space domain and to control space assets is of fundamental importance. Through the ROADS program, we are learning not only about the design, construction, and certification of these systems, but—most importantly for us in the School of Aerospace Sciences—about the operation of highly complex space systems. Developing the workforce of the future is what we do best. We are already the leading institution in the nation for aviation education, and we are now extending that leadership into the space domain."

UND in the AVS-US clean room



ROADS satelite intergration test



ROADS satelite in launch vehicle

Pablo de León, department chair for Space Studies

Ron Fevig, associate professor

Kavya K. Manyapu, adjunct professor

UND HOSTS SPACE INDUSTRY LEADERS FOR 2025 SPACE OPERATIONS SUMMIT

On Nov. 5-6, UND welcomed space industry executives, national security partners, researchers, and students to campus for the second installation of the annual Space Operations Summit (SoS).

According to the SoS website, the summit provides a “platform for exchanging ideas, insights, and best practices for advancing space operations and ensuring the long-term sustainability of the space environment.” Held at the Memorial Union, the summit showcased UND’s growing role as a national hub for aerospace and defense collaboration.

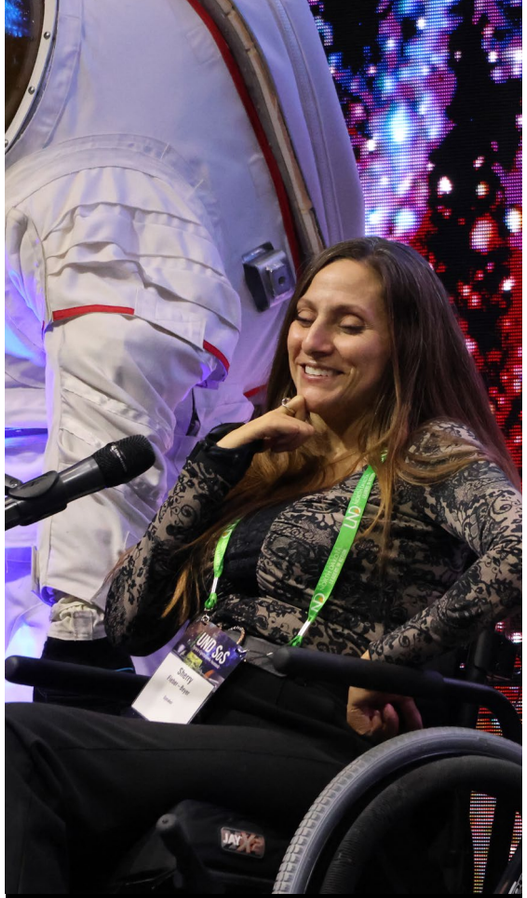
In videotaped remarks, North Dakota Sen. Kevin Cramer said Grand Forks is a driver of innovation in space.

“We have a top-notch university, a business-friendly state, and major defense investments,” Cramer said. “It’s the perfect breeding ground for innovation out here in Washington.”

President Andrew Armacost, in his introductory remarks, mentioned UND’s partnership with the U.S. Space Force and the University’s designation as a top-tier research university. These developments, along with the University’s May signing of an educational partnership agreement with the U.S. Space Development Agency, demonstrate the University’s commitment to partnering with various entities to advance space research.

“The work that’s happening both with manned and unmanned space operations and space flight are nationally significant here at the University of North Dakota,” Armacost said.

Keith Crisman, assistant professor



Sherry Fieber-Beyer, associate professor

Marcos Fernandez-Tous, assistant professor

Speaking first at the summit was Marshall Smith, CEO of Starlab Space Stations and a former 37-year NASA executive and engineer.

The global space community is approaching a pivotal transition as the International Space Station nears its end of service, potentially by 2030, Smith noted.

“On Sunday, we celebrated 25 years of continuous human presence in space,” he said. “The ISS is coming to an inflection point … The point is, the ISS has to be deorbited in a very known way. It’ll take a couple of years to deorbit, so you have to plan for this.”

And after that deorbiting? Smith outlined how Starlab Space, backed by Voyager Space and international partners, is advancing a next-generation commercial space station to ensure research continuity, strengthen national security, and expand global collaboration.

Though the U.S. leads a global collaboration in space, that domain is increasingly being contested, Smith said. He called for American leadership in space research and cautioned against stagnation.

“We don’t want to just maintain what we have. We want to move forward; we want to leap forward,” he said. “And that’s what Starlab is designed to do.”

Across the rest of the summit, leaders from Starlab, Iridium, NASA, Northrop Grumman, and others spoke and led panels on cutting-edge space-related topics. The full agenda can be found on the SoS website.

UND also fielded several speakers on a panel at the summit to talk about the Rendezvous & Operations for Autonomous Docking and Servicing, or ROADS satellite mission. The speakers recapped the history of the project, which got off the ground — literally — in June via a SpaceX launch.

The panel discussion included Ronald Fevig, associate professor of Space Studies; Pablo de León, chair of Space Studies; James W. Wade, professor of Mechanical Engineering; and Morgan Giuseponi, project manager of the Space Operations Group at UND. Also sitting in on the panel discussion was Ramon Blanco Maceiras, the U.S. head of space at Added Value Solutions.

UND’s satellites were developed in collaboration with collaboration with AVS-US, an engineering, an engineering firm headquartered in both upstate New York and Spain. They are low Earth orbit satellites orbiting at an altitude of approximately 300 miles above the Earth’s surface.

The pair of satellites can detach and reattach to each other, and test the technology needed to accomplish that feat.

Watch the conference recording on the University of North Dakota Research Channel

YouTube

WINNING BIG AND FLYING HIGH

The Story of UND Aerospace's Own Soccer Aviator

From left to right Jirasevijinda's father, mother, brother, fly with Jirasevijinda for first time while on a visit for graduation. Photo courtesy of Irene Jirasevijinda.

College is challenging enough without having to juggle the intense schedule of an athlete with the complexity of flight training. But Irene Jirasevijinda makes it look easy, competing as a D1 soccer player all while earning her ratings.

Discovering a Passion

Originally from Thailand, Jirasevijinda found her passion for soccer after seeing some boys play at school during lunch. One day, she decided that she wanted to play too, sparking an intense love of the sport.

"I immediately fell in love with it, and all I look forward to every day is playing soccer at school," expressed Jirasevijinda. "From there, I joined my school soccer team and a club team back in Thailand, and I was always the only girl on the team. I love the sport because it gave me a sense of community, new friends, and it opened many doors to new opportunities throughout my life. Most importantly, I love it because it's fun!"

Having discovered a love for soccer at 11, Jirasevijinda had a dream to play collegiate soccer in the U.S. So, she left her home country of Thailand

to attend high school in California to improve her chances of getting recruited.

"Throughout my 4 years in high school, I never even thought or knew anything about aviation until my senior year," explained Jirasevijinda. "I was already being recruited to come play soccer for UND; however, I still couldn't decide what I wanted to study in college. I talked to my parents one day and went through a list of careers that I can see myself pursuing. Eventually, I said I wanted to be a pilot, despite not knowing anyone in aviation or anything about the process of becoming one. From then on, it was a no-brainer after I found out that UND has an amazing aviation program and that I would be able to play soccer at a Division I level."

The Soccer Aviatrix

Once in school, Jirasevijinda worked hard to balance her athletic responsibilities with the commitment required to complete flight training. She had to work around her games and practices to get flights and schoolwork done, but explained that she was fortunate to have coaches, professors, and flight instructors who were helpful and accommodating.

"It was tough in the beginning to juggle everything," she admitted. "We were gone a lot during season, and as we all know, flying consistently is crucial, especially in the beginning of your flight training. So, it really took a lot of work and studying, trying to stay sharp and not fall behind in the classroom and in the plane. It taught me a lot about discipline, hard work, and sacrifice."

Despite the work involved, Jirasevijinda expressed that it is possible for students to have multiple interests while still successfully completing a degree. She explained that while different from each other, playing soccer helped her immensely in her flight training.

"I treated flight training like another sport I signed up for. There are many aspects of flight training that are very similar to being an athlete training for a sport. You have to practice and put in the work outside if you want to perform on game day or on stage check. Both sports and flight training are mentally and physically demanding. You need to be able to take criticism in sports and improve on it, just like how you get debrief notes from your flight. I also think being an athlete, you are naturally competitive and self-driven which, translates very well in the flight training environment. I think overall playing sports made the transition into flight training a lot easier!"

What's Next?

Now, as a flight instructor, Jirasevijinda is working towards her hours. As a member of the United Aviate program, she hopes to fly international routes to Asia for United Airlines one day. She encourages other students looking at extracurriculars while in school to get involved.

"I would say do it," advised Jirasevijinda. "Find something you enjoy besides aviation and get involved. It will take up a lot of your time and add more responsibilities to your plate, but it will be worth it. You will meet different people, make new connections, and you will grow from the experience. I think it is healthy for everyone to have multiple interests because life is so much more than just aviation, sports, or school."

INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH

WHAT THE COLOR OF GLACIAL LAKES COULD TELL US ABOUT THEM

In August of 2025, researchers from the University of North Dakota traveled to Peru. Their mission: To study the glaciers and glacial lakes of the area and their impact on the communities surrounding them.

In assisting Ph.D. student Anaí Caparó Bellido with her dissertation on glacial meltwater, Professor Jeff VanLooy noticed something interesting about the color of the glacial lakes in the area she was studying. VanLooy—whose background is in glaciology—hoped to discover the cause. So, he and master's student Logan Dietrich accompanied Caparó Bellido when she returned to Peru.

VanLooy collected samples from seven different lakes, two rivers, and one glacier, analyzing the levels of sediment and heavy metals found within. He discovered that sulfur, calcium, iron, and magnesium all showed high levels, but not dangerously so. However, aluminum levels exceeded EPA standards for long-term safety.

"For example," he noted. "If there were fish in the lakes, you wouldn't want to eat them. However, there is no marine life in them – so what's the big deal? The lakes output into streams, which flow into populated areas. It might not be a concern if the water mixes with other streams. What is a concern are the llamas and alpacas that herd in the area around the lake and stream. They could potentially be taking up the aluminum as they drink the water and eat the grass next to the stream. If it's enough, there could be potential problems when using the meat for food. Only two areas had high aluminum levels though - likely due to natural concentrations in rocks in the area."

Variations in metals and sediments were the cause of the wide range of colors Vanlooy had noticed in the images. He explained that seemingly insignificant characteristics of glacial lakes, like their pH levels, could have significant effects on the surrounding area. He noted that research like this is essential so they can report their findings and further research it, helping alert communities in the area to any potential issues.

"One of the things that we found out that was interesting was that one of the lakes had a pH of 3.86," said VanLooy. "This is pretty low for a lake. Given that it has a high level of aluminum, the pH becomes a bigger concern because then the water has dissolved the aluminum more within it, making the animals and vegetation downstream more likely to be susceptible to the aluminum in that water."

VanLooy expressed that the trip overall was successful and incredibly interesting for both himself and the two students. In addition to their research, they also did some sightseeing, taking in the country's gorgeous landscapes.

"We went down a bit early to get used to the elevation, so we spent a week seeing sights at high elevation locations," said VanLooy. "There were a lot of neat aspects. I loved being in this environment. I love glaciers and their appearance, and being on one was absolutely amazing. We got to do and see some really cool things. It was fantastic to be in that environment and get to do this research."

INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH

SAUDI ARABIAN FLIGHTS; UND AEROSPACE RETURNS FOR WEATHER MODIFICATION RESEARCH

This fall, researchers from the UND Atmospheric Science department returned to Saudi Arabia to continue weather modification work. Graduate Research Assistant Lynnlee Bestul shares her experience helping with cloud seeding and research during the trip.

Tell me a little bit about your trip to Saudi Arabia – what were you researching? What kind of work did you conduct?
We were researching convective clouds. Saudi Arabia has a cloud seeding project that aims to increase rainfall and greenify the desert. We sampled both seeded and natural convective clouds to see if and what differences we could detect. The research aircraft was equipped with a suite of microphysical cloud probes that sampled liquid water content, cloud droplet concentration, droplet shape and size, and many other features of the cloud.

Was this a continuation of research from a previous trip? How did the goals change, if so?
There was extensive research conducted from 2007 to 2010 assessing the feasibility of the operational seeding program, but this specific trip looked more at assessing the program. We completed three intensive operational periods (IOP) with the current research trip. The first IOP was focused on the escarpment along the west coast of the country, where the Red Sea provides ample moisture for upslope thunderstorms. Measuring winds was very important for that trip, as they were looking for regions to place ground-based flare trees in the mountains. They also did cloud passes. The last two IOPs (which I was present for) were based out of Riyadh, which is more centrally located. We conducted many cloud passes, but weren't doing any of the wind box flights that they did during the first IOP.

What is the main goal of the research you conducted?
The main goal was to obtain aircraft observations contemporaneous with the operational cloud seeding program in Saudi Arabia. The hope is that some of the data collected would show seeding effects, but there are a lot of challenges with that kind of analysis, so it is not the number one goal.

Who all was involved? What is your background in this work?
From UND, Michael Willette (graduated in 2023) and I were both overseas and flew on the research aircraft as cloud probe operators. Andrea Skow (flight scientist) and Kurt Hibert (flight engineer) are also UND alumni who traveled overseas and flew on research flights. Dr. David Delene was the flight scientist for most of the project. Marwa Majdi (research assistant professor), Andy Detweiler (retired adjunct faculty), Shawn Wagner (post-doc), and Christian Nairy (grad student) all helped with data processing and analysis stateside. I worked on the North Dakota Cloud Modification Project as an intern meteorologist and radar meteorologist for three summers. I have also been conducting cloud seeding research for 3 years with the North Dakota Department of Water Resources.

What was your favorite part? Did anything surprising happen?
My favorite part of the trip was getting to experience thunderstorms from inside the storm rather than outside. It was a really unique and different experience that most people never get to have. Watching the storm develop around us was insanely cool. I also really loved the hands-on field work experience. It's one thing to learn about atmospheric phenomena from the classroom, but to actually see the concepts occurring in front of me was so incredible.

Any fun stories from your time there?
We got to do some hiking on days when there wasn't weather in our target area. I do a lot of hiking in the US and have always found the differences in nature between different regions interesting (mountains vs. plains vs. sandy shrubs), so it was really cool to hike in the desert! We found camel bones one day, which was definitely different!

INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH

BRAVING THE COLD OF THE NORTH; PROFESSOR KENNEDY CONTINUES RESEARCH JOURNEY IN ICELAND

After returning to UND from a research trip in Iceland, Professor Aaron Kennedy is looking forward to the next steps of his project. While his initial goal was to use his self-developed instrument to study and predict the potential for dangerous avalanches, unideal winter conditions necessitated additional data collection to achieve that goal.

“From a personal goal, I thought it was an extreme success because I got to understand how to improve my instrument and make it more robust,” explained Kennedy. It taught me some more about the right design to use, but from a science perspective, we didn’t really get the data to see how useful this information would be for avalanche forecasting. And so, the goal of extending our data for an additional winter is to try to have a more typical Icelandic winter so that we can publish some papers about how this would be useful for avalanche forecasting.”

In August, Kennedy returned to Iceland with graduate students Talia Kurtz and Alec Sczepanski to set up the instruments for another year of data collection. He expects to receive the necessary information by the end of the year.

“I like seeing stuff I’ve built be deployed and getting useful data from it. Just seeing something that started from a little seed grant at UND turn into a proposal to the National Science Foundation and that turned into a Fulbright. And so, this little, tiny chunk of money has blown up, and it’s like literally most of my research now. And seeing this get to the point where now people are contacting me and saying, ‘hey, we saw your instruments deployed, the images they’re getting are great, can you do this and that?’ It’s a great feeling to know that you’ve been successful.”

Kennedy expressed that taking students this past August really inspired him to make such an experience as accessible as possible.

“I have my grad students that are like my kids, and being able to bring them over to Iceland and see them get really excited about the things I got really excited about, just got me even more passionate about it. I decided then that I need to do this more because it’s very rewarding to see your kids get excited about something, so I’m really pumped about trying to bring these experiences to others.”

Kennedy expressed that he hopes that his research can help people and improve the safety of communities. He hopes that the data they are collecting this year will improve the ability to predict avalanches and warn people who may be in danger.

“I got into winter weather after living in North Dakota,” he explained. “This got me into instrument design. Studying blizzards is only one thing you can do with instruments, which led me to the question of what else we can do. I visited Iceland for fun, and there was a memorial for people who had died in an avalanche. That resonated with me because most of my life, I’ve researched how the weather affects people, and here was something that impacted people. I wanted to help.”

Even several months later, Kennedy expressed the fondness he still holds for Iceland. Even thousands of miles from home, he still found ties to North Dakota.

“Iceland feels like a second home to me. A lot of people there are actually familiar with North Dakota, because there is a high population of Icelandic people living here and in Manitoba. It was weird going to a location where you could meet people on the street who had connections here. It was really rewarding.”

OUTSTANDING INSTRUCTORS
THE 2025 CFIS OF THE MONTH

January
SAMUEL HARRER
Big Lake, MN

February
COLIN NUGENT
San Diego, CA

March
SARAH BAIER
Huntley, IL

April
TYLER ALESSIO
Concord, CA

May
NICHOLAS BURGESS
Fishers, IN

June
EVA EDINGER
Glenwood, MN

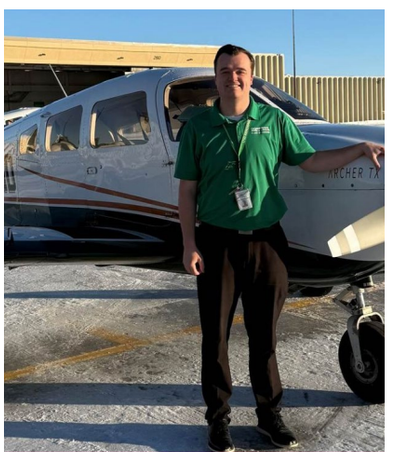
July
JOCELYN LEDIN-BRUENING
North Branch, MN

August
MAX BAUMGARTEN
New River, AZ

September
JEREMY HAEFNER
Minnetonka, MN

October
GARRET GUBBELS
Abrams, WI

November
JACKSON RENSCH
Garrison, ND



December
MASON GRAY
Alexandria, MN

HIGHLIGHTS

UND TODAY

UND AEROSPACE PURCHASES RECORD ORDER FROM PIPER AIRCRAFT
AUGUST 12, 2025

Over next eight years, John D. Odegard School of Aerospace Sciences will replace its fleet with 145 new aircraft

The contract, which is set to deliver 145 aircraft over eight years starting in 2027, replaces UND's existing agreement with Piper, signed in 2016. It will update the fleet at both the Odegard School's Grand Forks and Mesa, Ariz., campuses.

UND SIGNS $5 MILLION RESEARCH PARTNERSHIP WITH FAA
SEPTEMBER 30, 2025

Five-year partnership will supplement work of recently established North Dakota Center for Aerospace Medicine

The five-year agreement will assign an FAA research medical officer to UND, who will assist with the execution and planning of research activities. This is the first time the FAA has embedded a medical researcher at a university, which underscores the uniqueness of this partnership.

FROM MALI TO UND, SHE'S FLYING TOWARD HISTORY
NOVEMBER 6, 2025

Noumousso Diane, a UND aviation senior, is on course to becoming her country's first female commercial pilot

"One day, I'm going to be a pilot," she announced to her father. He smiled and laughed — not unkindly, but because he had never seen it done.

Read full stories at UND Today
blog.UND.edu

‘FACES OF THE INDUSTRY’ SUMMIT EXPLORES AEROSPACE-INDUSTRY INCLUSION

NOVEMBER 25, 2025

Hosted by UND students, the event ‘celebrates inclusion and acceptance in the aerospace industry’

In October, hundreds of students and faculty gathered at the Memorial Union for UND Aerospace’s Fifth Annual Faces of the Industry Summit.

UND PARTNERS WITH SPACE AND DEFENSE LEADER VOYAGER TECHNOLOGIES

DECEMBER 11, 2025

‘Multi-decade partnership’ will boost region’s space, UAS and defense ecosystem, says Voyager president and co-founder

When describing UND’s work in the domain of space, UND President Andy Armacost sometimes employs the Buzz Lightyear phrase “To infinity and beyond!” to capture the University’s seemingly limitless potential for innovation and growth.

AeroTalk launched in September 2025 as the official podcast of UND Aerospace, hosted by Matt Opsahl. New episodes are released every Monday and explore a range of topics within the field of aerospace. The show takes listeners beyond the classroom through conversations with alumni, career insights in aviation and aerospace, and practical advice for students. Since its release, **AeroTalk has reached the top 25% of global download status for podcasts**, according to Buzzsprout data. We are so grateful for our listeners and their continued support!

Tune in with AeroTalk every Monday—streaming on Apple Podcasts, Spotify, Amazon Music, and YouTube!

Wherever you listen, AeroTalk is available every Monday on Apple Podcasts, Spotify, Amazon Music, and YouTube!

CHECK OUT OUR TOP THREE EPISODES FROM THIS YEAR!

1. Simple Steps To Overcoming Your Stage Check

2. Leo Saucedo, The Man of Many Hats

3. Ken & Kent: The Early Days of Odegard

AEROSPACE CONNECTIONS

01

02

03

04

05

06

07

01. Fraternity brothers **Carter Lane '20** and **Tyler Couch '19** were on reserve when they randomly got assigned together for a SkyWest Airlines flight to Denver.

02. Former UND roommates **Mark Jones '92** and **Matt Shane '92** reunited during Matt's captain IOE at United Airlines.

03. Envoy Air First Officer **Frank Meredith '22** and Delta Air Lines First Officer **Kenneth Chen '20** reconnected at DFW.

04. Hometown friends **Matthew Adamson '21** and **Blake Eyer '22** found themselves flying together again at SkyWest Airlines in MSP.

05. **Chris Cooper '05, '08**, once had **Patrick Verner '21** as a student at UND. Years later, the two reconnected aboard a United Airlines flight from SLC to IAD.

06. Atmospheric Sciences alum **Shelby Ebertowski '24** and **Adam Caskey '02** working together as weather authority meteorologists on KSAT 12 News in San Antonio, Texas.

07. United Airlines Captain **Michael Morgen '10** and First Officer **Owen Poborsky '20** flew from Chicago to New York.

08. Aviation Professor, **Kim Kenville '91, '98, & '05**, reconnected with Airport Management and Commercial Aviation alumni **Dave Decoteau '06**, **Gina Van Slyke '06**, **Shawn Burke '11**, **Emily Phillipe '08**, and **Kyle Finseth '21** at NWAAAE.

09. Before a flight to Grand Forks, **Nathaniel Leben '05** ran into **Josh Ludwin '17**, a previous coworker from General Atomics, now working at the airlines.

10. **Michael Morgen '10** and **Jonathan Sepulveda '10** met in 2005 while touring UND as prospective students. They went on to become friends, having several classes together over the years. 20 years later, they reunited on a United Airlines flight from PHL to DEN, serving 151 customers.

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