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Profile: Frank Sterrett

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Frank Sterrett, the coordinator of the Aviation Science Program at Bridgewater, is on a mission. His task in the coming years is to alert the aviation community and those students contemplating a career in aviation to the best kept secret in the east. The secret that Frank Sterrett is talking about is that aviation science at Bridgewater is on the move with new programs, new equipment and a new vision. In his second year as coordinator, Frank Sterrett has ambitious plans for positioning Bridgewater at the top of those schools offering an aviation science degree.

Frank proudly lists the new initiatives that the program will introduce in the coming years. At the top of the list is the development of a Distance Learning program. Beginning in the Spring of 1995 and using the emerging satellite technology associated with the Moakley Center, the Aviation Science program will be able to link up with aviation education programs that originate at the University of North Dakota, one of the leading aviation science programs in the United States. When Bridgewater links up with the AWS program it will be the first east coast school to participate in distance learning. This tie-in with the University of North Dakota will enhance the course offerings of Bridgewater students and further solidify the reputation of the aviation program. Already Frank has hosted a visiting team of Russian aviation science faculty who are interested in cooperating with Bridgewater through the wonders of satellite communication. As Frank rightly states, the opportunities to improve aviation science at Bridgewater and to form contacts with the rest of the world are endless now that Bridgewater has the satellite capability of the Moakley Center.

As the aviation program deepens its course offerings and uses the advanced technology of the Moakley Center, Frank feels that one of the next steps will be to begin the process of offering a Masters degree in Aeronautical Science. There are currently some fifteen schools in the country that offer a masters degree but most are engineering institutions. Bridgewater, with its solid tradition of liberal arts, would take the lead in offering a masters program from a much different academic setting. With over three hundred students currently enrolled in the aviation program, Frank is confident that there would be a significant demand among Bridgewater students and the public for such a masters degree program.

But if the aviation science program is to prosper in the future Frank recognizes that new and more sophisticated equipment will be essential. Frank is anxious to add several new “visual” simulators to the five simulators that the college already has online. The more advanced simulators allow two students to test their skills. The Federal Aviation Administration, which certifies the program, encourages the two seat simulators as part of its effort to strengthen Cockpit Resource Management. The government is increasingly interested in developing pilots that have an understanding that the cockpit is made up of a team of professionals. A dual set simulator currently costs upwards of $250,000.

Frank also has his sights on a turbine simulator which will allow the students to prepare for a career in jet aviation. The price tag on such a simulator is $500,000.

Frank is undaunted by the challenges of upgrading the aviation science program at Bridgewater. He envisions the program growing into a new building where the simulators could be housed and the students could benefit from new technologies associated with the Moakley Center. Frank has already developed a $77,000 grant to acquire a Kavorous weather system that can provide pilots with the most accurate flying conditions. Frank envisions the Kavorous system having wide use on campus as students in coming years may pass a kiosk which will provide them with the latest in regional weather conditions.

As you can see, Frank is a busy man these days as he tries to spread the word about aviation science at Bridgewater. But Frank is an energetic promoter of his major and a practical dreamer who knows where aviation science should be by the year 2000. With Frank Sterrett at the controls of aviation science it is a sure bet that word of Bridgewater’s best kept secret will quickly leak out.