

Aero-interns get cockpit seat and learn from AirVenture entrepreneurs

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Doug Rottler comes from a military family. Since he was little, he has been a regular at the Experimental Aircraft Association's AirVenture summer fly-in conventions – the week when the world, literally, swoops into Oshkosh.

“My dad always wanted to stop by the home-built airplanes, which isn't what I wanted to see when I was younger,” said Rottler, a UW Oshkosh business student studying marketing with plans to focus on market research when he graduates in December. “I wanted to see the jets and the warbirds. Now, working with AeroInnovate, I get to see some of the hard work and innovation that goes into all different types of aircraft. It has been a great learning experience for me.”

The “AeroInnovate” Rottler references is provider of his summer gig. His passion for aviation has translated into a unique internship through the University of Wisconsin Oshkosh-launched nonprofit, AeroInnovate. The organization, formed within the UW Oshkosh Business Success Center, will participate in its fifth AirVenture next week.

AeroInnovate highlights new technologies, entrepreneurs, emerging companies and investment trends in the global world of aviation. It has also played a tremendous role in magnetizing Oshkosh to aviation start-ups and existing companies and continues to work with statewide interests to improve the Badger State's aviation-industry appeal.

Inventors, investors and entrepreneurs developing and promoting everything from legit jet packs to vertical-takeoff-and-landing aircraft to breakthroughs in fuel efficiency and avionics are getting a lift from a UW Oshkosh endeavor. It is continually capitalizing on the institution's hometown, international reputation as a Mecca for aviation.

Next week, Rottler and his small band of fellow AeroInnovate interns will find themselves at the epicenter. For about three to four UW Oshkosh students, AirVenture means helping AeroInnovate coordinate programming, set up camp at Wittman Regional Airport and strategize on how best to expand its reach, influence and services during the week-long aviation convention which runs July 29 through Aug. 4. AeroInnovate will compete for attention with dozens of international companies and organizations, not to mention tens of thousands of visitors swarming at the EAA and airport grounds.

“Working with AeroInnovate, I get to see, and be part of, all the behind-the-scenes that go into planning a huge event such as this,” Rottler said. “This is not something I could experience in a classroom and has been essential to understanding how much effort (and, sometimes, headaches) goes into this type of event. Coordination has to happen not only locally but with people from all over the world. That part has been a major learning experience for me and will help me when I have to do that in the business world.”

“I get to meet with the people who are inventing new parts as well as investors who want to fund the future of the industry,” Rottler said. “This could possibly lead to new opportunity for me and maybe lead me to an industry I have never thought of exploring for future jobs.”

For Tori Thern, the AeroInnovate internship seems perfectly aligned with her studies at UW Oshkosh. Thern is a marketing and Web management major, emphasizing in entrepreneurship.

“Working with AeroInnovate has been a tremendous experience, especially since I study entrepreneurship,” Thern said. “I was blown away by the passion these aero-entrepreneurs have. AeroInnovate’s ‘Pitch and Mingle’ event lets successful investors and industry leaders listen to six aero-related businesses that have new aero-related technologies to bring to the workplace. To learn the story behind these innovators is amazing. I hope to develop that same passion in my field someday. Finally, I love the fact that AeroInnovate works with companies from all over the world. I hope my career will allow me to travel to businesses in other countries.”

Thern said her internship has also proven to be a crash course in the exhaustive work that goes into helping AeroInnovate generate some buzz among AirVenture’s gathering of aviation companies and organizations.

“The preparation that goes into hosting a week-long event at EAA is a lot of work,” she said. “Setting up our booth in Oshkosh is not the only thing -- also the preparation on our social media sites, contacting local businesses and determining schedules for everyone has kept us busy. I am also taking away the love and passion from all the aero-industry businesses. And finally, before AeroInnovate, I had no knowledge of the aero-world; I had never even been to EAA. And now that I have, I will most likely be back next year. I have knowledge (and I am still learning) about aeroinnovators, new technologies and the aviation field.”

For Allie Langkau, an Oshkosh native, AeroInnovate’s internship provides a new opportunity to peek backstage at AirVenture. She, like Rottler, has been attending the event since she was a child. Langkau is majoring in marketing with emphases in sales and Web presence management at UW Oshkosh.

“I find it fascinating how the networking and communication extends to different parts of the world,” Langkau said. “It’s exciting to be a part of something that connects such a diverse group of people who share the same passion. I believe this will help me in my career development because, throughout the event week and weeks prior, we have to work as a team and communicate to ensure the smooth sailing of the exhibits and events. It’s already taught me a lot and the event hasn’t even started.”

“What I’m learning is that if you have a passion for something, nothing should stop you for pursuing it, and that there are people along the way that are willing to help you achieve your dreams,” Langkau said. “I also am taking away the power of teamwork and the knowledge of a new and exciting topic. It has really broadened my horizons and exposed me to a new industry that, a few months ago, I didn’t even know existed.”

Learn more:

- [AeroInnovate](#)

- [UWO's AeroInnovate the catalyst in launch of new 'Wisconsin Aerospace Consortium'](#)
- [UWO's AeroInnovate welcomes Governor Walker to AirVenture 2012](#)