

CAREERS TAKING FLIGHT

WITC students
work side-by-side
with Composite
Manufacturers



Story by Jena Vogtman and Jim Biros
Photo by Jeff Frey

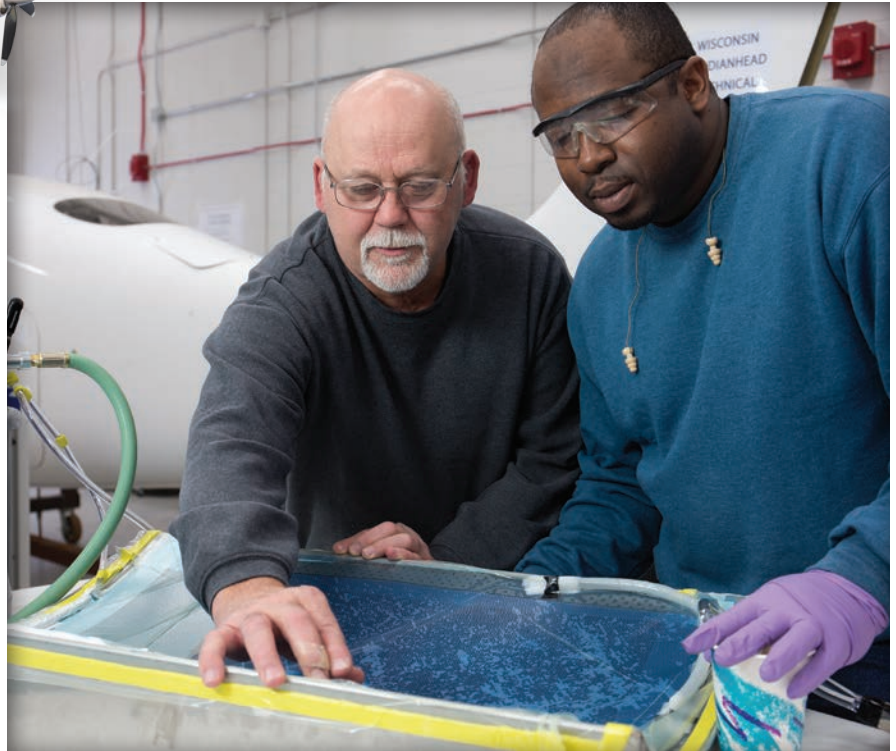
Although they are still months away from graduation, students in Wisconsin Indianhead Technical College's composite technology program are already seeing their careers take flight. Several students in the program have recently been selected to take part in internships for businesses throughout the Twin Ports.

"The interns will have an opportunity to apply the skills that they have learned in class on real aircraft parts," said Jeremy Henriksen, manager of SF50 Engineering Operations. "They should broaden their knowledge by being exposed to new materials and processes to bring back to the composites program. They will contribute to Cirrus's success by being ready to use those skills as soon as they start."

Cirrus and AAR Aircraft Maintenance have both taken in WITC's composite technology students.

"While we believe we can do a good job of planning and delivering training of the technical skills our industry needs, ultimately that will not be tested until we have placed students in industry," said Tim Wright, WITC program instructor. "We cannot train the students on the culture and mission of the companies with which we intern them; this they must learn on their own."

The composite technology program, which prepares students to be successful in today's highly competitive world of aviation composite technologies, provides students with a background in composite theory and hands-on



experience in all the stages of the aircraft's life from design to production and repair. However, the composite technology program is not limited to only the aircraft industry. Similar fabrication, inspection and maintenance processes are used in transportation, wind mills, sporting goods and boats, among other products. Careers in the composite technology field nationally average \$37,000.

The opportunity to internship was a chance the students couldn't pass up.

"These are first-rate internships working directly with companies who fully intend on hiring composite program students," said composite technology student Joe Wambach. "This internship will allow me time with engineering and design people, while boosting my level of experience with composite and their manufacturing process."

"It's a great way to get your foot in the door," said Jeremy Pittman, who is interning in the experimental design department at Cirrus.

The internships for all businesses run until December 16, but Wright believes most students will be able to stay on through their winter break.

"I would like to take part in this internship because of the hands-on experience," said Derrick Rouse, who is interning at AAR Aircraft Maintenance. "Having this experience is necessary to excel in having a permanent position at AAR." ■

For more information about WITC's composite technology program, visit witc.edu/programs.