

Ohio State News

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Austin E. Knowlton Foundation gives Ohio State \$10M to enhance aviation, education and research facilities

Funding will be cornerstone of a multiyear renovation of the university's airport at Don Scott Field

COLUMBUS, Ohio – Continuing its namesake's commitment to education and to his alma mater, the Austin E. Knowlton Foundation has donated \$10 million to upgrade aviation education and research facilities, and the terminal at The Ohio State University Airport.

"This generous gift reinforces the university's commitment to aviation education and research at Ohio State and to utilize Don Scott Field as it was originally intended — training pilots, advancing aviation innovation and serving the needs of a growing region," said Dean David B. Williams of the College of Engineering. "Modernizing the facilities will allow us to keep pace with the educational needs of 500-plus Ohio State students, research demands of the state and nation, and service expectations of local businesses and pilots."

The gift will support construction of a new aviation education and research facility with state-of-the-art flight simulators, research labs and classrooms. Combined with a modern flight terminal, the new facilities will integrate education with airport operations, benefiting Ohio students as well as Columbus-area residents and visitors.

With this core funding in place, Ohio State will be sharing the vision for airport modernization with community, civic and corporate leaders over the next few months. In conjunction with development of the Austin E. Knowlton Aviation Learning Center and Executive Terminal, additional university and philanthropic funds will be used to construct complementary aircraft hangars and support facilities for Ohio State's flight education fleet and private aircraft. Plans and timelines will be shared with the community as they develop.

Since opening in 1942, The Ohio State University Airport at Don Scott Field has served as a learning lab for future aviation professionals, a hub of research and a highly regarded facility for civilian and small business aircraft. Some highlights:

- More than 500 students a year are pursuing aviation degrees, training for professional pilot certifications, performing federally sponsored research, and engaging in community outreach programming at the airport through the Center for Aviation Studies, as well as the College of Engineering, Fisher College of Business, the College of Arts and Sciences, the Moritz College of Law and the John Glenn College of Public Affairs.
- The airport delivers \$157 million in direct and indirect benefits to central Ohio, according to a study commissioned by Ohio State in 2012. Local companies, including Cardinal Health, Worthington Industries and DLZ, use Ohio State's airport as a primary business travel hub.
- MedFlight critical care helicopters, U.S. Army Reserve paratrooper training and Ohio State Highway Patrol aviation operations all use the airport as a hub for activities that save lives in our community and beyond.

- Ohio State is a key participant in three key federal research initiatives to improve aviation safety, reduce noise and create the next generation of airport and air traffic operations. This work is being conducted through the Federal Aviation Administration National Research Centers of Excellence.

These modernization efforts are needed because the airport's educational spaces, terminal and most of its hangars are more than 50 years old. The Knowlton Foundation gift, which will be allocated over the next five years, will allow the university to remain at the forefront of aviation-related education and research.

"Dutch Knowlton was a pioneer in using aircraft to support and grow his many business interests," said Eric Lindberg, trustee of the Austin E. Knowlton Foundation. "Although he was best known for his construction company and ownership in the Cincinnati Bengals and Reds, he had a lifetime passion for aviation. He acquired a Beech dealership and began using business aircraft to travel between construction sites in the 1960s, later operating an air charter company and multiple Learjets and helicopters from the 1970s — and he remained an avid Learjet fan until the end of his life, always outfitting his airplanes in his signature emerald and white livery.

"Mr. Knowlton understood the vital importance of aviation as a part of the infrastructure of the American economy and loved Ohio State — so this grant is a great combination of his passions and he would be proud to see his foundation supporting such an important project."

Over the next decade, up to 45,000 new pilots will be needed to support the commercial aviation industry, according to the airline industry and the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Ohio State's Center for Aviation Studies currently has about 2,000 square feet for classrooms, simulators and one-on-one instruction, when at least twice that amount is needed to support students — the industry's lifeblood.

"The current infrastructure is basically unchanged in the past 50 years," said Ohio State Assistant Chief Flight Instructor Christine Zavodnik, "so these improvements will benefit not only students and faculty, but also businesses and the community."

"Ohio State's airport is an important economic development asset for the Columbus region," added Columbus 2020 Chief Economic Officer Kenny McDonald. "The aerospace research and pilot training conducted at the OSU Airport brings new dollars into the area and prepares students for great careers in the industry. It also serves as a gateway to the Columbus region for many important visitors and companies and provides significant benefits for the surrounding communities."

Aviation education at Ohio State dates back to 1917, when the university opened its School of Aeronautics to provide training for military aviation operations. The university's aviation programs are managed today out of its Center for Aviation Studies, established in 2011 and awarded the nation's most outstanding collegiate aviation program in 2015 by the National Intercollegiate Flying Association.

Austin E. Knowlton received his architectural engineering degree from Ohio State in 1931. Also known as "Dutch," he was the owner and chairman of the Knowlton Construction Company, which started in Bellefontaine, Ohio, in 1937 and whose predecessors dated back to 1906. His company was responsible for over 600 major construction projects throughout Ohio and the Midwest, including school buildings, hospitals and libraries. Dutch was an aircraft owner and a frequent client of The Ohio State University Airport in the 1980s and 1990s. In his honor and in

recognition of his philanthropic support, Ohio State's school of architecture was renamed in his honor in 1994.

Founded in 1981, the nonprofit Austin E. Knowlton Foundation seeks to promote and advance higher education in the United States and to provide direct grants and contributions to qualified colleges and universities.

On July 24 at 10 a.m. CDT, Knowlton Foundation Trustee Eric Lindberg will present Center for Aviation Studies Director Seth Young with a ceremonial check at Ohio State's exhibit space at EAA AirVenture in Oshkosh, Wisconsin.

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