

July 17, 2023

Advisory Meeting Summary and Vote

San Bernardino Valley College Aeronautics Division meeting with Riverside Flight Academy

Advisory Committee Members Present:

Francisco Gonzalez – Department Chair, Aeronautics, San Bernardino Valley College
Kenneth Wilkerson – Aeronautics, San Bernardino Valley College
Shannon Millen – Aeronautics, San Bernardino Valley College
Johan Backlund – Owner, Chief Pilot, Riverside Flight Academy
Adrian VandeWater – Owner, Riverside Flight Academy

July 17, 2023

Meeting time: 1:30pm - 2:30pm

Location: Riverside Flight Academy, Riverside Airport

San Bernardino Valley College Aeronautics met with the owners of the Riverside Flight Academy, Johan Backlund and Adrian Vandewater to discuss the development of a new degree and program certificate program at San Bernardino Valley College. SBVC Aeronautics is seeking to develop a new degree and certificate program incorporating actual flight training as a mandatory component for the degree and certificate. Flight training would require an outside training school for the addition of “flight labs” (formal flight training) toward development of a Professional Pilot certificate and degree. SBVC would work collaboratively with Riverside Flight Academy for the flight training component of the earned certificate and degree.

Johan discussed the need for pilot training programs associated with college degrees and that a professional program for a degree in more than aviation science, but a Professional Pilot degree or a certificate program for people with degrees already, does exist and has a place in the growth of the aviation business.

The committee discussed that while Riverside Airport and the Academy is outside of San Bernardino, the Academy has significant resources that can meet the needs of students at San Bernardino Valley College. Riverside Airport is primarily a “training” airport for student pilots. Johan stated that Riverside Flight Academy is open 7 days a week, and schedules flights from 6am through 9pm and later as necessary. The flight academy employs 11 flight instructors and have 9 flight/instruction-ready aircraft on their flight line. Of the 9 aircraft, 7 are considered “primary” trainers, 1 twin engine trainer and 1 complex-rated aircraft. All aircraft are maintained by both the Flight Academy’s maintenance department in conjunction with CAVU Aircraft Maintenance located in the building next door.

Johan provided a tour of the facility, including a tour of the aircraft on the Flight Line. Academy Flights were both arriving and departing during our visit. The Flight Academy has a Redbird Flight Simulator for student use in a simulator room, a separate classroom with ample seating for up to 35 students, individual study areas, and a back office. The academy has a full-time secretary/associate for scheduling, and other related duties.

According to Johan, the Flight Academy “launches” approximately 25-40 flights per day, dependent on holidays, weather and other affecting factors. Scheduling is done on a first come first serve basis and students are encouraged to schedule within two weeks advanced of their instruction/flight.

Johan addressed questions from Francisco pertaining to insurance. The Flight Academy holds a 1-million-dollar insurance policy for flights/instruction and a policy for incidents non-aircraft involved. Students flying solo are required to carry a renter’s policy. In discussing availability and scheduling of flights, it was assured that equal opportunity, hours of operation, number of aircraft and instructors allows students ample availability to schedule instructional flights.

Francisco discussed the ability of growth, from the perspective of both SBVC and the Flight Academy. All members agreed that there is room at the airfield and college to adequately support program growth and expansion. The committee further discussed the “vetting” of student candidates for the program as well, to ensure each student candidate understands the commitment associated with gaining a commercial pilot license as part of degree or certificate completion. The Flight Academy has offers flight training from student pilot through commercial pilot, and the potential for future growth and partnership within the aviation industry. Both parties agree the addition of a Flight Operations/Professional Pilot Degree and Certificate will greatly benefit students seeking to become career professional pilots.

A vote took place among the Advisory committee members for Riverside Flight Academy and San Bernardino Valley College regarding the approval of two program additions at San Bernardino Valley College. The associate degree for Professional Pilot was presented and received unanimous approval by consensus. Similarly, the Certificate for Professional Pilot was reviewed and gained unanimous approval by consensus.