

Southwest Airlines Welcomes Four Universities into Destination 225° Partnership

Southwest Airlines recently welcomed four new universities into the Southwest Family as partners in Destination 225°, the airline's development and recruitment program that creates a pathway for qualified aviators to a First Officer position at Southwest.

Baylor University, Louisiana Tech, Middle Tennessee State University, and Oklahoma State University are the newest partners in Destination 225°, growing the number of university partners in the program to 11.

Destination 225° University Pathway Candidates build post-graduate flight instructing time within their college's flight program, with the goal of becoming competitively qualified to interview for a First Officer role at one of the program's partner carriers. After building their flying experience at a partner carrier, Southwest Airlines considers Candidates for a First Officer position. Candidates receive ongoing career mentorship from a Southwest Pilot during their university studies and early flying career.

"It's exciting to see Destination 225° University Pathway continue to grow as we aim to find the next generation of aviators," said Lee Kinnebrew, Vice President of Flight Operations at Southwest Airlines. "We look forward to supporting students at Baylor, MTSU, OSU, and my Alma mater Louisiana Tech as they gain flight experience and develop into competitively qualified Pilots."

Baylor University

Through Baylor's Institute for Air Science, Baylor offers a Bachelor of Science in Aviation Sciences, including majors in Aviation Sciences and Aviation Administration in conjunction with Baylor's Hankamer School of Business, that prepares students for numerous careers in the aviation industry.

"At Baylor, we want our students to have the best possible career opportunities after graduation," said Trey Cade, Ph.D., director of the Baylor Institute for Air Science. "This partnership with Southwest Airlines and its Destination 225° program provides a tremendous opportunity for our aviation students to more easily transition to an airline career, especially at a major airline consistently recognized as one of the best employers in the country."

Louisiana Tech University

Beginning in 1967, Louisiana Tech University's Department of Professional Aviation has established itself as a high-quality degree program with a national reputation for outstanding graduates. The Department is a member of the University Aviation Association and is accredited by the Aviation Accreditation Board International.

"This partnership will help both parties and is a wonderful opportunity for our students to engage with an industry leader like Southwest," Monty Montgomery, Chair of Tech's Department of Professional Aviation, said. "We're grateful that the Destination 225° program introduces our students to a defined and clear path to pursuing their dream careers."

Middle Tennessee State University

Established in 1942, the Aerospace Department is a signature department at MTSU and has grown into one of the most respected aerospace programs in the nation. MTSU's 900 professional flight majors hail from 32 states and 16 foreign countries.

"This is an excellent opportunity and the latest in many unique endeavors supporting our students' career goals," MTSU Aerospace Chair Chaminda Prelis said. "Programs like Destination 225° are a fantastic way for our students to embark on fulfilling their career aspirations after graduation. We look forward to a long and prosperous partnership with Southwest Airlines."

Oklahoma State University

OSU offers an undergraduate degree in aerospace administration and operations, and students can choose from four options: aerospace security, aviation management, technical service management and professional pilot. OSU has the largest enrollment for flight training in Oklahoma and opened the brand new Ray and Linda Booker OSU Flight Center in 2022, providing a premier facility for aviation students.

"We are very excited to add the Southwest Airlines Destination 225° program to support our students," said Dr. Chad Depperschmidt, head of the School of Educational Foundations, Leadership and Aviation. "This partnership offers students a chance to be mentored by Southwest Airlines pilots, and it is a direct pathway to become competitively qualified for a Pilot career at a major U.S. airline."

The four Universities join fellow Destination 225° University Partners Auburn, Angelo State University, Arizona State University, Southeastern Oklahoma State University, Texas Southwest University, University of Nebraska at Omaha, and the University of Oklahoma. These University Partners work with Southwest to train and support collegiate aviators accepted into the Destination 225° University Pathway.

For more information on Destination 225° and other valued flying, academic, and training partners, please visit careers.southwestair.com/D225.

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1. Based on U.S. Dept. of Transportation quarterly Airline Origin & Destination Survey as of Q4 2025
2. Fulltime-equivalent active Employees as of March 31, 2026

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