

Southwest Airlines and Texas Southern University Announce Destination 225° Partnership

Southwest is proud to announce Texas Southern University (TSU) as a university partner in the airline's First Officer development and recruitment program: Destination 225°. TSU is the first Historically Black College or University (HBCU) to join Destination 225° and provides a pathway for qualified collegiate aviators to join the Southwest Team as professional Pilots.

"We're honored to welcome Texas Southern University as the newest academic partner in Southwest's Destination 225° Program as we focus on hiring, training, and developing the next generation of world-class, professional aviators," said Lee Kinnebrew, Southwest's Vice President of Flight Operations. "We recognize the importance of embracing diversity, equity, and inclusion in all that we do, and we're confident this partnership and defined career pathway supports underrepresented and minority aspiring pilots in their efforts to join the Southwest Family."

Texas Southern University, with its Aviation Science & Technology program, is the only school in Texas that offers a combined Bachelor of Science degree in Aviation Science Management and, beginning just six years ago, a Bachelor of Science degree as a Professional Pilot.

"Working with Southwest Airlines and Destination 225° aligns with Texas Southern University's mission of transformation—not only for our students but for STEM-related industries such as aviation. This is great news for TSU Director of Aviation Dr. Terence Fontaine, the Aviation Science program, and our students." said Dr. Lesia L. Crumpton-Young, TSU's President. "African American, Hispanic, and Asian American pilots are significantly underrepresented in the U.S. This makes our degree program and our new partnership with Southwest a critical pathway for the next generation of minority pilots and aviation professionals."

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.

“Our job as educators is not complete until our students are either employed or seeking further education,” added Dr. Terence Fontaine, TSU’s Director of Aviation. “Today, our partners at Southwest Airlines delivered news that our students have a new place to land, literally. Being the first HBCU that Southwest Airlines is partnering with shows the depth of talent we have in our Professional Pilot students. I want to thank our university leadership for allowing our Aviation Program to grow to unforeseen heights. The best is still yet to come from Texas Southern University Aviation.”

TSU joins current Destination 225° university partners Arizona State University, Southeastern Oklahoma State 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. For more information about TSU’s Aviation program, visit transportation.tsu.edu.

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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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