

BOARD OF DIRECTORS ANNUAL MEETING AGENDA

June 10, 2025

- | | |
|---|------------------------|
| Call to Order | James Hall |
| 1. Approval of March 16 Meeting Minutes (page 3) | James Hall |
| 2. Finance | Crystal Maguire |
| 2.1. Balance Sheet (page 7) | |
| 2.2. Budget vs. Actual (page 8) | |
| 3. Annual Conference | Tarra Ruttman |
| 3.1. Portland March 30-April 2, 2026 (exhibit and sponsor) | |
| 3.2. 2027 & 2028: Wichita and Denver | |
| 3.3. Beyond: Tulsa, Miami, Anchorage, Mobile | |
| 4. Operations | Crystal Maguire |
| 4.1. Director slate (page 10)—nominations due 7/15 | |
| 4.2. Member survey—past due | |
| 4.3. ATEC Journal | |
| 4.4. Summer webinar series | |
| 4.5. Strategic planning | |
| 5. ATEC Academy | Michael Sasso |
| 5.1. June 3-4—Tulsa/Tulsa Tech | |
| 5.2. October 21-22—Houston/United | |
| 5.3. March 2-3, 2026—Portland/Portland Community College | |
| 5.4. Fall 2026—Clearwater/National Aviation Academy | |
| 1. Choose Aerospace | Kelly Filgo |
| 1.1. 2024-25 Programs (school directory)— 984 students @ 46 schools | |
| 1.2. Teacher training June 3-5 @ Tulsa Tech report out | |
| 1.3. ATEC credential report out | |
| 6. Legislative | Crystal Maguire |
| 1.4. DC Fly-in September 16-19, 2025 (page 25) | Jared Britt |
| 1.4.1. Registration | |
| 1.4.2. Hotel room booking | |
| 2. Regulatory | Crystal Maguire |
| 2.1. Aviation week article re testing (page 11) | Sean Gallagan |
| 2.2. ATEC ACS Working Group | |
| 2.3. FAA reauthorization tasking re military transition and early testing | |
| 2.4. Boeing pilot test re access to technical data | |
| 2.5. ODA Order status | |
| 2.6. Workforce development grant status | |

3. Membership

Tarra Ruttman

3.1. AMTS: 157 [159 in 2024, 156 in 2023, 153 in 2022]

3.2. Industry: 48 [64 in 2024, 68 in 2023, 64 in 2022]

3.3. Academic: 29 [31 in 2024, 30 in 2023, 27 in 2022]

3.4. Choose Aerospace 33 [34 in 2024]

3.5. 2025 renewal rate: 92%

3.6. 2025 new and returning members: 7

4. Old Business

Crystal Maguire

5. New Business

James Hall

6. Adjourn

James Hall

**AVIATION TECHNICIAN EDUCATION COUNCIL
BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING MINUTES**

March 16, 2025

The Aviation Technician Education Council held its quarterly board meeting in Norfolk VA in conjunction with the annual conference. Those in attendance included—

Attended	First	Last	ATEC Title	Company
X	Jared	Britt	Vice President	Aviation Education Academy
X	Sean	Gallagan	Director	Aviation Workforce Solutions
X	Jim	Hall	President	WSU Tech
X	Mark	Holloway	Director	Aviation Institute of Maintenance
X	Gary	Hoyle	Past President	Epic Aviation Academy
X	Crystal	Maguire	Exec Director	ATEC
O	Kim	Pritchard	Director	Zipline
X	Tarra	Ruttman	Ops Manager	ATEC
X	Michael	Sasso	Secretary/Treasurer	Cape Cod Community College
X	Sheryl	Oxley	Director	Tulsa Technology Center
X	Scott	Sykes	Director	U.S. Aviation Academy
X	Greg	Emerson	Director	American Airlines
X	Suzanne	Markle	Director	Pittsburgh Institute of Aeronautics
X	Kelly	Filgo	Guest	Choose Aerospace
X	Scott	Ferris	Director	United Airlines
X	David	Blanton	Director	Liberty University
X	Archie	Vega	Director	Horizon Air
X	Justin	Benard	Director	Moore Norman Technology Center
X	Rob	Cush	Guest	Aircraft Mechanics Fraternal Association
X	Thomas	Laxson	Guest	Portland Community College
X	Kevin	Marlow	Guest	Horizon Air
X	Amy	Moore	Guest	Spartan College of Aeronautics and Technology
X	Stephen	Ley	Guest	Utah Valley University
X	David	Jones	Guest	AVOTEK
X	Dennis	DeMille	Guest	AVOTEK
X	Brian	Ward	Guest	Spartan College of Aeronautics and Technology

X = Present; O = Not Present

ATEC president J. Hall called the meeting to order at 12:35 PM ET.

ATEC Academy

M. Sasso provided an update on the Norfolk cohort, which kicked off March 15-16 in conjunction with the annual conference. Trainees participated in two days of in-person training followed by six weeks of online coursework. The board discussed refinements to mentorship and is calling for applicants that would like to join the mentorship pool.

The next cohort is scheduled for June 3-4 in Tulsa, coinciding with Choose Aerospace

teacher training, and the October 21-22 session will be held in Houston, hosted by United. United will also offer a tour as part of the training session. The financial break-even point for each cohort is approximately 12 participants so we are looking for a stronger turnout in the summer and fall sessions.

Meeting Minute Approval

A motion was made and seconded to approve the December 10, 2024, meeting minutes. The motion passed without objection.

Finance

C. Maguire provided the finance report, including a review of the balance sheet, budget vs. actual figures, and the statement of activity comparison. The executive committee will evaluate options for better leveraging council savings including looking at options to move funds into a money market or high yield savings account.

Membership dues renewal invoices were issued through the Novi association management system in October. While overall membership numbers did not increase last year, we are utilizing additional tools available through the AMS and expect to increase the renewal rate in 2025. We've also brought on some additional management resources to follow up on renewals.

Sponsorships continue to exceed budget expectations for both the annual conference and Fly-in. Year over year income was up for the annual conference.

Annual Conference

T. Ruttman reported record attendance of 306 participants at the Norfolk conference, an increase from 293 in 2024. The conference featured an expanded breakout track with five tracks and 20 sessions. The board discussed adding webinars to feature the most popular breakout sessions.

Future conferences are scheduled in Portland (March 30-April 2, 2026) and Wichita (2027). The board discussed potential locations for 2028 and beyond, including Denver, Tulsa, Miami, Anchorage, and Mobile. Participation in upcoming industry events such as SkillsUSA, MRO Americas, AEA, and ARSA was also discussed.

Operations

C. Maguire provided updates on board director openings. J. Smith of Marshall University resigned from the board, nominations will open to fill that director position and one other high school representative opening over the summer for September elections.

The member survey will be released on April 15 and close on May 30. The timeline for the Pipeline Report development was reviewed; the plan is to again release the report at the September Fly-in. ATEC will work with its partner Oliver Wyman Vector to better publicize the media release event on Capitol Hill to increase attendance.

Discussions continued regarding the Xennial Affinity Agreement which was presented to the board for approval. A motion was made and seconded without objection to enter into the referral agreement with Xennial which will provide ATEC members a discount and a referral fee to ATEC.

Directors discussed continuation of the current referral agreement with Ekanos. United Airlines has decided not to continue using the product citing user dissatisfaction. C. Maguire will reach out to other program referrals that use the product to assess their experience and report back to the board.

Choose Aerospace

K. Filgo reported that 951 students are currently enrolled across 45 schools in 19 states and South Korea, with an additional 31 programs considering implementation for the 2025-26 academic year. Fifteen teachers have registered for the upcoming teacher training in Tulsa (June 3-5).

We are expecting a few dozen students to sit for the ATEC credential exam upon completion of the Choose Aerospace program. The purpose of the credential is to provide third party verification of knowledge, to assist high school programs seeking credentials and matriculation into part 147 schools.

The AAR parts donation program has distributed more than \$3 million in product to ATEC member part 147 schools. The board discussed improvements to the inventory spreadsheet that could help grow the program. Directors suggested adding more detailed descriptions for each part.

Choose Aerospace applied for the FAA workforce development grant which would fund increased outreach, curriculum development, and scaling of the program.

Legislative

J. Britt provided an update on the upcoming DC Fly-in scheduled for September 16-19, 2025. Registration and hotel booking details were discussed.

C. Maguire is engaging with congressional staff to ensure FAA grant program funding is not impacted by the federal government cuts. Based on discussions with FAA officials, the grant notice of funding opportunity (NOFO) which was released in January will be reissued (to remove DEI provisions that run afoul of new executive orders) and applicants will have a fifteen day window to reapply.

Regulatory

Directors reviewed the letter sent by ACS working group leadership to the FAA regarding necessary improvements to the airman certification system, most pointedly dealing with the FAA testing contractor, PSI. Up until February, C. Maguire and fellow ACS working group leadership were having regular calls with FAA's airman testing branch to walk through the identified issues. We hope those will resume soon.

ATEC has created a working group to develop a recommendation to the FAA for the first revision of the airman certification standards and associated handbooks. That group met weekly for the last month and will continue to work through each line of the ACS and build upon the recommendation submitted by Airlines for America. Goal is to have the recommendation to the FAA by the end of the first quarter, but fully expect an extension to the deadline given the FAA ACS working group is currently at a standstill given recent Executive Orders impacting stakeholder engagement.

Directors discussed the recent military transition tasking that fell out of FAA reauthorization and issued by ARAC to the ACS working group late last year. We expect the early knowledge testing tasking to issue as soon as ARAC reconvenes for a quarterly board meeting.

A small “pilot group” is still working through a potential partnership with Boeing that would provide schools technical data access. While we’ve received proposed pricing and terms, there are key elements missing from the program proposal. As soon as the group has a clear understanding of the terms, it will engage with airline partners as needed to address concerns on pricing and insurance requirements that will likely be a barrier for many schools.

The FAA ODA order is expected to publish this summer.

ATEC representatives have held several meetings with FAA officials regarding expansion of access to DMEs, including a request that the FAA provide blanket approval for any DME to test at any part 147 program. Those discussions were positive and a draft policy proposed at the last meeting was promising.

Membership

C. Maguire presented membership statistics, noting that ATEC currently has 139 AMTS members, 46 industry members, 28 academic members, and 38 Choose Aerospace members. The 2025 renewal rate stands at 84%, with seven new and returning members.

Old Business

C. Maguire has two action items carried over from the last meeting including treasurer orientation and strategic plan development, with contributions from G. Emerson, S. Sykes, D. Blanton, and A. Vega.

New Business

No new business was brought forward.

Adjournment

There being no new, or other business to discuss, the meeting was adjourned at 2:57 PM ET.



Aviation Technician Education Council

Balance Sheet

As of June 9, 2025

	TOTAL
ASSETS	
Current Assets	
Bank Accounts	
Bank of America - Checking	54,332.19
Bank of America - Savings	60,113.05
Business Adv Relationship - 4894 - 2	1,175.94
Total Bank Accounts	\$115,621.18
Accounts Receivable	
Accounts Receivable	85,393.00
Total Accounts Receivable	\$85,393.00
Other Current Assets	
Undeposited Funds	1,121.00
Total Other Current Assets	\$1,121.00
Total Current Assets	\$202,135.18
TOTAL ASSETS	\$202,135.18
LIABILITIES AND EQUITY	
Liabilities	
Total Liabilities	
Equity	
Net Assets	181,891.82
Opening Balance Equity	661.46
Net Income	19,581.90
Total Equity	\$202,135.18
TOTAL LIABILITIES AND EQUITY	\$202,135.18

Aviation Technician Education Council

Budget vs. Actuals: Budget_FY25_P&L - FY25 P&L

October 2024 - September 2025

	TOTAL		% OF BUDGET
	ACTUAL	BUDGET	
Income			
Conference Income			
Annual Conference Income			
Exhibitor Income	38,500	55,000	70.00 %
Registration Income	120,735	120,000	101.00 %
Sponsorship Income	78,000	110,000	71.00 %
Total Annual Conference Income	237,235	285,000	83.00 %
Legislative Fly-In Income			
Registration Income - Fly-In	3,200	20,000	16.00 %
Sponsorship Income - Fly-In	7,000	25,000	28.00 %
Total Legislative Fly-In Income	10,200	45,000	23.00 %
Total Conference Income	247,435	330,000	75.00 %
Membership Income			
Academic Membership Income	18,600	20,000	93.00 %
AMTS Membership Income	91,193	95,000	96.00 %
Industry Membership Income	33,600	40,000	84.00 %
Total Membership Income	143,393	155,000	93.00 %
Program Services Income			
Advertising Income	5,950	10,000	60.00 %
ATEC Academy Income	16,269	25,000	65.00 %
Exchange Agreement Income	0	10,000	0.00 %
Grant Income		25,000	
Other Income	507	1,000	51.00 %
Total Program Services Income	22,726	71,000	32.00 %
Total Income	\$413,554	\$556,000	74.00 %
GROSS PROFIT	\$413,554	\$556,000	74.00 %
Expenses			
Administrative Expenses			
Business Expenses			
Awards	1,688	2,000	84.00 %
Copying and Printing		8,000	
Dues and Subscriptions	3,871	20,000	19.00 %
Insurance		3,000	
Office Expense and Supplies	785	1,000	79.00 %
Postage and Delivery	8	500	2.00 %
Telephone and Wifi	1,350	1,800	75.00 %
Total Business Expenses	7,703	36,300	21.00 %
Fees			
Bank Service Charge	122	200	61.00 %
Credit Card Fees	11,052	10,000	111.00 %
Total Fees	11,174	10,200	110.00 %
Professional Fees			

Aviation Technician Education Council

Budget vs. Actuals: Budget_FY25_P&L - FY25 P&L

October 2024 - September 2025

	TOTAL		
	ACTUAL	BUDGET	% OF BUDGET
Accounting		1,000	
Contractors	4,108	25,000	16.00 %
Graphics & Design	12,623	20,000	63.00 %
Legal	250	3,000	8.00 %
Legislative	8,420	10,000	84.00 %
Management	158,667	220,000	72.00 %
Total Professional Fees	184,067	279,000	66.00 %
Travel Expense			
Lodging	2,153	5,000	43.00 %
Meals and Entertainment	341	2,500	14.00 %
Transportation	3,162	9,000	35.00 %
Total Travel Expense	5,656	16,500	34.00 %
Total Administrative Expenses	208,600	342,000	61.00 %
Conferences Expense			
Annual Conference Expenses			
Audio Visual	18,740	12,000	156.00 %
Copying and Printing	9,977	10,000	100.00 %
Facility Cost	3,706	15,000	25.00 %
Food and Beverage	124,337	110,000	113.00 %
Transportation	6,536	10,000	65.00 %
Travel	2,441	4,000	61.00 %
Total Annual Conference Expenses	165,737	161,000	103.00 %
Annual Legislative Fly-In			
Copying and Printing		5,000	
Food and Beverage	2,000	12,000	17.00 %
Travel	587	3,000	20.00 %
Total Annual Legislative Fly-In	2,587	20,000	13.00 %
ATEC Academy Expenses			
Copying/Printing - ATEC Academy	254	1,000	25.00 %
Food/Beverage - ATEC Academy	3,637	3,000	121.00 %
Training Consultants - ATEC Academy	16,000	16,000	100.00 %
Travel - ATEC Academy	3,923	3,000	131.00 %
Total ATEC Academy Expenses	23,814	23,000	104.00 %
Total Conferences Expense	192,138	204,000	94.00 %
Total Expenses	\$400,738	\$546,000	73.00 %
NET OPERATING INCOME	\$12,816	\$10,000	128.00 %
NET INCOME	\$12,816	\$10,000	128.00 %

ATEC Board of Director Directory
June 9, 2025

Position	Composition	Elected	Term Exp	Term	First	Last	Organization	Sector
Director	Industry (1 of 5)	2024	2028	1st	Archie	Vega	Horizon Airlines	Regional airline
Director	Industry (2 of 5)							
Director	Industry (3 of 5)	2020	2028	2nd	Sean	Gallagan	Aviation Workforce Solutions	Training consultant
Director	Industry (4 of 5)	2024	2028	1st	Scott	Ferris	United Airlines	Commercial airline
Director	Industry (5 of 5)	2023	2027	1st	Greg	Emerson	American Airlines	Commercial airline
Director	Academic (1 of 1)							
Director	AMTS (1 of 7)	2024	2028	1st	David	Blanton	Liberty University	Private, not-for-profit, 4-year
Director	AMTS (2 of 7)	2020	2028	2nd	Mark	Holloway	Aviation Institute of Maintenance	Private, proprietary
Director	AMTS (3 of 7)	2024	2028	1st	Justin	Bernard	Moore Norman Technology Center	Public, 2-year
Director	AMTS (4 of 7)	2023	2027	1st	Scott	Sykes	US Aviation Academy	Private, proprietary
Director	AMTS (5 of 7)	2023	2027	1st	Suzanne	Markle	Pittsburgh Institute of Aeronautics	Private, not-for-profit, 2-year
Director	AMTS (6 of 7)	2023	2027	1st	Sheryl	Oxley	Tulsa Tech	Public, 2-year
Director	AMTS (7 of 7)							
President	Officer (1 of 3)	2022	2026	2nd	James	Hall	WSU Tech	Public, 2-year
Vice President	Officer (2 of 3)	2024	2026	2nd	Jared	Britt	Aviation Education Academy	Designated mechanic examiner
Treasurer	Officer (3 of 3)	2024	2026	1st	Michael	Sasso	Aims Community College	Public, 2-year
Immediate Past President	Past President (1 of 1)	2022	2026	2nd	Gary	Hoyle	Retired	Training consultant

Directors shall serve four-year terms and shall not serve more than two consecutive terms. Directors may be re-elected for additional terms after a one-year separation from the Board. The immediate past president shall serve a two-year term and may serve two consecutive terms as immediate past president in the event the residing president also serves two consecutive terms.

Test Anxiety

Barriers to testing may be holding back the pipeline of new aviation maintenance technicians

LINDSAY BJERREGAARD CHICAGO AND NORFOLK, VIRGINIA

Stakeholders in the U.S. MRO industry have been accelerating initiatives to recruit, train and hire new technicians to get ahead of a projected labor shortage. However, aviation maintenance schools say barriers to testing and certificating those technicians stand in the way.

While the Aviation Technician Education Council (ATEC) reports that new mechanic certifications increased 32% in 2023, it still expects the industry to be about 20% short by 2028. In a survey of ATEC members, nearly one in five Part 147 schools reported problems from a lack of designated mechanic examiners (DME), the proctors of oral and practical tests that aspiring technicians must take to become certificated. ATEC says the existing DME population must grow by nearly 30% to accommodate all Part 147 school graduates.

Before aviation maintenance technician (AMT) students take their oral and practical exams, they must first complete a written FAA knowledge test. Although the FAA previously contracted multiple companies to provide test delivery, the agency tells *Inside MRO* this was a costly and inefficient model, so in 2018 it awarded a sole-source contract to testing specialist PSI.

During ATEC's Annual Conference March 16-19 in Norfolk, Virginia, a breakout session about the organization's legislative priorities quickly turned into a discussion highlighting schools' complaints about PSI's practices and perceived shortcomings. "I think we all have a little PSI PTSD," the head of one Part 147 school joked, spurring laughs in the room.

While many Part 147 schools were eager to tell *Inside MRO* about their grievances, most would only speak anonymously, citing fear of retribution from PSI. When asked about this, the FAA said: "PSI doesn't have any authority or oversight of any FAA cer-



tificated school and would not be capable of any sort of 'retribution.'"

TESTING SHORTAGES

To *Inside MRO's* knowledge, the FAA and PSI have not publicly released full lists of DMEs or agency-approved Knowledge Testing Centers by state. The FAA says 268 DMEs completed nearly 18,000 activities in 2024. One can search for DMEs by state on the agency's website, but results often show duplicates of the same individual—for instance, the website lists 15

in Arizona, but once duplicates are eliminated, there are only eight.

The FAA says PSI operates a network of an estimated 800 active testing centers across the U.S. Those centers are only searchable by ZIP code on the company's FAA testing website. ATEC says its request for a comprehensive list of all FAA Knowledge Testing Centers was denied, so the organi-

zation gathered its own data from its membership. ATEC provided *Inside MRO* with a document it compiled of nonmilitary PSI FAA testing center locations, which totaled 673 in the U.S.

While some states appear to have many testing centers—often based at Part 147 schools—certain areas are "testing deserts." *Inside MRO* manually crosschecked a wide variety of nearest testing center locations with ZIP codes across the country for schools listed in ATEC's directory of FAA Part 147 certified institutions.

Students at Southwest Texas College in Uvalde and at Helena College of the University of Montana—the state’s only Part 147 school—would need to drive nearly 70 mi. to the nearest testing center. Students at Columbia Gorge Community College in Oregon have to drive nearly 60 mi.; students at Arkansas Northeastern College, 45 mi.



PHOTOIR/ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

PSI’s website shows Hawaii has four testing centers—a comparatively large number for the state’s one FAA-certified AMT school—but it has no in-state DMEs. Several sources said students in Hawaii must fly to the mainland to test with a DME.

Many states only have 1-4 DMEs handling testing. Arkansas only has one for its four certified Part 147 schools, and Louisiana has two for its four. The states with the most DMEs are California (23), Florida (22), Texas (17) and New York (15). However, ac-

ording to ATEC’s most recent data from 2023 on total AMT school enrollment by state, these DMEs have their hands full.

Florida had nearly 3,000 Part 147 school students in 2023. If all of them were to pursue oral and practical testing, each DME would need to test around 135 students over the typically two-year programs to handle the full load. In Nevada and New York, the disparity is even larger. Nevada had 394

There are currently fewer than 300 designated mechanic examiners in the U.S.

students in 2023, but only two DMEs, meaning each would need to test 197

students if all pursued their A&P certification. New York had 2,724 students in 2023, so between its 15 DMEs, each would need to test around 181 students.

The director of a Part 147 school in Alabama said the institution previously had five local DMEs, but is down to two, so he has tried to get a third certified. “But the FAA won’t act on my request,” he said. “Our FAA inspector believes it is acceptable for our students to drive 90 min. to find another DME.” He also repeated the anecdote about students in Hawaii flying to California and those in parts of Texas driving 6 hr. to their nearest DME.

The FAA says it assesses need for DMEs based on regional demand, but that Flight Standards District Offices have limits for how many DMEs they can support, and even qualified applicants may be turned away if the office believes it has sufficient coverage.

Oral and practical examinations are also time-consuming. According to Jesse Hauch, Delaware’s only certified DME, the FAA said in its initial DME training seminar last year that the new oral and practical examination process averages 16 hr. over two days, “so it takes a lot of fortitude to get through all of them once you have the necessary training and experience.”

Hauch said he conducted more than 50 examinations last year, most of which were two-day tests lasting 16-20 hr.—meaning he spent more than 800 hr., or over 33 days total, conducting examinations. These time estimates do not include pre-examination processes, such as coaching and guiding applicants, setting up tests, inspecting testing facilities, and ordering required tools and equipment.

“This year, in May, I’m up to about

20 [examinations] for the year, so the potential is there to have enough applicants to make [being a DME] a full-time option, but it’s a feast-or-famine thing,” Hauch said. “Are you close enough to a population center where you can disengage from your day job and do nothing but test applicants? . . . You either have to be willing to spend your free time on a side hustle, doing applicant testing and getting everything set up, or you have to be at retirement age where you fully stepped away from your day job and can put time into this.”

Hauch said DMEs also face added cost burdens that are typically passed on to test-takers. He noted that the new Airman Certification Standards require test-takers to perform a flare-less fitting, for which they must use equipment that costs around \$45 apiece. DMEs must use PSI’s website to generate tests, and each now costs \$10, when they were previously free, meaning a “full-form practical” is a \$30 expense.

Hauch reported that the test generating system is “kind of a glitchy, buggy website” that often goes down. When *Inside MRO* spoke with Hauch, he said the website was scheduled to go down from Friday through Sunday, “so if I had an applicant or I needed to process test results, I’m out of luck.”

Hauch said DME schedules frequently book up far in advance, so applicants may need to wait 6-7 months for a slot. Further compounding the delays, students must schedule, take and pass written exams before they can schedule oral and practical exams with a DME. The FAA says it allows applicants up to 24 months to complete the testing sequence once it begins, but this may be easier said than done.

BUGS AND BARRIERS

Every Part 147 school that spoke with *Inside MRO* shared similar complaints about what they called PSI’s “monopoly” on written exams, ranging from a shortage of testing centers and capacity to technology glitches, increased costs, lack of communication and barriers to approving more independent testing centers.

Brad McDonald, CEO and director of training at the Federal Aerospace Institute (FAI) in Ohio, said he has been trying for three years to get a testing center at his school. “I have everything under our roof except for

the written test,” McDonald said. “I have the privacy, I have the video, I have the proctor and . . . everything in place required to be a testing center, [but PSI] will not allow me to become a testing center. They say there are two testing centers already in the region.” One is around 9 mi. from the nearest airport, and the other is 30 mi. away. “The problem [we’ve] also run

which it had to wait another 11 days before it was allowed to begin testing in the new space.

“To ensure continued compliance, any change in testing location needs to be assessed in the same way we assess a new site—even if it is to another location within the same complex,” a representative for PSI told *Inside MRO* in response. “When a testing center

were available” from January 2024 to May 2025.

“What I believe PSI is doing is sort of amortizing all tests taken over a length of time and saying, ‘We are fulfilling our obligation, because if 100 students need to take the test, we have enough seats over a 12-month calendar to meet those demands,’” said Jackie Spanitz, general manager of Aviation Supplies & Academics, a company that provides aviation industry training materials to Part 147 schools. “Well, that’s not how people actually test.” Instead, students typically finish their last class and then all want to take the test around the same time, Spanitz explained. “What I hear from schools [is] that the students don’t have access to testing seats when they need them.”

Asked about getting the Midwest school’s test site up and running, “They [PSI] were ridiculous,” the school’s vice president of aviation said. “We went back and forth for a year and a half, sending them pictures and drawings of our testing center, computer outlines for our testing center, [discussions about required cameras] . . . back and forth. They made it as difficult as possible, and I’ve heard that if you make any changes at all, they will shut you down for at least 60 days to get it going again.”

He also noted that the school’s IT staff was incredulous because PSI required an operating system that “hasn’t been supported in 10 years.”

The testing center site administrator for one Part 147 school in Illinois said that despite operating as a testing site for more than 30 years, the school had to invest in “about \$10,000 worth of equipment to accommodate PSI.”

A representative for PSI says the company is meeting and exceeding FAA regulations and procedures for test center and equipment requirements “to ensure these tests are secure and that the results are valid, reliable and fair,” and that “the compliance processes involved are necessarily rigorous and take time.” The company’s computer specifications for testing sites are listed on its website and call for Windows 10 or 11 operating systems.

Every Part 147 school with a testing center that spoke with *Inside MRO* complained of a “buggy” system with frequent outages. Several DMEs reported similar issues.

DMEs vs. Student Need By State

	Student-to-DME Ratio	DMEs With Both A&P Certification	AMT Students	AMT Schools
NEVADA	197.0	2	394	1
NEW YORK	181.6	15	2,724	6
ALABAMA	165.5	6	993	4
MICHIGAN	139.2	6	835	6
FLORIDA	135.6	22	2,984	19
UTAH	127.5	2	255	3
TEXAS	117.9	17	2,005	22
NORTH CAROLINA	116.8	5	584	6
ARKANSAS	113.0	1	113	4
COLORADO	102.8	5	514	4

Source: From data compiled from ATEC, FAA and PSI websites.

These 10 states have the biggest gap between Part 147 students and DMEs.

into is our students will call to test, and they don’t have any openings,” he added, noting that PSI’s regional testing centers handle exams for many other industries beyond aviation.

Bryan Despain, lead aviation maintenance instructor at Columbia Gorge Community College in The Dalles, Oregon, said students must travel some 80 mi. to Portland to take their FAA written tests. While scholarships or stipends can cover testing costs—currently \$175 for students—travel “is sometimes the biggest hurdle,” Despain noted. “This has proven a concern for our students and graduates as they consider fuel costs and time,” he said. “It takes a tank of gas and about half of their day. They do it because there is no other choice for them.”

The head of a large Part 147 school with several locations across the country said one of its campuses only has one testing center within a 40-mi. radius, and this center “does not have the capacity to efficiently serve the volume of AMT students and graduates currently in the pipeline.”

At another campus, the school requested to move its approved test center to another room on the same campus, but did not receive approval from PSI for more than 40 days, after

decides to relocate, the ‘new site’ process starts over.”

One Part 147 school in the Midwest had just recently opened a new PSI testing center “after an 18-month ordeal to get it up and running” when it spoke with *Inside MRO*. The school’s vice president of aviation and workforce development said when his staff reached out to PSI to ask about the process of becoming a testing center because its students struggled to find enough capacity for testing, the company’s immediate response was, “Your application has been denied,” even though the school had not yet applied. “I have heard from a lot of operators that [PSI is] trying to push all of the independent testing centers out,” he said.

A PSI representative says the company “carefully reviews every request we receive to become an authorized PSI test center” to ensure sites meet strict environmental and security requirements. The company says its contract with the FAA requires it “to provide reasonable accessibility to the aviation community and maintain adequate coverage of locations throughout the country.” It also notes that “FAA exams only used a small proportion of the total seats that

McDonald at FAI said he has been locked out of the oral and practical testing system for up to four days before he could submit test results. The site administrator in Illinois said frequent glitches would kick students out of the system while they were testing, one of which lasted for around three months.

assist the applicant appropriately, whether it is to reschedule or provide a refund.”

The FAA says nationwide outages are “extremely rare and well documented” and suggests outages at third-party testing centers could stem from differing internet speeds and computer equipment.

ing representatives when experiencing difficulties.”

ADDRESSING COMPLAINTS

The FAA’s contract with PSI stipulates that the company should have a process to capture complaints from test-takers and provide a monthly report to the agency. While some Part 147 schools told *Inside M* RO they did not believe this was happening and believed their complaints went unheard, PSI says it compiles regular reports for the FAA and has clear procedures to review, measure and assess this data. The FAA says it receives this data, which is “reviewed, measured and adjudicated for continuous improvement,” although it does not provide specifics.

“Where relevant, these complaints feed into a continuous improvement process,” a PSI representative says. “In support of our goal to provide an excellent testing experience for every applicant, we take all complaints very seriously and take action when warranted.”

Increased testing fees and reduced reimbursement for test centers and DMEs were among the biggest complaints *Inside MRO* heard from many schools that operate testing centers. PSI’s contract says the FAA reserves the right to set a maximum fee of \$160 per test, to be reevaluated every three years. The company increased its FAA Airman Knowledge Test fee to \$175 in 2021, then reduced third-party test centers’ reimbursement in late 2022. Schools operating testing centers said they previously were reimbursed \$65 for every exam, but this has dropped to \$10-30 per test.

The school in Illinois previously paid proctors \$50 to administer each exam, but with the new pricing structure, “[the reimbursement] doesn’t even cover us, [so] the university considered cutting the program after 30+ years of being an FAA testing site because we’re losing money at it,” the testing site administrator said.

Despain said Columbia Gorge Community College has not tried to open a testing center due to the cost. “PSI requires that they receive their \$175, and then any additional costs are extracted from the test-taker,” he said. “And then that drives the cost even higher for the student, or the school would need to fold that added cost into their budget [when it] is already too thin.”



IMAGIC EDUCATIONAL/ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

Some Part 147 schools report challenges getting new testing centers approved by PSI.

When tests do not load, testers “must wait an hour to make sure the test doesn’t populate; otherwise, they forfeit the test fee,” said the head of the Part 147 school with multiple campuses. “If the test doesn’t repopulate within that hour, the tester must wait about three business days before they can reschedule their test. The tester is not notified of an outage prior to showing up for their test, even if PSI is aware of an outage.”

In response to these complaints, a representative for PSI said: “PSI has procedures in place for notifying applicants when unexpected events occur, including outages and testing closures due to weather or staffing. Our goal is to notify applicants in advance whenever possible if there is a need to change their testing appointment. Occasionally, issues arise at the last minute, and it’s not always possible to contact the applicants who will be impacted. In these cases, we assess each individual situation and

Several sources told *Inside MRO* the system to sign up for tests is confusing and difficult. For instance, the head of the Part 147 school in Kansas said students can only see availability for testing dates a single day at a time, rather than a range of dates, and once a tester clicks the date, “you’re locked in,” he said. “It’s like, ‘You picked this date and you have to go test now or we’re keeping your \$175.’” He added that PSI and the FAA frequently blame technical issues on each other.

“Our focus is always on resolution and not blame,” a PSI representative says. “All technical issues are investigated with the aim of establishing root cause and resolving the issue. Our priority is in supporting the applicant to complete the assessment.”

The head of the Part 147 school with multiple campuses called PSI’s response time a recurring issue. “When leaving a message, you may never receive a call back,” she said. “When sending an email, you don’t receive a response for at least a week or more. All test center support is on Pacific Standard Time, so East Coast test centers often have issues reach-

ATEC surveyed its members after the pricing structure changes. One-third of respondents reported that the development resulted in lower testing capacity in their area, whether because of test center closures, reduced hours or fewer seats. More than half of respondents reported that the change either somewhat or greatly affected students' access to testing. However, only one said their school's testing center definitely would close as a result of the fee change.

PSI maintains that its test costs have been agreed upon with the FAA "and are below industry average for this type of high-stakes test." The company says the fees it pays to third-party testing centers vary depending on test length and "are in line with industry standards and are consistent across our network." The FAA says current testing fees are "below average for the high-stakes testing industry" and negotiated when the contract is modified "by continuous modernization efforts and program advancements."

ATEC and a coalition of other schools and industry associations shared concerns with the FAA in early 2023 about PSI's performance and how the fee change would diminish testing capacity. ATEC Executive Director Crystal Maguire said the group and other stakeholders were in communication with the FAA about the industry's "top 11" concerns about PSI when the agency stopped responding in February.

OVERSTEPPING BOUNDS?

ATEC and Spanitz at Aviation Supplies & Academics also raised concerns that PSI has solicited public feedback on FAA test development—a task they say the agency's Airman Certification Standards (ACS) Working Group is supposed to handle. The

group was established in 2016 to recommend revisions to the ACS to improve and standardize pilot and crew testing. Last year's FAA Reauthorization Bill specifies the ACS Working Group as responsible for training and testing recommendations.

Spanitz shared with *Inside MRO* a screenshot of a call to action PSI put on its website in June 2024 asking for subject-matter experts to

"We believe DMEs should be able to create their own test. They know the system better than anybody. Having PSI prescribe the test is . . . a degradation to the system."

apply for committees the company was creating to work on "FAA test development activities." PSI also asked for a screenshot of an email it sent to previous FAA knowledge exam test applicants in January 2025, asking them to respond to a survey to analyze "tasks performed by drone pilots nationwide," the results of which "will be used to update the specifica-

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tions for certification examinations so [they] reflect current practices.”

Spanitz, who is on the ACS Working Group, stressed that PSI does not have aviation expertise, so “they are not qualified to be writing test questions or determining the relevance of

various ACS exam boards, which review new and revised questions, do include at least one member from the working group.

“We’re supposed to be two sides of the same coin,” Spanitz told *Inside MRO* in late March. “The training and

centers on campus,” Despain said. “This brings the testing resource to the student, reducing educational costs in time and travel.”

“We believe DMEs should be able to create their own test,” Spanitz said. “They know the system better than anybody. Having PSI prescribe the test is something new. This has happened within the last three years, and it’s a degradation to the system. They should . . . revert back to allowing DMEs to issue their own exams under the guidance of the mechanic ACS. They don’t need a prescription, which ends up in a lower-quality test.”

The head of the Part 147 school in the Midwest said: “PSI should be required to have testing centers within 50 mi. of every school and . . . they should ensure that there are enough seats to meet the needs of all the students, because since they are a sole-source provider, it should be on them to make sure that our students have access to testing in a reliable distance and in a reliable place,” said the head of the Part 147 school in the Midwest.

“PSI is a business that is making decisions for profit,” Spanitz noted. “That makes good sense, but that means some of our rural communities aren’t served, and we aren’t getting the testing capacity when we need it versus when it makes business sense for them—it’s just two different agendas.”

“The testing process should involve more than one testing company,” said the head of another school. “Relying on a single source for testing is problematic. If the sole testing company

were to suddenly close or have a security breach or extended network outage, who would administer the exams? How long would it take to establish a new system and provider?”

“Having multiple companies involved would mitigate such risks and ensure a more reliable process,” the school administrator continued. “Furthermore, having competition in the space would put pressure on providers to deliver better technology, customer service and response time to requests.”

FAA DESIGNEE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

There are no DMEs in Hawaii, so students there must travel to the mainland to take FAA oral and practical tests.

PSI WEBSITE

Test Site	Distance	Address
Summit Aviation Inc.	2340	2340 Tubbs Rd Bozeman, MT 59714
Holman Aviation Co	1940	1940 Airport Ct Great Falls, MT 59404
Northstar Jet Inc.	6045	6045 Corporate Way Missoula, MT 59808
Choice Aviation	528	528 Airport Road Hamilton, MT 59840
Red Eagle Aviation - SSP	1880	1880 Hwy 93 South Kalispell, MT 59901

Aviation maintenance students in some regions must travel long distances to get to their nearest PSI-approved test center.

test content.” She also expressed “grave concerns that the FAA silence means they may not be getting the work done that we need them to get done so that we have new additions and ongoing improvements to the ACS, the handbooks and the test.”

The FAA says it most recently met with the ACS Working Group in May, and “continually makes decisions concerning [the group’s] meeting cadence, attendance and agenda.” The agency says writing test questions is not an ACS Working Group task, but that

the testing communities have to work in collaboration, and if half that coin has gone silent, what are the rest of us supposed to do?”

She suggested that an obvious answer would be for the testing and training community to be given control over its own testing. Most sources for this article agreed.

“FAA needs to retake control of the testing of airmen and allow Part 147 schools to proctor the written tests as they do the tests/exams that they already proctor through their testing