

Factors Influencing Student Selection of a Collegiate Aviation Program

The cost of higher education is skyrocketing. In 2015, The College Board reported that the cost of a higher education is increasing at an annual rate of approximately five percent (The College Board, 2017). In addition, the report stated that in 2015, the cost of a 4-year education (in-state tuition and fees) at a 4-year public university averaged \$39,400.000. The College Board also projected that by the year 2033, in-state tuition and fees associated with a 4-year, public university education could exceed \$94,800.00 (The College Board, 2017). The cost of flight training at public academic institutions is also increasing rapidly. For students pursuing a collegiate aviation education and aspiring to become professional pilots, flight training fees can easily represent an additional \$65,000.00 on top of the institutional tuition and fees (FAPA, 2016).

Academic departments also struggle with financial pressures. To further compound the issue of increasing costs associated higher education, academic institutions are faced with growing budgetary constraints and mounting pressure to maintain or increase student enrollments (Allen & Minniear, 2007). Attracting and retaining undergraduate students is a marketing-related activity, and if properly addressed, we can develop a better understanding of the programmatic attributes that draw students to our different programs on college campuses.

This study aims to identify the top programmatic attributes at various flight programs across the U.S. This study will utilize a preference aggregation analytical method to identify the most desirable attributes at the participating aviation flight programs. The respondents will identify and rank the institutional characteristics that influenced their decisions to select and attend a collegiate aviation institution. The population for this study will include current students from 10 prominent collegiate aviation institutions. The institutions participating in the study will represent all major geographic regions in the nation; 2-year and 4-year institutions; public, private and non-secular private collegiate aviation institutions. The study will employ an online survey questionnaire to collect the preferences from the survey respondents.