

VII. STANDING COMMITTEES

A. Academic and Student Affairs Committee

Department of Aeronautics & Astronautics Name Change to William E. Boeing Department of Aeronautics & Astronautics

RECOMMENDED ACTION

It is the recommendation of the Academic and Student Affairs Committee that the name of the Department of Aeronautics & Astronautics be changed to the William E. Boeing Department of Aeronautics & Astronautics, to honor the man who founded both the Boeing Company and the Department of Aeronautics & Astronautics nearly 100 years ago.

BACKGROUND

William Edward Boeing had a passion for flight, and being an entrepreneur at heart, began building floatplanes near Seattle. In 1916 he founded the Boeing Airplane Company and hired two UW engineering graduates to further design his flying machines. Though Claire Egtvedt and Phil Johnson were trained in mechanical engineering, and eventually became two of the most influential men in aviation history, their lack of formal background in aeronautics started Mr. Boeing thinking.

To build a successful airplane company, Mr. Boeing realized he needed trained aeronautical engineers and a facility in which to test new airplanes. The partnership was born when he decided to donate a wind tunnel to the University of Washington on the condition that the University develop an aeronautics curriculum.

The Aerodynamics Laboratory was built in 1917 for a cost of \$5,829, funded personally by Mr. Boeing through his first gift to the UW. The 1,612 square foot building housed the first wind tunnel built in the Northwest. During the 1920s, the tunnel was used to test various Boeing Company aircraft models. The wind tunnel has been updated over the years, and today it is still used by university, government, and industry personnel for aerodynamics testing.

In early 1926, the University opened a dialogue with Harry Guggenheim and the Guggenheim Fund for the Advancement of Aeronautics, in an attempt to procure funds to establish a school of aeronautics. At that time the Guggenheim Fund had already provided grants for similar schools at Caltech, MIT, Stanford, the University of Michigan and New York University. The UW stressed its strong ties with the Boeing Company and Naval Aviation, as well as highlighting the wind tunnel on campus. Mr. Boeing wrote to the Guggenheims on behalf of the

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University, and in 1928, the Guggenheim Fund approved a grant of \$290,000 for the construction of an aeronautics building on the University of Washington campus. This beautiful building still houses the Department of Aeronautics & Astronautics.

The Boeing Company also participated in funding for a second wind tunnel, along with the federal Public Works Administration and the State of Washington. The University of Washington Aeronautical Laboratory (UWAL) began testing once it was open for commercial use in the late 1930s, and the Boeing 307 Stratoliner testing occupied the facility for much of 1939.

Over the years, the Boeing Company became the exclusive customer in the tunnel. Aircraft such as the B-47, B-52, KC-135 and 707 were tested in the 1950s. A strong relationship between Boeing and the Aeronautics Department blossomed during this period and for the next 30 years, UWAL would host most of Boeing's low-speed wind tunnel testing.

In the early 1980s Boeing's continued use of the UWAL wind tunnel resulted in a decision to help the University modernize it. Gearing up for the 757 and 767 programs, Boeing donated \$2 million to upgrade the computer systems. And in the 1990s, the company invested heavily in people in the College of Engineering, creating a large endowment to permanently fund prestigious endowed professorships and chairs to help the College of Engineering ensure success in hiring the best educators and scholars.

Mr. Boeing's investment in aeronautics at the UW paid off early, in the form of outstanding engineering employees and effective research and design partnerships. In 1926, all but one member of Boeing's engineering department were University of Washington graduates. Even into the 1940s, the majority of Boeing's engineers came from the UW. Almost every Boeing airplane project has had a UW aeronautics alum at the helm. Any reference to the history of the Boeing Company includes names of alumni such as Maynard Pennell ('31), George Martin ('31), George Snyder ('31), Jack Steiner ('40), William Hamilton ('41, M.S. '48), Joseph Sutter ('43), and Lynn Olason ('43). Both Jack Steiner and Joseph Sutter were awarded the *Alumnus Summa Laude Dignatus*, the University of Washington's highest alumni honor.

The Department of Aeronautics & Astronautics today:

The Department of Aeronautics & Astronautics is one of ten academic departments in the College of Engineering. Enrollment includes 116

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undergraduate students and 140 graduate students. It offers the only aerospace degree program in the Pacific Northwest, a region whose aerospace industry has been a major contributor to the technological development, economic vitality and the security of the United States. Educators and researchers in the Department have made numerous contributions in all major areas of aerospace engineering.

A seemingly small transaction nearly 100 years ago began what has since become a thriving partnership between a multinational Fortune 100 corporation and the UW – specifically UW engineering. Thousands upon thousands of engineering alumni have powered design and manufacturing efforts for the company’s many airplane models. Many Boeing employees have held leadership and advisory roles for engineering disciplines, mentored students, created internships, participated in student projects and provided financial support to the UW. The UW offers continuing education in engineering and business to company employees, often designing courses specially attuned to the educational needs of the company. Many product improvements and breakthroughs have resulted from joint research projects.

During its history, the Boeing Company has demonstrated its appreciation for the UW partnership and the value of its educated workforce through financial support for students, programs and research projects, totaling nearly \$80 million. Within the last ten years, nearly \$20 million in Boeing Company funds have flowed to the College of Engineering for scholarships, undergraduate student support, and research projects.

To honor the nearly 100 years of partnership, the University of Washington will be proud to permanently name the William E. Boeing Department of Aeronautics & Astronautics in honor of its founding benefactor.