

Aviation Students Win Intermountain Competition

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(Pictured left to right) Ryan Ritchie, Josh Hurwitz, and Emily Wadsworth.

Representing the career skills taught in Utah State University's Department of Aviation and Technical Education, three students in the aviation maintenance program won this year's Intermountain West Airframe and Powerplant School Competition.

Competing under the team name Aggie Airmen, the winning students were Ryan Ritchie, Emily Wadsworth, and Josh Hurwitz. They competed against 11 other three-student teams, including two others from USU, one from Idaho State University, and eight teams from Salt Lake Community College.

"My team was and is awesome," Ritchie said. "I got the opportunity to select my team for this competition, and I couldn't have picked two better individuals or mechanics. Emily and Josh did amazing well individually, and as a team we killed it."

The regional competition was held in place of the annual Aerospace Maintenance Competition that draws teams from across the country which was canceled this year due to COVID-19. Schools in Utah and Idaho with aviation maintenance programs sought support from local industry partners to host and sponsor the competition.

Alpine Air Express, Snap-on Incorporated, Delta Airlines, Skywest Airlines, and Matco MFG donated prizes and helped create the competition events. Mikhail Maxfield, professional practice assistant professor in USU's program, helped judge and host an event, and a

representative of the Federal Aviation Administration gave human factors tests.

Students worked their way through 13 events, including borescoping engines, removing aircraft wheels, sealing fuel tanks, painting, performing composite layups and inspections, removing hydraulic pumps from a turbine engine, identifying aircraft hardware, and a written weight and balance test. Teams competed for a total possible score of 400 points, and the Aggie Airmen had the highest total score.

"The competition was challenging, and as a first-year student it was a little intimidating going into the events, especially with a time limit," Ritchie said. "But the idea was to have fun and learn, and that took some of the pressure off. It was a great experience and I would definitely do it again."

The event also provided students with opportunities to network with industry



professionals.

"It was a fun event that included networking, especially with Alpine Air," said Chris Bracken, professional practice assistant professor from USU's aviation maintenance program. "Quite a few students were able to meet the airline's owner and their director of maintenance, who is anxious to hire our students."