

**For more information contact:
Ken Carson
(405) 325-7231
kencarson@ou.edu**

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OU Department of Aviation Celebrates 75 Years of Flight

NORMAN, OK — The Department of Aviation at the University of Oklahoma will celebrate its 75th year of flight operations throughout 2016 with a wide variety of events.

Established with a single grass landing strip in 1941, Max Westheimer Airport—the home of OU's Department of Aviation—has played a key role in the evolution of aviation education in Oklahoma since the State Board of Regents first voted to create a flight training program at the university in 1940.

“Working at Max Westheimer is like experiencing living history”, said Bryce Bailey, OU Aviation Chief Ground Instructor. “You can look around and see the old hangars and barracks buildings that still exist and contemplate the impact this airport had on the history of flight training in Oklahoma. It’s remarkable.”

Today, Max Westheimer Airport serves not only as a fully functional regional airport, but also as the flight lab for OU's Aviation students, as they pursue Bachelor of Science degrees in Professional Pilot, Air Traffic Management and both Flying and Non-Flying programs in Aviation Management, as well as minors that grant Single-Engine Commercial Pilot, Multi-Engine Commercial Pilot, Air Traffic Control and Aviation Management certifications.

“As we move into our 75th year of flight training at Max Westheimer, we are thankful for our history, our legacy and the fantastic footprint and facility that we have,” OU Aviation Program Director and Chair Ken Carson said. “Coupled with our relationships with the FAA, FAA Contract Tower Program (class D) and our community, we are in a position to also leverage outstanding opportunities for higher education missions at our wonderful airport facility right now and for another 75 years.”

The festivities commemorating OU's 75 Years of Flight will kick off with a special ceremony during the annual Aviation Banquet on Thursday, April 14.

Professional Pilot senior Keenyn Duncan and Professional Pilot sophomore Kaisha Holbrook will represent OU June 21-24 when they compete in the 2016 National Air Race Classic, a 4-day, 2,400-mile, cross-country race that encourages and educates current and future women pilots, while preserving and promoting the tradition of pioneering women in aviation.

OU Aviation and Max Westheimer Airport will also host the 10th Annual Aviation Festival and Airport Open House on Saturday, Oct. 1, during which the public can view and tour aircraft from throughout aviation history and get a first-hand look at everything that OU Aviation and Max Westheimer Airport have to offer.

Just two weeks later, the National Intercollegiate Flying Association Region VI Flight Competition will take place at Max Westheimer Airport on October 17, which will feature collegiate pilots from across the nation competing in a variety of events.

“OU Aviation has a history of giving back to our community and country,” said Dr. Shad Satterthwaite, Assistant Vice President for University Outreach, Continuing Education Academic Programs. “Whether in support of the war effort, building the aviation infrastructure, or promoting local needs, OU Aviation has risen to meet those demands.”

For more information about the University of Oklahoma Department of Aviation, visit aviation.ou.edu.