

## ERAU engineer, aviator named Florida's top professor

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Published: Thursday, November 15, 2012 at 5:30 a.m.

DAYTONA BEACH — Tilting a model World War II plane in his hands, Pat Anderson talks to aerospace engineering seniors about the technical aspects of flying and teaching a computer to think like a pilot.

It can be a tough task since many of his students have not flown an airplane but will have future careers designing computers and autopilot systems for airplanes.

Anderson, 44, who has seven airplanes at his home in DeLeon Springs, is able to share firsthand his aviation experiences as a pilot and an aerospace engineering professor.

His dedication to teaching has earned him the top honor in the state as the 2012 Florida Professor of the Year.

The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching is officially presenting the honor Thursday at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C., along with other state and national winners.

"It's a great honor," said Anderson, who started at Embry-Riddle as a flight instructor in 1996 and then as a part-time professor in 1997. "I don't do my job thinking of (awards), but it's great that this has happened."

Sponsored by the Carnegie Foundation and administered by the Council for Advancement and Support of Education, the organizations acknowledge the most outstanding undergraduate instructors nationally who excel as teachers and influence the lives and careers of their students.

Nearly 300 top professors nominated by colleges and universities across the country were evaluated. Four national winners were chosen and the remainder of the nominees were considered for state honors. One of the national winners is Autar Kaw, a professor of mechanical engineering at the University of South Florida in Tampa.

Anderson was nominated by Maj Mirmirani, dean of Embry-Riddle's College of Engineering. He points to Anderson's "selfless" dedication and touching the lives of hundreds of students.

Anderson quickly moved his way up to a full-time professor in 1999 while continuing his education and obtaining a doctorate degree in 2003.

He not only teaches, but is director of the Eagle Flight Research Center where



News-Journal / David Tucker

Pat Anderson, professor of aerospace engineering and director of Eagle Flight Research, helps students, from left, Christoffer Laulund, Eduardo Sardi and Peter Tan, during a class Tuesday at Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University.

students do various types of research including developing the first-of-its-kind gas/electric hybrid aircraft. Anderson led a student team to compete in NASA's Green Flight Challenge in 2011 with the aircraft.

In 2006, Anderson was the recipient of Embry-Riddle's Outstanding Researcher of the Year Award and the Faculty Advisor of the Year Award. He is certified as an airline transport pilot, flight instructor and aircraft mechanic.

"No one is really more deserving than him," Mirmirani said of the state honor.

Working side-by-side students on hands-on projects makes "the students extremely excited about engineering," Mirmirani said.

He also said there are "very few engineering faculty" that are both a "a seasoned aviator and a consummate engineer."

Anderson, who started flying when he was 17 through a Civil Air Patrol scholarship, said he found "one of the few jobs on the planet" where he could combine his love of flying and engineering.

"I would be disappointed if I could only do engineering and not fly an airplane and the opposite is true," Anderson said. "I enjoy teaching and research. I like to figure out new things and how to make an airplane work better and I like to pass it on to the next generation. I like to see the students light up when they get excited about this stuff."

Besides teaching, Anderson also flies aerobatic planes in competitions and gliders as well as experimental airplanes for the university. He is founder and past president of the Eagles Sports Aviation Club.

He and his wife, Carolina, who is also an Embry-Riddle professor, participate in charity work taking low-income children on their first rides in airplanes.

"The hope is to provide some incentive if the individual is enthusiastic about doing this they will stay focused and stay in school," Anderson said. "I'd like to see them go down the right path and fulfill whatever dream they have in life."

Current and former students said Anderson's award is well deserved.

"He knows what he's talking about. He sits down with us and helps us work through it," said Samir Kasliwala, 22, of Hartford, Conn., an aerospace engineering senior.

Nathan Rich, 29, of Gloucester, Mass., an aerospace engineering senior, said Anderson's "passion for aviation comes through in the classroom."

Christoffer Laulund, 24, a senior from Norway, said Anderson's piloting and engineering experience helps him "bring the best of two worlds to the classroom."

Lori Costello, 26, of Daytona Beach, a former bachelor and master's degree student who works in the Eagle Flight Research Center, said Anderson is "willing to give any student a chance and he really lets the student go in their own direction."

"He really helps you figure out the problems. He doesn't give you the solution," she said.

Mikhael Ponso, 32, a former student who has worked as associate director of the research center, said Anderson keeps students "up to speed" on current information.

"He's very practical and very good at explaining things with words," Ponso said.