F-35 TEST FACILITY HOSTS FUTURE AEROSPACE ENGINEERS

NAVAL AIR SYSTEMS COMMAND, PATUXENT RIVER, Md. – Twenty-five aerospace engineering students and faculty from the Pennsylvania State University got hands-on experience with the future of naval tactical aviation Oct. 13.

Penn State's proximity and engineering program made visiting NAVAIR a good fit for one of the many STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) outreach events hosted each year at the F-35 ITF. The F-35C carrier and F-35B short take-off and vertical landing variants of the Joint Strike Fighter are undergoing test and evaluation at NAS Patuxent River prior to delivery to the fleet. (Photo credit: Lockheed Martin)

The students, seniors set to graduate in May 2012, toured the F-35 integrated test facility and got a close look at F-35C test aircraft CF-2 provided by government chief test engineer Andrew Maack.

“It was smooth,” said Grant Dowell, senior aerospace engineering major. “It was very cool to see the spectrum of flight testing, and the F-35 will be the future for the next 20 to 30 years.”

The tour was one of many STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) outreach events hosted each year by the F-35 Integrated Test Force.

The future engineers were in Penn State’s principles of flight testing course, one of only four academic institutions to offer such a course, according to professor emeritus Dr. Barnes McCormick, who first visited NAS Patuxent River in 1969.

“There is no place better than Pax for us to bring students to visit,” said McCormick. “It’s not just proximity. The students are very interested in aircraft, and seeing the hands-on work of flight test is very beneficial for them.”

“It’s been a great partnership,” said Larry Trick, a 1982 and 1994 Penn State graduate and senior engineer for air-ship integration at NAVAIR. “NAVAIR’s had a great track record of recruiting at Penn State, and a sizable number of grads have had great impact here over the years.”

Students in Penn State’s flight test course work with a Cessna 172 and test pilot to understand the basics of creating a flight test plan and reporting results of a test flight.

“This was an enthusiastic group of students, many of whom expressed a desire to work flight test after graduation and they could tell this is an exciting place to work,” said Maack. “I told them to look us up for job opportunities and I hope that we see a number of them show up to work at the F-35 ITF in the coming year.”

The F-35C carrier and F-35B short take-off and vertical landing variants of the Joint Strike Fighter are undergoing test and evaluation at NAS Patuxent River prior to delivery to the fleet.

The F-35B is the variant of the Joint Strike Fighter for the U.S. Marine Corps. It is capable of short take-offs and vertical landings for use on amphibious ships or expeditionary airfields to provide air power to the Marine Air-Ground Task Force. The F-35C is distinct from the F-35A and F-35B variants with its larger wing surfaces and reinforced landing gear for slower catapult launch and landing approach speeds and deck impacts associated with the demanding carrier take-off and landing environment. Both are undergoing test and evaluation at NAS Patuxent River prior to delivery to the fleet.

Aerospace engineering students in a principles of flight testing course from the Pennsylvania State University visited the F-35 Integrated Test Facility at NAS Patuxent River Oct. 13, hosted by government chief engineer Andrew Maack. The F-35C carrier and F-35B short take-off and vertical landing variants of the Joint Strike Fighter are undergoing test and evaluation at NAS Patuxent River prior to delivery to the fleet.
(Photo credit: Lockheed Martin)