Fall 2011- BSU Aviation Student Profile

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This semester BSU Aviation's student profile is on Shelby French 14'. Shelby did an excellent job throughout the entire Private Pilot flight training program.

Shelby comes from southern New Hampshire and is currently a sophomore at BSU. At the age of five, she told her grandmother that she wanted to fly airplanes. They would often visit the Nashua airport and sit at the end of the runway to watch the small planes take off and land. As a child, Shelby believed that the best part of a family vacation was the thrill of flying to their destination.

Shelby started her path toward an aviation science degree at Bridgewater State University in 2010 and fell in love with flying. Along with her degree course work, ground school and flight training, she joined the flight team, is an ACE Camp counselor and an aviation tutor. Shelby hopes to either become an airline pilot or join the National Guard to fly Blackhawks. Shelby has always wanted to learn aerobatic maneuvers and plans on finishing her instrument rating in the near future.

Why did you choose BSU aviation over a different aviation training program?

I chose BSU aviation for two reasons: Bridgewater State University is close to home and the flight fees are significantly less for the same training as other aviation programs.

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Was the flight training more challenging than you expected?
The flight training was a challenge, but the work load is what caught me by surprise. There is a multitude of information thrown at you all at once. At times it seemed impossible to keep up, and in the very beginning it was extremely overwhelming. But with time, dedication, new study habits and tremendous support from my flight instructor and peers, I chipped away at the knowledge I needed to know to make my flight training successful.

How was your experience flying in the New England weather?

I believe New England is one of the best areas to train in because I can experience flying throughout four seasons. New England provides daily opportunity to learn how to fly the aircraft in various weather situations.

What has been the most rewarding part of your flight training with Bridgewater State University?

The most rewarding part was obtaining my private pilot's license. I am amazed looking back at everything that I have learned in such a short period of time. There is no other feeling like it.

Did you feel that you were prepared for each flight lesson?

I was always prepared for each lesson because I knew that if I wasn't, I wasn't flying that day. BSU Aviation expects you to be prepared for each flight and delivers mandatory online homework that is to be completed before each lesson. This guarantees a minimum of an hour study time before each flight.

In addition to the ground school, do you prepare on your own for the flight lessons?

Yes, ground school and flight school have their own separate workloads because they are two different classes. There is online home work to be completed before each flight and the majority of the time I had to do additional studying.

What was the most rewarding part of training with your CFI?

The most rewarding part of training with my CFI was seeing how proud he was when I received my license. He spent many of hours teaching me what I needed to know and adjusted his teaching style when I was having trouble with certain maneuvers or

concepts. He had a very flexible schedule and really dedicated his time to my learning. In the end I could see how much of an experience it was for the both of us and we were both very proud of what we had accomplished as a team.

You were what we'd refer to as aggressive in scheduling and completing your Private Pilot flight training. Did this help you, and do you see yourself doing likewise during your upcoming flight courses?

Yes being aggressive absolutely helped me complete my flight training as fast as possible. It allowed for continuous study habits and focus from lesson to lesson. I was aggressive toward scheduling because of the weather. Flights get cancelled all the time for one weather scenario or another. When one of my flights was cancelled I immediately would try to reschedule for the next day. By keeping up with studying and constantly scheduling flights I didn't allow myself to fall behind. I do see myself being just as aggressive, if not more aggressive toward my upcoming flight courses.

Do you have any suggestions for new students that would help them with their training?

My only suggestion for new students is start studying before you come to school. Everyone told me to start reading my flight books before I started classes, but of course it was summer vacation and I didn't listen. I regretted this decision for about two months into my first semester because there was so much to read and know. So start studying now.

BSU Aviation Flight Instructor Patrick Griffin, 10'

What was the most rewarding part of working with Shelby?

Shelby is a very self motivated student who worked hard throughout her private pilot training. I would give her an assignment and she would have it completed by the next lesson. She would often have gone above and beyond what I had asked her for. She made my job a lot easier since I didn't have to chase her to get things accomplished. This left more time to accomplish the actual flight training since the ground knowledge was already there. She would have the maneuvers memorized for a lesson so we could work on flying the maneuver and not on what the procedure of the maneuver was.

Would you encourage students to have similarly aggressive flight training schedules?

I would always encourage at least three blocks a week. Many weeks you could lose one of the blocks to weather or other reasons so that leaves you with two blocks a week which really isn't a lot. The closer your blocks are together the more fresh the information is and the quicker you will go through your training. On top of that, the quicker you go through training the less it will cost you.

What have you found to be the most common training difficulty for students going through this program?

The most common training difficulty that I have found for students is only doing the minimum of what the instructor tells you to accomplish. You have to be self motivated. All of the training builds on itself. The more you learn during your first stage of private pilot the better off you will be further down the road. The same is true from one course to the next. If you only learn the bare minimums in your private pilot course then you have that much more to learn during your instrument training. Also if you are in the habit of doing the minimum from private that will be a hard habit to break. Start the right way and you will learn a lot more and training will be easier/more enjoyable.

How much home study and preparation should students do before each flight?

This varies by student but I would say at least two hours before each flight lesson. They should have a firm grasp on the topics that will be covered during the next lesson. The more you study in the beginning the easier the later stages will become. You should have the procedure memorized for what you are doing on the next lesson so that you are perfecting that procedure during the flight and not trying to remember the steps. That makes for a much more enjoyable flight.

How flexible were you able to be with your flight schedule?

I was able to be pretty flexible with my flight schedule. If a student misses a flight I was often available to fit them in somewhere else during the week. I always want the student to be flying more since the information is fresh and we don't have to spend as much time reviewing things we have already gone over.

What have you found to be the most rewarding part of being a flight instructor?

The most rewarding part of being an instructor to me has been seeing how excited students get when they solo a plane for the first time or achieve the license they have worked so hard to get. You can just see the sense of accomplishment on their face and how proud they are. All of that hard work finally paid off and now they get to enjoy a new certificate.

Do you have any recommendations for new students as they start their training?

My recommendation would be get ready to work hard but also enjoy what you are work toward. The best advice I ever got was remember flying is supposed to be fun. There will be times when you are really frustrated with what is going on and stressed out about your next test. Just remember that you are flying a plane. Not too many people get to do that. Especially when you are doing your private pilot, you should be looking outside, enjoy the view. Not too many people have an office with a better view. Just remember the more prepared for each lesson you are the more enjoyable that lesson will be for you.

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