

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH ALABAMA STUDENT BRANCH RECEIVES CHARTER

by

Ken Philippart, Past Chair

The Greater Huntsville Section welcomes its newest student branch, the University of South Alabama (USA), to the American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics (AIAA). Professor Carlos Montalvo, Faculty Advisor for the USA branch, notified section leadership on October 22 that he received the official charter and welcome package from AIAA. The USA Student Branch has approximately 20 student members.

Receipt of the official charter culminates the process that began in August of 2014 when Dr. Montalvo and Ms. Kourtney Kronenberger contacted AIAA to ask about forming a student branch at USA and an AIAA chapter in Mobile. AIAA referred the requests to then-Region II Director Alan Lowrey who then discussed with Greater Huntsville Section leadership. The Greater Huntsville Section Council approved the creation of the Mobile Chapter in September, 2014 and initiated the chartering process for the USA Student Branch shortly thereafter.



A student branch must meet numerous requirements to be chartered by AIAA. The school must be accredited by ABET, Inc. or by the appropriate regional accrediting body. At least one school faculty member, who is an AIAA Professional Member, must agree to act as Faculty Advisor to the student branch. The Dean of the Engineering School, or an equivalent academic official, must write a letter of endorsement giving the school's official recognition of the group. At least fifteen students must have enrolled as charter members of the student branch. The prospective branch must submit proof of accreditation of the school's engineering programs and a set of bylaws. Finally, the AIAA Student Activities Committee and Board of Directors must review and approve the charter application.

Past Chair Ken Philippart traveled to Mobile last April and met with Prof. Montalvo and the USA student branch members. While there, Ken welcomed the students to the Greater Huntsville Section, presented an AIAA overview briefing and suggestions for activities and helped the students resolve the final administrative issues for their charter application package. Inspired by the discussions, the students completed the branch Bylaws and submitted them for review that same evening.

The complete charter application was formally submitted to AIAA last May, reviewed by the AIAA Student Activities Committee and then forwarded to the AIAA Board of Directors for approval. In October, the Board officially approved the charter, making USA the eighth student branch within the Greater Huntsville Section.

The USA Student Branch is planning an official chartering celebration that will include invitees from the university, Greater Huntsville Section's Mobile Chapter and Airbus Americas.

The Greater Huntsville Section congratulates the USA Student Branch as a shining example of the section's commitment to increasing AIAA's presence within the growing aerospace community in southern Alabama.