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Factors Influencing Student Selection of a Collegiate Aviation Program

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The cost of higher education is skyrocketing. In 2015, The College Board [a non-profit association of colleges] reported that the cost of a higher education is increasing at an annual rate of approximately five percent (The College Board, 2017). In addition, the report stated that in 2015, the cost of a 4-year education (in-state tuition and fees) at a public university averaged \$39,400.00. The College Board also projected that by the year 2033, in-state, tuition and fees associated with a 4-year education from a public university could exceed \$94,800.00 (The College Board, 2017). For students pursuing a collegiate aviation education and aspiring to become professional pilots, flight training fees can easily represent an additional \$65,000.00 to that total (FAPA, 2016). To further compound the issue of increasing costs associated with the pursuit of a higher education, academic institutions are faced with growing budgetary constraints, coupled with mounting pressure to maintain or increase student enrollments (Allen, T.R. and Minniear, H.E., 2007). To remain competitive in this challenging environment, it is essential for aviation institutions to understand what issues discerning students consider when selecting a collegiate aviation program.

The purpose of this research study is to identify and measure the perceived value of individual institutional characteristics that influence a student's decision to select a collegiate aviation institution. Given the aforementioned challenges, gaining insight into what institutional characteristics students consider when selecting a collegiate aviation program would prove highly enlightening and useful to all collegiate aviation institutions. The population for this study will include current students from 10 prominent collegiate aviation institutions. The institutions participating in the study will represent all major geographic regions that encompass the U.S.; including 2-year and 4-year institutions; public, private and non-secular private collegiate aviation institutions. The study will employ an online survey questionnaire that will be composed primarily of Likert Scale formatted statements to gather data.