An Introduction to the

Flight Instructors Model Code of Conduct

Introduction. The *Flight Instructors Model Code of Conduct* (FIMCC)[1] was released on April 18, 2011 as a free public service to the aviation community. The FIMCC is a tool designed to enhance flight and ground instructor safety and professionalism. Developed by a diverse team of aviation professionals and extensively peer-reviewed within the aviation community, the FIMCC offers a vision of excellence to help flight and ground instructors build professional relationships with their students. This paper introduces the FIMCC, considers its anticipated uses, presents drafting considerations and options, identifies challenges, and proposes areas for future work.

Genesis of the Code of Conduct. The FIMCC is the latest in a family of aviation codes of conduct.[2] The code of conduct initiative began in the early 1990s when a gap in flight training curricula became evident. Unlike most professional/specialized training (engineering, law, medicine, military, finance, or even hairdressing[3]), general aviation training generally lacks an emphasis on the pursuit of lifelong learning, aspiring to excellence, acting with honesty and fairness, and providing a superior level of service to client or customer and society. In contrast, flight training is often focused on *teaching to the test* and getting students certificated – a focus reflecting poorly on the flight training community and its culture of professionalism. The FIMCC initiative sought to respond by articulating what it means to be a great instructor and to act with professionalism.[4]

The Code of Conduct Examined. The FIMCC is a concise document containing seven key *Principles:*

    I. GENERAL RESPONSIBILITIES OF INSTRUCTORS
    II. STUDENTS, PASSENGERS, AND PEOPLE ON THE SURFACE
    III. TRAINING AND PROFICIENCY
    IV. SECURITY
    V. ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES
    VI. USE OF TECHNOLOGY
    VII. ADVANCEMENT AND PROMOTION OF AVIATION INSTRUCTION

This structure accommodates all issues identified during its development into a logical and supportable order.[5] Corresponding *Sample Recommended Practices* (SRPs) provide suggestions for tailoring and applying the Principles.[6]

Supporting the Principles and SRPs is *Commentary*, published separately, that provides drafting and implementation considerations, annotation, and education.[7] Code of conduct implementation[8] and teaching[9] resources are also available on the Codes website.[10] As designed, the FIMCC is a multi-level, on-line, dynamic and easy-to-implement tool.

Flexibility and Customization. The FIMCC is a *model* code, not a prescriptive code. It is designed to serve as an example and to be modified to suit the particular requirements of each implementer.[11] The most effective implementation of a code of conduct is a personal one in which the implementer

customizes—indeed personalizes—it, internalizes it, and becomes committed to adhere to it. We encourage those implementing the FIMCC to personalize every dimension of the code, including, but not limited to: the provisions and sample recommended practices, the length[12] (even a single-page model code is available[13]), the title[14] (it need not be entitled a "code of conduct"), and the format (brochures, web-based content, and Jeppesen plate style implementations are just a few available options).[15]

Methodology. The FIMCC has benefited from numerous focus groups, extensive editorial consultation, and review by hundreds of experts.[16] It incorporates incremental improvements gained from development of each prior code of conduct and associated commentary. In this regard, it is a *grass roots* initiative reflecting real world, line oriented input. Most importantly, however, the strength of the code was enhanced by the seasoned oversight, collective experience, vision, and judgment of its *Permanent Editorial Board* (PEB). The PEB is an active group of eight accomplished and diverse aviation professionals and pilots including academics, flight instructors, industry executives, and a major airline captain.[17]

Anticipated Uses of the FIMCC. While its intended uses are broad and unrestricted, we anticipate the FIMCC will primarily be used to articulate preferred and prudent practices; advance a safety culture;[18] underscore a commitment to life-long aviation training and education; help develop personal minimums, standard operating practices (SOPs), and checklists; and to advance flight and ground instructor professionalism.[19] The FIMCC is intended to motivate an overarching discussion by:

- flight schools—to socialize a safety and professional culture,
- flight instructors—to set an example for other instructors and students, i.e., to lead by example, and
- prospective flight students—to ascertain what they might expect from excellent instructors.[20]

Challenges. Professional codes have an extensive body of research and implementation support, yet many core issues concerning their efficacy remain in play. For example, how can the FIMCC best assist implementers to commit to its provisions? How can the FIMCC best encourage implementers to view themselves as professionals[21] and generate a safety culture? To what extent can the FIMCC facilitate professionalism? Is it feasible for the FIMCC to be implemented effectively by any flight instructor in the absence of support and oversight by professional educators and ethicists? Resolving such questions is beyond the scope of the FIMCC. Nonetheless, to the extent that the benefits (and limitations) of the FIMCC are consistent with professional codes of conduct in other disciplines, then the FIMCC should provide value and endure similar challenges.

Conclusion. The Permanent Editorial Board promotes, reviews, and periodically revises the family of aviator codes of conduct. Current projects include an update of the foundational *Aviators Model Code of Conduct* (AMCC) that will reflect lessons learned from the recently released *Aviation Maintenance Technicians Model Code of Conduct* (2009) and the FIMCC (2011), both of which are geared to professionals. We hope such lessons, focused on *aspirations* of professionalism, continue to permeate the entire aviation community – in both private general aviation operations and commercial operations; from primary training to airline transport training, and beyond.[22]

Consistent with the FAA Administrator's call for greater pilot professionalism[23], the FIMCC provides the flight instruction community with a roadmap to accomplish such a goal.

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[1] *Available at <http://www.secureav.com/FIMCC-Listings-Page.html>.*

[2] Codes released earlier include the *Aviators Model Code of Conduct* (AMCC), *Aviation Maintenance Technicians Model Code of Conduct* (AMTMCC), *Glider Aviators Model Code of Conduct* (GAMCC), *Light Sport Aviators Model Code of Conduct* (LSAMCC), *Seaplane Pilots Model Code of Conduct* (SeaplanePMCC), and *Student Pilots Model Code of Conduct* (SPMCC). *Available at <www.secureav.com>.*

[3] *See, for example*, Code of Conduct, Guidelines for European Hairdressers, The International Hairdressing Union (2001), *available at <http://www.eesc.europa.eu/self-and-coregulation/documents/codes/private/008-private-act.pdf>.*

[4] *See* FAA Administrator Randolph Babbitt, Keynote Address at the Pilot Training Reform Symposium, Atlanta (May 5, 2011), available at <www.faa.gov/news/speeches/news_story.cfm?newsId=12685> and <http://www.secureav.com/Babbitt-Atlanta-Symposium.pdf> (addressing professionalism and lauding the FIMCC). *See also* Commentary to AMCC I.f – General Responsibilities, *at <http://www.secureav.com/Comment-AMCC-I.f-General-Responsibilities.pdf>* (addressing professionalism and the Codes of Conduct).

[5] Although the order of the material is not generally prioritized, emphasis was given to third parties (passengers and people on the surface) as the second of the seven principles to underscore the importance of the enhanced ethical obligations of the instructor to the safety and well being of third parties. Also noteworthy is the explicit (if not elevated) treatment of security, environmental, and technology issues – considered an essential triad for safe and effective flight operations.

[6] The separate presentations of principles and SRPs was an editorial decision not only to keep the FIMCC focused and to better facilitate customization, but to encourage the implementer to *think* – that is, to analyze the content – with the expectation that this would enhance understanding. One highly influential aviation association urged that we interlineate the Principles with the SRPs. After considerable redrafting to create such an interlineated prototype, it was found unwieldy and comparatively ineffective. "Forcing" SRPs into exclusive association with a single Principle had the unintended effect of (a) disassociating certain SRPs with other (often equally) valid Principles, (b) creating imbalance since some Principles then had no associated SRPs whereas others had many, and (c) diminishing the learning process by creating a "checklist like" document that failed to encourage implementers to engage in critical thinking, sole-searching, and discourse to effectively change behavior, and garner commitment.

[7] *See <http://www.secureav.com/Commentary-Index.pdf>* (providing a table of contents to the Commentary).

[8] *Notes for Implementer*s, *available at <http://www.secureav.com/Notes-for-Implementers.pdf>.*

[9] *Notes for Instructors, available at <http://www.secureav.com/teaching.html>.*

[10] *At <www.secureav.com>.*

[11] Customization of each implementation may be a function of: instructor(s), culture, equipment, mission, and flight environment, among other factors.

[12] *See* Commentary Addressing Code of Conduct Model, Length, and Organization, *available at <http://secureav.com/Comment-AMCC-General.pdf>.*

[13] *See <www.secureav.com/FIMCC-Summary.doc>.*

[14] *See <http://secureav.com/Comment-AMCC-Title.pdf>.*

[15] *See <http://www.secureav.com/newdevelopments.html>* (highlighting many diverse implementations in diverse factor-forms, of the Code of Conduct).

[16] *See <www.secureav.com/Ack.pdf>.*

[17] The PEB includes: Michael S. Baum, JD, MBA; Ric Peri, VP AEA; Michael Radomsky, CFII; Bill Rhodes, Ph.D.; Rusty Sachs, JD, DhE, MCFI; Josh Smith, CFII; Don Steinman, ATP, CFII; and Thomas P. Turner, ATP, MCFI. *See* <www.secureav.com/PEB.pdf> (further introducing the PEB). The underlying agreement for the PEB is available at <http://www.secureav.com/PEBagreement.pdf> (describing PEB roles and responsibilities with respect to the Code of Conduct).

[18] *See* Eurocontrol/FAA Action Plan 15 Safety, "Safety Culture in Air Traffic Management, A White Paper" (2008), *available at* <http://www.eurocontrol.int/safety/gallery/content/public/library/Safety%20Culture/Safety_ATM_WhitePaper_final%20low.pdf>. (*Safety Culture* "is the product of individual and group values, attitudes, competencies and patterns of behaviour that determine commitment to, and the style and proficiency of, an organisation's health and safety management." Advisory Committee for Safety on Nuclear Installations (HSC, 1993, p. 23)).

[19] THE FIMCC may also contribute to a single pilot SMS. It is recognized that a SMS "should not be any more complex than the rest of the organization's operation or management processes," Transport Canada, *Let's be practical,* TP 14135 - *Safety Management Systems for Small Aviation Operations - A Practical Guide to Implementation* (Nov. 9, 2004), *available at* <http://www.tc.gc.ca/civilaviation/general/Flttrain/SMS/TP14135-1/section5.htm>. The FIMCC can provide a viable format for single pilot and similar, basic operations. It emphasizes core SMS principles of safety risk management, internal evaluation, and self-audit, provides safety promotion as a core value, and embraces important SMS attributes including a philosophy of *responsible free-agency,* high-level principles underpinning a safety policy, and *procedures and practices*: via SRPs. *See* <http://www.secureav.com/Comment-AMCC-I.a-General-Responsibilities.pdf> (addressing SMS and the Codes of Conduct).

[20] Student focus, however, should be on the Student Pilots Model Code of Conduct (SPMCC) or the Aviators Model Code of Conduct (AMCC), not the FIMCC. The FIMCC should assist flight and ground instructors in teaching the SPMCC and AMCC.

[21] *See generally* Muriel J. Bebeau and Verna E. Monson, Univ. of Minn., *Guided by Theory, Grounded in Evidence: A Way Forward for Professional Ethics Education*, in HANDBOOK FOR MORAL AND CHARACTER EDUCATION, pp. 557-582 (Larry P. Nucci & Darcia Narvaez, *Eds.*) (2008), *available at* <http://www.routledge.com/books/details/9780805859614/>.

[22] Future work has been suggested by members of the aviation community, including further development of teaching tools to support code of conduct use and education, an enhanced focus on professionalism within each of the codes, support for single pilot operations within a Safety Management System (SMS), a survey of use and benefits/limitations of the codes, and possible collaboration on the assessment of code of conduct effectiveness.

[23] FAA Administrator Randy Babbitt , Speech (Nov. 5, 2009), *available at* <http://atwonline.com/international-aviation-regulation/news/babbitt-calls-northwest-overfly-incident-example-pilot-profes > (there is an "extreme need to refocus on professionalism…"); Randy Babbitt, Address at the ALPA Air Safety Forum (Aug. 5, 2009), *available at* <http://www.faa.gov/news/speeches/news_story.cfm?newsId=10680 > ("We cannot regulate professionalism… and it still comes down to us — and by *us,* I mean every pilot.*").

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