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WEATHER BOOT CAMP AND OTHER OUTRAGEOUS ACTIVITIES

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1. INTRODUCTION

Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University's (ERAU) fledgling Applied Meteorology program has attracted nearly 40 undergraduates as it begins its second year. Faculty have developed creative ways to catch the interest of not only students and their parents, but also offer activities to the local community and for weather fans around the globe.

2. COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Faculty arranged a Lightning Safety Seminar in Spring, 2001 which was well attended by both students and citizens of the surrounding areas. William Roeder performed his special magic to impress upon the audience the under-rated dangers of the atmosphere's beautiful, but deadly electricity.

On the eve of the 2001 hurricane season, faculty gathered leaders from local government, the Red Cross, local National Weather Service, local television meteorologists, and our own faculty to present a two-hour seminar on the impending tropical storm dangers.

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Experts in their field discussed how tropical storms form, when and where to evacuate, and how to prepare homes and businesses for potential wind and water damage.

During the summer, a "weather boot camp" was added to the sports, aviation, and aerospace camps that have been traditionally offered young people by ERAU through the years. Middle teens from Hawaii and California to New York and Georgia learned the basics of observing and documenting surface weather observations. They then plotted surface observations and analyzed local area surface charts for pressure and temperature. These young people came to ERAU because of their interest in aviation, but next year we plan to offer a distinct camp focused on applied meteorology.

3. NEW FACILITIES

We can be more successful with and expand our summer programs because of upgraded facilities that will open in April, 2002. A new School of Aviation building will house the Applied Meteorology faculty and staff. Not only will we have two dedicated electronic classrooms, but we'll also have a large operational weather lab with 27

computer work stations and a rooftop observing facility complete with balloon launch capability.

Faculty have also developed community outreach programs in the introduction to weather basics and have added a web-enhanced edition to the first course in meteorology offered to students. An interactive web course has been 50% completed at the writing of this paper. These creative initiatives are the result of collaborative efforts among meteorology faculty, Educational Technology experts, and Community Outreach managers and staff.

4. THE FUTURE

Future efforts to attract young people to the field of applied meteorology will include a student chapter of a professional weather organization and an interactive web-based newsletter designed to keep students, parents, and faculty involved and informed.