

NATIONAL INTERCOLLEGIATE
FLYING ASSOCIATION



AWARDS BANQUET

Rhythm City Casino Resort
Moline, IL
May 23, 2026
Doors: 17:00 CDT

Program of Events

Welcome

Dinner

Presentation of Awards

Closing Remarks

Special Thank You to...

Crystal Newman	Verne Wiese	Emma Dodd-Carnine
Greg Robbins	Liewe Wiese	Joe Goetz
Jill Robbins	Jeremy Brown	Dave Herrell
Suzie Espinosa	Juan Velasquez	Paulette Day
Corrie Reigle	John Frasca	Barb Toft
Jessica Auslander	Grant Germann	Mo Hyder
Dan Auslander	Ben Leischner	...and so many others!

Our assiduous students & their steadfast coaches

Our dedicated judges

Our hardworking volunteers

Our sustaining donors

All families, friends, and university officials who have supported their students' participation in SAFECON!

FlightSafety International

United Aviate

Southwest Airlines & Destination 225°

Air Line Pilots Association, International

Aviation Supplies and Academics

Aviator Assistant

Delta Propel in partnership with Endeavor Air

Frasca, A FlightSafety International Company

Jeppesen Foreflight

King Schools

Pilots of FedEx

Piper Aircraft

Sporty's Pilot Shop

Talon Systems

Textron Aviation

United States Air Force Reserve Command

Metropolitan Airport Authority of Rock Island County, IL

Quad Cities International Airport & MLI ATC Personnel

Visit Quad Cities

Preflight Inspection Event

Sponsored by: The NIFA Council

An aircraft is "bugged" with at least thirty un-airworthy discrepancies. Contestants are given 15 minutes to preflight the aircraft and find as many of the discrepancies as possible.

Aircraft Recognition Event

Sponsored by: Textron Aviation

Images of aircraft are shown on a screen for three seconds. Competitors then have 15 seconds to identify the aircraft's manufacturer, model number, and common name, if any.

Certified Flight Instructor Event

Sponsored by: Pilots of FedEx

Certified Flight Instructors take part in a teaching competition. The event starts with a CFI preparing and teaching a pre-determined subject. If weather and time permit, the CFI then teaches the lesson in flight.

Coach of the Year Award

Sponsored by: Talon Systems

This award is presented to the coach that has demonstrated the best qualities in coaching, support, and leadership. Team members nominate the coach they feel best meets these criteria.

Collegiate Aviation Progress Award

Sponsored by: The NIFA Council

This award recognizes the team that has made the greatest improvements in the last year. A judging committee evaluates each team, considering the team's performance, safety, membership, aircraft operations, and extra-curricular activities.

Competition Safety Award

Sponsored by: The NIFA Council

This award is presented to the team displaying the highest degree of safety during the week of competition. Teams are judged on their ability to maintain a safe environment while handling aircraft as well as their professionalism and behavior.

Computer Accuracy Event

Sponsored by: Aviation Supplies and Academics, Inc.

Contestants work against the clock to solve mathematical flight planning computations using a manually operated flight computer (E6B). The exam includes problems on time, speed, distance, wind correction, fuel requirements, and conversion factors.

Crew Resource Management/ Line Oriented Flight Training (CRM/LOFT) Event

Sponsored by: Frasca, A FlightSafety International Company

Two-person crew (a Pilot Flying and Pilot Not Flying) are assigned a cross-country flight in a simulator. Contestants are judged on their ability to work together in a cockpit environment as well as their ability to handle in-flight situations.

Achievement Awards

Sponsored by: United States Air Force Reserve Command

Competitors are interviewed by a board that examines their academic accomplishments, community service, and aviation involvement.

Message Drop Event

Sponsored by: The NIFA Council

The objective of the Message Drop Event is to hit a target on the ground with a message container, dropped from an aircraft in cruise configuration and at an altitude of 200 feet. A team effort is necessary by both the pilot and drop-master to maneuver the airplane so each container will hit the target. The contestant with the lowest total distance from the target for both containers is the winner.

IFR Simulator Event

Sponsored by: Frasca, A FlightSafety International Company

Competitors are required to demonstrate proficiency and precision by flying a given route in a flight training device. All aspects of cross-country of cross-country IFR flight are included such as clearances, holding patterns, instrument approach procedures, and diversion to an alternate.

Outstanding Team Member Award

Sponsored by: NIFA Council

Each team can recognize the contributions and efforts of one of their own team members by selecting him or her as their Outstanding Team Member.

Power-Off Approach and Landing Event

Sponsored by: Piper Aircraft

Similar in concept to the Short-Field Event, except power must be reduced on the downwind leg and remain at idle abeam the target line. The approach is made by gliding for the remainder of the traffic pattern to touchdown, preferably on the target line.

NIFA Sportsmanship Award

Sponsored by: The NIFA Council

This award is presented to the team displaying the most sportsmanship-like conduct and behavior throughout the week of competition. Each team votes for whom they feel should be the recipient.

Regional Top Pilots

Sponsored by: Air Line Pilots Association, Int'l

The Regional Top Pilot is the contestant earning the greatest number of points in the following events at their Regional SAFECON: Power-Off Approach and Landing, Short-Field Approach and Landing, Navigation, Ground Trainer, Preflight Inspection, and SCAN. In addition, the winner must place fifth or higher in one of the following three flying events: Power-Off Approach and Landings, Short-Field Approach and Landings, or Navigation.

Short-Field Approach and Landing Event

Sponsored by: The NIFA Council

The objective of the Short-Field Event is to test the pilot's skill at maneuvering and manipulating the aircraft. After taking off and flying a normal pattern, the objective is to land as close as possible, if not on, the target line. Once the pilot reduces the power, he or she cannot increase it again. The Pilot's score is the distance in feet from where the aircraft's wheels initially touch the runway to the target line. The lowest cumulative score from two landings, plus technical penalty points, if any, wins.

Simulated Comprehensive Aircraft Navigation (SCAN)

Sponsored by: The NIFA Council

The SCAN event is written exam with problems that reference a simulated cross-country flight over a given route. Included in the flight planning are questions on weight and balance, aircraft performance, FARs, aeronautical charts, weather interpretations, and fuel consumption.

Traditional Navigation Event

Sponsored by: King Schools

The Navigation Event consists of a cross-country flight over a three to five leg course between 70 and 120 nautical miles. Each contestant submits a flight plan before takeoff, which includes estimated time en route for each leg, total elapsed time, and fuel consumption. Traditional entrants may not use navigation equipment/electronics of any kind. The contestant with the lowest penalty points wins.

Ground Trainer Event

Sponsored by: Frasca, A FlightSafety International Company

This event is designed to test the contestant's competency and skill in a flight training device. Flying a predetermined pattern, the competitor must show proficiency in maintaining altitude, heading and airspeed.

Aviation Maintenance Technician Event

Sponsored by: Aviation Supplies & Academics

This event involves questions ranging in topics from Human Factors and Safety to Inspection Concepts and Techniques. Standings are determined by overall test score and time to complete the exam.

Unlimited Navigation Event

Sponsored by: King Schools

The Navigation Event consists of a cross-country flight over a three to five leg course between 70 and 120 nautical miles. Each contestant submits a flight plan before takeoff, which includes estimated time en route for each leg, total elapsed time and fuel consumption. The contestant with the lowest penalty points wins.

Top Scoring Contestant Award

Sponsored by: The NIFA Council

This award is presented to the contestant who accumulates the greatest number of points in the individual events, used for determining the winner of the national championship trophy.

National Top Pilot Award

Sponsored by: Air Line Pilots Association, Int'l

The National Top Pilot is the contestant earning the greatest number of points in the following events at the National SAFECON: Power-Off Approach and Landing, Short-Field Approach and Landing, Navigation, Ground Trainer, Preflight Inspection, and SCAN. In addition, the winner must place fifth or higher in one of the following three flying events: Power-Off Approach and Landing, Short-Field Approach and Landing, or Navigation.

Gary Hemphill “Spirit of NIFA” Award

Sponsored by: The NIFA Council

See detailed description on later page.

Top Two-Year School

Sponsored by: NIFA Council

This award is presented to the team who places highest amongst the group of attending schools which offer two-year degree programs in aviation.

Judges Trophy

Sponsored by: The NIFA Council

This trophy is awarded based upon the overall participation of all the contestants on a team. Point values are assigned to each non-disqualified contestant's placing in each event. The team having the highest number of cumulative contestant points will be the recipient of the trophy.

Founder's Award

This year's award will be the 11th Founder's Award given in the history of NIFA. It is presented to a person who has demonstrated steadfast dedication to providing the foundation upon which NIFA stands and prospers.

Ground Events Champions

Sponsored by: United Aviate

The team earning the greatest number of points in the Ground Events (SCAN, Ground Trainer, Preflight Inspection, and Computer Accuracy) will be presented this award.

Flight Events Champions

Sponsored by: Southwest Airlines and Destination 225°

The team earning the greatest number of points in the following flight events will be named the Flying Events Champion: Short-Field Approach and Landing, Power-Off Approach and Landing, Navigation, IFR Simulator, CRM/LOFT, and Message Drop.

National Championship Trophy

Sponsored by: FlightSafety International

This award is presented to the team that accumulates the most points during the national competition.





The "Spirit of NIFA" Award was established in 2021 in honor of the late Gary Hemphill. Gary's NIFA involvement began in 1978 as a student in Region IV. He humbly volunteered as SAFECON support, host school advisor at Northeast Louisiana University (NLU), and Region IV Representative. Gary served in the U.S. Air Force and later completed his master's degree at Northeast Louisiana University, where he also taught and coached. From 1985-2011 he guided the NIFA as Executive Director, while also spending his career as an Aviation Professor, Department Chair, and Flight Team Advisor at Delta State University. Not only did Gary carry NIFA on his shoulders and in his heart for over 26 years, but without him NIFA would not be where it is today. In 2011, NIFA awarded Gary its highest honor, the Founder's Award, for his dedication and service to the organization. There have been only 10 recipients of this award in NIFA history. NIFA owes Gary much more than this award. NIFA owes its future to Gary.

The Gary Hemphill "Spirit of NIFA" Award will be presented to a person who exemplifies the same passion toward humbly serving others, while leading a life of dedication and commitment to excellence for future generations.

You can support NIFA in a special way and support the "Spirit of NIFA" Award by becoming a Hemphill NIFA Member at any amount. Your membership will directly support the Award.

Thank You

2026 NIFA Council Members and Staff

Mrs. Samantha Morris	Region I
Mr. Jeff Satterwhite	Region II
Mr. Jeff Guynes	Region III
Mr. Phil Roberts	Region IV
Mr. Lewis Liang	Region VI
Mr. Cameron Laramee-Gonzalez	Region VII
Mr. Andrew Ross	Region VIII
Mr. James Hanover	Region IX
Mr. David Hauth	Region X
Mr. Marty Coaker	Member-at-Large
Mrs. Emily Coaker	Member-at-Large
Mr. Eric Barton	Member-at-Large
Mr. Erich Hess	Member-at-Large
Mr. Will Kraatz	Member-at-Large
Mr. Calvin Warren	Member-at-Large
Mr. Greg Weseman	Member-at-Large
Mr. Prescott Dean	Member-at-Large
Mr. Dillon Mucha	Student Representative
Ms. Barbara Donovan	Student Representative
Mr. Taylor Newman	Executive Director
Mr. Ryan Perrin	Senior Chief Judge
Mr. Carlo Espinosa	Director of Social Media
Mr. Nick Klepinger	Manager of Student Representatives
Mr. Kent Lovelace	Member Emeritus
Mr. Glenn McConnell	Member Emeritus
Capt. Darryl Stubbs	Member Emeritus

The National Intercollegiate Flying Association
would like to thank

FlightSafety
INTERNATIONAL

for their National Championship
sponsorship and support!