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## NextGen provides potential for new college programs

By MICHELLE LEE Staff Writer | Posted: Saturday, October 17, 2009 |

The Next Generation Aviation Research Park could become a learning center for other nearby colleges.

The Richard Stockton College of New Jersey, one of the park organizers, is trying to partner with other schools to turn the future research complex into a place where aviation experts, Federal Aviation Administration officials and professors can work on joint projects, said Stockton President Herman Saatkamp Jr.

Saatkamp said he hopes the research park will draw academic interest from other universities as well, and that could provide another opportunity to do collaborative education programs and hire new professors. Stockton College is in the midst of expanding its computational science and professional science programs and will be building a new science center.

The Stockton president noted the aviation-research industry could provide another economic "anchor" to southern New Jersey, in addition to the education and health care fields. "This type of research park is normally a stable economic factor in a community," Saatkamp said. "The funding and need for research is stable through economically good and bad times."

There have been discussions with Atlantic Cape Community College about the possibility of setting up a program to train students in becoming air-traffic managers, said Gordon Dahl, director of the South Jersey Economic Development District, the group that is developing the research park.

Otto Hernandez, the associate dean of ACCC's Geographic Information Systems and Technical Studies Institute, said the community college is interested in establishing an air-traffic control program because it would be a great career opportunity for students, especially since the jobs will be in high demand over the next five to 15 years when many current workers will retire.

Hernandez said there are no such programs currently in the southern New Jersey area and the closest school with an air traffic control program is the Community College of Beaver County in Pennsylvania.

Atlantic Cape Community College would also like to bring a GIS training program to the research park. Hernandez said the college got a \$1.25 million three-year grant in February from the U.S. Department

of Labor and the aviation research complex would be good place for students to develop work skills. The community college is looking to branch out the business fields graduates can work in, and the research park could provide another employment venue, according to Richard Perniciaro, ACCC's dean of facilities, planning and research. Perniciaro noted the school is in the process of building a new science building and expanding its regular classes and workforce programs.

Officials from Rutgers and Drexel University have also expressed an interest in the aviation complex, Joseph Sheairs, the interim director for the research park, said.

The U.S. Department of Education set aside \$341,000 last year for Stockton College to develop educational programs and an academic participation plan in connection to the research park.

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