

By Allison McKay

Navy Vet Takes on the Challenge of Aviation

Patrick Jaegar, a 2017 HFI Commercial Pilot Scholarship winner, grew up in Champlin, Minnesota, and enlisted in the U.S. Navy in 2008, straight out of high school. He was on active duty for eight years, eventually becoming a navy SEAL, that service's elite special operations team.

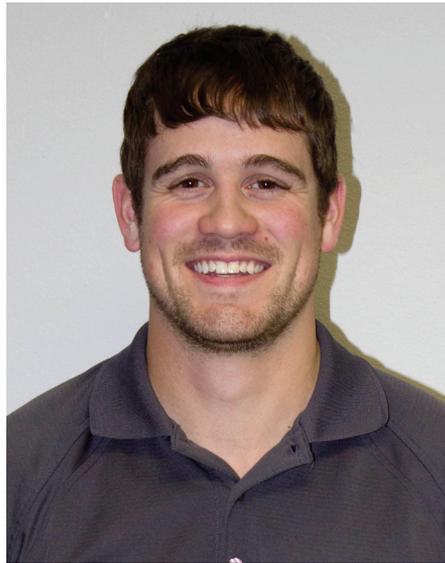
While in the navy, he worked with many helicopter pilots and witnessed what it takes to be a professional pilot, as well as the different missions that a helicopter was capable of accomplishing. This is what inspired him to pursue a career in aviation.

In May 2016, Jaegar left active duty and immediately started flight school at Texas State Technical College in Waco, Texas. The school offers associate's degrees in both fixed- and rotary-wing piloting.

He completed his private and instrument ratings in the first two semesters. He is currently working to complete his commercial rating, with a target completion date of April of this year. Jaegar plans to go straight into preparing for his certificated flight instructor (CFI) and CFI – Instrument ratings and to graduate with a two-year associate's degree by spring of 2018.

Jaegar uses his VA benefits to pay for his helicopter ratings, but they currently do not pay for any other additional training. He was awarded the 2017 HFI Commercial Pilot Scholarship and plans to use it toward a night-vision goggle transition or possible long-line training to better prepare him for the industry and improve his career options.

As part of his HFI scholarship award, Jaegar was able to attend HAI HELI-EXPO 2017 in Dallas. He attended the HAI Annual Membership Meeting & Breakfast, several Rotor Safety Challenge sessions, the HFI Career Roundtable,



and the Salute to Excellence Awards dinner. He valued his time at the show, saying it enabled him to capitalize on the “mentorship that some pilots provided, along with their willingness to help a lower-level pilot get into the industry. Most industries do not have this mentality, so it was really motivational to see.”

Once Jaegar graduates, he plans to instruct at a flight school to build hours, as well as to gain the considerable knowledge and experience that comes from teaching. After flight training, his ideal job would be working in the utility sector, but he is keeping his options open.

“For those who are considering a career in aviation, it will unquestionably be one of your biggest challenges,” Jaegar says. “However, if you put the time and effort in, it will pay dividends in setting you up for a prosperous aviation career.” 

Allison McKay is vice president of Helicopter Foundation International.



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