

DUBUQUE, Iowa (KWWL) – The university is holding aviation classes in a brand new space this semester.

The new Ed Babka Aviation Learning Center is right on airport road next to the Dubuque Regional Airport.

University leaders say the aviation program has seen significant growth over the years, so they needed to accommodate more students with more space for classes and learning. The university also added a helicopter pilot program two years ago.



Head of the aviation program, Chaminda Prelis says while the program has been around for decades, it has seen a lot more students enroll in just the last few years.

“The aviation program has been around for over 40 years and we started with only a handful of students and we’re up to more than 300 students now especially in the last three or four years.”

He says this has a lot to do with a pilot shortage happening in the workforce. He says more young people are finding good careers with airline companies.

Before the new center was built, the university held aviation could only hold classes at their main campus. Head of the aviation program, Chaminda Prelis says students would have to travel back and forth from campus to a building the college rented from the airport for flight training purposes.

“We also have three classrooms out here that we can use as well so that way the students don’t have to continue to zip back and forth between campus and here.”

Prelis says the new building is not only larger and has more space to accommodate more students, but it is also more energy efficient and is located closer to the university’s hangar.

The new center and amenities cost the university about \$5 million. This was partially paid for with donations, most of which came from the late Edward Babka who was a former university trustee. The center was named in his honor.



Cori Hanna
Today in Iowa reporter

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