



Media Release

Contact: Michael Barber
Director of Communications
(941) 720-1734

STATE LEGISLATURE AND GOVERNOR FUND AVIATION MAINTENANCE TECHNICIAN SCHOOL AT SRQ

(Bradenton, FL – June 8, 2022) The School District of Manatee County’s dream of building an Aviation Maintenance Technician School at the Sarasota Bradenton International Airport has become a reality, thanks to \$5.5 million allocated for the project in the 2022 state budget passed by the Florida Legislature and signed into law by Gov. Ron DeSantis.

Once opened, Manatee Technical College will partner with Sarasota’s Suncoast Technical College to provide career certificate workforce training in aviation Airframe Mechanic and Aviation Powerplant Mechanic. The University of South Florida Sarasota-Manatee will also be involved, preparing students for licenses in aviation maintenance and employment and advanced training in the aviation industry.

“I want to thank the legislature and Gov. DeSantis for having the vision and foresight to fund this innovative venture that will benefit not only Manatee and Sarasota Counties, but the entire state,” said School District of Manatee County Superintendent Cynthia Saunders. “I want to say a special thanks to Representative Fiona McFarland and Senator Joe Gruters for their sponsorship of this initiative.”

The Bradenton Area Economic Development Corporation reports there are nearly 1,500 annual openings for aircraft mechanics and service technicians statewide, and industry reports say more aviation mechanics are retiring than are entering the field nationwide. In addition, the Bradenton Area EDC states that more than 50 employers in the aviation/aerospace industry operate in Manatee and Sarasota counties, and the aviation sector accounts for 16 percent of Manatee County’s workforce.

“The aviation maintenance training program at SRQ will be a valuable strategic asset for economic development in the Bradenton area and our region,” said Sharon Hillstrom, president and CEO of the Bradenton Area EDC. “Companies want to locate in forward-thinking communities that understand the value of collaboration and that support education, workforce development and business expansion.”

SRQ, billed as the fastest growing airport in the country, is excited to welcome the new school, according to SRQ President and CEO Rick Piccolo.

“This school will create worldwide opportunity for students in our entire region in a growing industry,” Piccolo said. “It enhances the opportunity to attract major aircraft maintenance firms to the airport which would create high paying jobs locally.”