1. Why did you choose BSU Aviation over other aviation training programs?

I chose BSU Aviation for a few different reasons. Firstly, it is a central location in New England. Growing up in Maine, I knew that I wanted to go to a school that gave me some freedom but that was still close enough to home for me to visit when I wanted to. BSU gave me all of that. Secondly, this is the least expensive aviation program anywhere in the country. The cost of getting your licenses and ratings with such elite training here at BSU is extremely reasonable and for a student who is paying for most of his training himself, that is a huge plus. And lastly, the flight education that you receive is some of the best in the business; BSU has a reputation for a sound and solid training program.

2. Was the flight training more challenging than you expected?

I knew that flight training was going to be a challenge but I wasn’t as prepared for the workload as I should have been. In order to be successful in the program you really have to dedicate yourself to your training almost more than your other classes. You have to make sure you prepare for each lesson, you should practice the maneuvers on the free simulator before hand, you have to come early to every flight to preflight and prepare for your event; it is a much larger commitment than most people understand. That was the most challenging aspect for me.

3. How would you describe your training experience flying in the New England weather?

To have training experience in New England weather is great. Here in Massachusetts we are able to experience a large spectrum of weather that makes us much safer and more experienced pilots. I have friends in Florida who are in flight training right now who have never experienced cold weather operations, I couldn’t imagine not having those types of experiences under my belt as a professional pilot.
4. What has been the most rewarding aspect of your training experience at BSU?

I would say the most rewarding aspect of my flight training is what I call the “get it” moment. The “get it” moment is the very clear turning point where you are no longer learning the information in a flight training course but mastering it. In both of my training courses there was a very specific point in training where I no longer required direct assistance from my CFI, where I could accomplish everything on my own without asking for help, where I knew and completely understood what was going on. This was huge to me; it was a transition in my training but it was a transition in my confidence as well. I knew what the situation was and how to accomplish each task at hand and that sense of confidence in myself felt great.

5. Did you believe that you are properly prepared for each flight lesson?

Absolutely. I was always aware of what the next lesson was going to include, what I should be studying, how I should be preparing, you always leave each lesson knowing exactly what you have to do next. It was great and it made it a lot easier to move efficiently through your training.

6. Do you prepare for your training sessions outside of the regularly scheduled ground school?

For sure, I study and review every single lesson before I go up. A lot of the time I’ll jump into the free simulator to fly the lesson before I ever even touch an airplane, just to know what I’m going to expect. Every flight takes a ton of planning and thought. Not only do you have to prepare and study what you’re going to go over in each event but you also have to prepare yourself physically and mentally every time you fly. Preparing for a flight really starts hours before; you have to make sure that you get a good nights sleep, make sure that you’ve eaten properly, make sure you have all of your supplies and materials. There’s so much that goes into every flight, there’s really no way you can be efficient with your flying if you don’t prepare.

7. What has been the most rewarding element of your training with Christi?

Christi is great, she’s a really awesome CFI. Flying is a really serious matter with a lot of risk and a lot of times students take it so seriously they forget that flying is supposed to be fun; myself included. What’s awesome about Christi is that every time we go up she’s laughing and joking around and making the flight a really good time, all the while making sure you
learn something in a practical and efficient manner. Coming from a teaching background she knows how students learn and what they need in order to make each lesson worthwhile and its just really great to have a CFI that is laid back and fun but at the same time really efficient and productive.

8. You’re a student who was pretty aggressive in scheduling and completing your Private and Instrument flight training. Did this help you and are you doing likewise in with your current training course?

Absolutely, it was a huge advantage in my training. Every time that you have a large break between blocks, you forget what you learned in the previous lesson and you have to spend time going over it again instead of starting on new material. During my training I try to keep my schedule as open as possible in order to soft block as much as I can. This keeps me current in relation to my previous lessons but it also keeps me in focus; I don’t have an opportunity to be off of my game and I can keep rolling through all my lessons. I am definitely doing this during my current training and I highly suggest it to any new aviation students as well; I guarantee it will help you attain that license faster and more efficiently.

9. Do you have any suggestions for students who are new to BSU Aviation and/or new to flight training in general?

In order to be successful in your flight training, you are going to have to work your butt off. There will be lots of sleepless nights studying the FAR/AIM and early mornings driving to the airport. There are lots of challenges in your way. It is the way it is. But if you can accept that and work through all of the obstacles and hurdles, you will be successful and it will be one of the most rewarding experiences you can have. And through all of the work, just remember why you’re doing it; remember your passion and remember to enjoy every flight. Being a pilot is the greatest privilege in the world, enjoy it.

Flight Instructor – Christi Ellis

1. What has been the most rewarding aspect of working with Ben?

Ben is very proactive with his learning. He comes in not only willing to learn but also prepared by having reviewed the material he was asked to look over. Ben is also quick to pick up new skills because he is eager to further his knowledge and skill, not just to pass test, but to become the best pilot he can become.

2. Ben has been pretty forward-leaning about his scheduling, so how do you manage this to keep him moving forward and on track with both his aeronautical knowledge and flight proficiency?

In order to keep Ben progressing at a pace that matches his drive to succeed, I create extra blocks whenever he is available (for any solos he may need) as well as blocks with myself any extra time we can. In order to keep his knowledge up to par, I will also give him homework, things to look over. We also stay in continual contact over his training so that we are both on the same page and we both have a good idea about the plan of action we have to get his course complete. Also, we have an understanding that on days where the
weather is inadequate for the objectives we need to complete, we will do a ground to cover subject areas he may be tested on for his stage check and checkride.

3. Do you encourage students to approach their training with a philosophy similar to Ben's?

Ben is a great student in that he takes full responsibility for his learning. He studies, watches videos, and asks for help when learning anything new. I not only encourage other students to approach their training with the same eagerness and enthusiasm as Ben but I also encourage them to use him as a resource if they have need extra help or simply a fellow classmate to ask advice. The other approach to Ben's training I like is he immerses himself in the culture. He is involved with helping run the flight team and is always talking to other students about their training and encouraging them with their progress. His positive attitude towards other students and constant involvement with aviation as well as having a proactive approach to his own training makes his approach to training something that should be emulated.

4. What have you found to be the most common training difficulties for students as they progress through their courses?

The biggest issue I've found with training is the student's unwillingness and/or inability (due to lack of experience) to take charge of their learning and strive for excellence. Some strive to just get by. Some students are still in a high school mindset that information will be handed to them by a teacher whereas, as in most college environments, now the learning must be more self-propelled. They need to take the initiative with their learning, read up on the information their flight instructor asks them to look at as well as make sure to learn (for the long term) the information they learn in the ground schools. It should be a continual effort to increase knowledge, not just to a level to pass a test or stage check but to become the best pilot they can. I've found not being mentally prepared has hindered a student's progress more than any other factor.

5. Do you have any recommendations for how to properly prepare for a training session?

The best way to prepare for a lesson is to first review the lesson you will be doing next block, preferably by taking notes during the briefing the student received after the previous block and referencing that with the actual lesson sheet in the Training Course Outline. For the flight portion, look up the maneuvers listed in the appropriate book (i.e. Airplane Flying Handbook) and cross-reference it with the FSM in order to learn correct procedures to make it easier to understand when you are trying to learn it in the plane. For the Preflight briefing, again, try to find information in the appropriate references (i.e. if it lists electrical system, look up information in the Cessna manual as well as the PHAK). Most importantly, write down questions that come up when reviewing any material so the student can ask specific questions over the material thereby taking an active role in their learning.

6. What have you found to be the most rewarding aspect of being a CFI?

The absolute best thing about teaching is where your teaching culminates in a moment where you see them succeed on a check ride, stage check, or simply just a maneuver you’ve been working on. There's no greater feeling than seeing them succeed. One of my favorite
moments is getting to see it happen for a student when they get to go fly the plane by themselves while I just watch. Seeing them light up afterwards and knowing they did it because you helped them get there is the most rewarding aspect of being a CFI.

7. Do you have any suggestions for students who are new to BSU Aviation and/or new to flight training?

Students should definitely be aware that it will take a lot of hard work. Their success is completely dependent on their work ethic as well as their persistence and dedication to their dream of being in aviation. Don't be afraid of the hard work; see it as a challenge worth the effort!