Nationals-bound Flying Hornet Team honors Tuskegee Airmen

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The DSU Aviation Program – which will be sending a team to compete in the National Intercollegiate Flying Association's National Flight Competition in May – is getting really excited about the new film *Red Tails* that tells the stories of the WWII exploits of the Tuskegee Airmen.

The students are so excited, they have applied a new coat of paint to a number of their aircraft that they maintain at the Delaware Air Park.

In honor of the African American flyers and the new film, the DSU Aviation Program members have painted the tail section of several of its planes red. Aviation students plan to go to the movies to see the opening of *Red Tails.*

James Otis Handy, an aeronautical technical engineer with the original Tuskegee Airmen, is honored with a cake on the occasion of his 92nd birthday during a Jan. 20 Aviation Program celebration at the Delaware Air Park hangar. To his right is retired Brig. Gen. Ernest G. Talbert Jr.

"It is our way of honoring the Tuskegee airman," said Hans Riegle, assistant director of the Aviation Program.

The Aviation Program has also invited Tuskegee Airman mechanic Otis Handy to the Delaware Air Park where the students will celebrate his 92th birthday with a pizza luncheon party on Jan. 20.

The program's Flying Hornets team was among the top three scoring teams at the NIFA Regional Flight Competition in October, and that performance guaranteed the Hornet flyers an invitation to compete in the NIFA National Flight Competition on May 13-17 in Kansas City, Mo.

The Flying Hornets, led by their faculty advisor and coach Marc Anderson, include sophomore Willie Gonzalez, junior Will Jester, senior Kenneth Ritchie, and junior Isaac Shellenberger. All four team members are DSU aviation majors, and Mr. Anderson is a 2011 graduate of the program.

During the October regional competition, the Flying Hornets finished third in the competition. Mr. Gonzalez finished fourth overall, competing against juniors and senior who already hold commercial and flight instructor ratings.

"The fact that our team finished third is amazing and a testament to the talent of our students and the effort they exerted in preparation for the competition, because we had only four team members competing against teams that had eight or nine participants," said Capt. Stephen Speed, DSU Aviation Program director.

Capt. Speed noted that because the team awards were cumulative, the DSU students were at a disadvantage. "If we had one more team member, we would have finished in second place," he said.

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