In May of 2011, Vice President and CFO Neil Theobald approved the IU policy on Use of Aircraft on University Business. One of the policy’s requirements is an annual reminder of the risks associated with employees piloting aircraft or use of employee-owned aircraft that is to be submitted by my office to the vice presidents, provosts and chancellors.

I am writing to provide the required annual reminder and also to alert you that the policy has been amended to address donated flight time.

Although we don’t have a precise number, several University employees fly aircraft that they own, rent or lease on University business. This may be directly related to their work, it may be for convenience, it may be personal preference.

Statistically, flying is safer than driving, but flying is not without peril.

Consider, for a moment, being a passenger in a car when the driver starts complaining of chest pains and becomes faint. We would expect the driver to pull to the side of the road and allow you to take over driving and to summon help, if necessary.

Now put yourself in the right seat of an airplane in the same scenario. Unless you are a pilot yourself, this is a frightening scenario.

Indiana University is concerned about the welfare of our pilot employees, as well as passengers they might have and people on the ground that might be injured if they crash.

Obvious risks include mechanical failure and pilot error.

Consider the risk of a mid-air collision between “our” airplane (with our employee flying it may legally becomes an IU plane in some ways) and a commercial jetliner. These collisions don’t happen often but they do occur. Another significant problem is runway incursions – aircraft at the wrong place and wrong time while on the airfield.

While the statistical likelihood of any of these occurrences is small, the ramifications of injury, death, and damage to personal property and the attending liability and financial consequences are great if such an event were to occur.

The University policy on the Use of Aircraft on University Business (http://rmweb.indiana.edu/orm/SiteMap2.cfm?todo=aircraft) outlines the procedure an employee must follow if he or she wants to fly an aircraft (or allow an aircraft they own to be flown) on University business.

Now included is the use of donated hours, e.g., a friend of the University offers to fly a coach on a recruiting trip in the friend’s airplane.

The procedure stated there is:

An employee, or other person for whom the university may be responsible, shall make written application to his or her provost, chancellor or vice president (with a copy to the Office of Risk Management) giving the rationale for piloting an aircraft and / or use of his or her privately owned aircraft, or the use of other non-
commercial aircraft hours, including the date / dates / time period of use. In no event will the time period be longer than one year. This includes DONATED aircraft hours supplied through the Indiana University Foundation.

Approval will be in writing (with a copy to Office of Risk Management). Upon approval, the prospective pilot and / or owner will complete the Authorization for Use of Private Aircraft Form and provide the documentation specified therein. If the request is for the use of DONATED hours, the employee shall submit the request to campus administration, but the pilot will submit the online forms to the Office of Risk Management.

The aircraft will not be used until authorization is granted from the Office of Risk Management.

We are working with other departments, such as Travel Management, to make pilots aware of this policy. We also ask your cooperation in alerting employees who may fly or use donated flight hours.

If application is made to you for permission to fly in accordance with this policy, we ask that you give it serious, contemplative consideration. The University cannot function without risk, but we try to mitigate those risks and one form of mitigation is avoidance.

Thank you for your assistance and cooperation. Please contact me if you have any questions.

Larry Stephens
Director of Risk management