



NEWS RELEASE

Inside a team member's journey from intern to mentor

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Heather Salah Wood has been an engineer at American Airlines for more than a decade, building her career in Fort Worth, Texas, and shaping the next generation of aviation talent along the way. Her journey began at an engineering job fair at the University of Texas at Arlington (UTA), where she was simply hoping to secure a summer internship. She didn't expect that stumbling upon American's booth would spark a career in aviation and ignite a lifelong commitment to mentorship.

Hard work, opportunity and a passion for learning afforded Salah Wood a spot in American's Cooperative (Co-Op) Education Program in 2015, joining the Interiors Engineering team and supporting the transformation of the Boeing 777-200 cabin interior. She ultimately landed a full-time engineering role after graduating from UTA in 2017. Salah Wood later developed and facilitated training courses, teaching Co-Ops and new engineers how to use internal processes to implement aircraft modifications from concept to delivery.

"Not only do I get to peek behind the curtain and make meaningful contributions that make a positive impact to our customers, but our culture at American truly is a competitive advantage," Salah Wood said. "We've increasingly onboarded team members from varying backgrounds and experiences, and American is all the better for it."

Salah Wood stands in front of a Boeing 787 aircraft during her Co-Op in 2015.
Salah Wood led a workshop with maintenance team members in São Paulo, Brazil.
The Engineering Co-Op class of 2015 poses for a photo.

Today, Salah Wood is the Manager of Aircraft Software Engineering, where she leads an exceptional team that lends their technical expertise to care for American's fleet. Looking back, she credits serendipity for her start but believes opportunity shouldn't rely on chance. She worries that without access to information and role models, many



students may miss out on opportunities where they can thrive and make their own mark on the aviation industry.

Salah Wood now dedicates her time to helping students discover careers in aviation earlier than she did. Whether speaking during the all-girls session at the CR Smith Museum’s award-winning **Aviation STEM Summer Camp**, hosting informational sessions at her alma mater or mentoring through the same program that launched her career, she’s committed to fueling the industry’s talent pipeline.

“Mentorship is important work that should begin before a Co-Op,” Salah Wood said. “Just an hour of your time can create a ripple effect. We should never be too busy to help someone grow. You never know who you could be inspiring to dream big.”

Salah Wood volunteered at “Meet an Engineer Day” at the CR Smith Museum’s Aviation STEM Summer Camp in 2024.

Hands-on discovery takes center stage at the CR Smith Museum’s Aviation STEM Summer Camp.

Students engaging with hands-on activities at the CR Smith Museum’s Aviation STEM Summer Camp.

Community outreach at Young Women’s Leadership Academy in Fort Worth, Texas.

Salah Wood led a tour for University of Texas at Arlington students at one of American’s maintenance hangars at DFW.

Salah Wood awarded Amelia Danker, a student aspiring to pursue a career in aviation, an American Airlines Engineering Scholarship at the 2024 Women in Aviation conference.

COOPERATIVE EDUCATION

PROGRAM AT AMERICAN

The Cooperative (Co-Op) Education Program is a key part of American’s commitment to developing the next generation of aviation professionals. Through this program, students have the opportunity to apply their academic knowledge to real-world challenges. Co-Ops work alongside seasoned experts, gaining hands-on experience, building professional skills and shaping a strong foundation for their future careers.

Get the latest about American’s Co-Op Program at jobs.aa.com.