



HISTORY

- 1995** JoAnn and Sandy Hill begin research and development of a voluntary flight instructor accreditation program.
- 1997** The Master Certificated Flight Instructor (MCFI) designation becomes available. The Hills administer their program through the National Association of Flight Instructors (NAFI).
- 1999** The Master Ground Instructor (MGI) designation is added, as well as a Master designation specifically for Ultralight instructors (this designation is later dropped). The program's official name becomes *Master Instructor Continuing Education Program (MICEP)*.
- 2001** The Master Instructor-Aerobatic (MCFI-A) designation is added to MICEP.
- 2002** The Soaring Society of America (SSA) introduces its Master Instructor Cross-Country Program.
- 2007** A derivate of MICEP is introduced called the *Aerobatic Instructor Designation Program*. This program offers three tiers: Flight Instructor-Aerobatic (FI-A), Certificated Flight Instructor-Aerobatic (CFI-A), and Master Certificated Flight Instructor-Aerobatic (MCFI-A).
- 2009** The Master Instructor Emeritus (MIE) and Master Aviation Educator (MAE) designations are added to MICEP. The licensing agreement between the Hills and NAFI regarding MICEP is terminated. The Hills establish the independent Master Instructors LLC (MI LLC) to administer MICEP. NAFI introduces its own Master Instructor program, based largely on MICEP.
- 2010** The Master Instructor-Helicopter (MCFI-H) designation is added to MICEP.
- 2011** The MICEP application packet is expanded to facilitate greater participation by glider instructors. Responding to a project proposed in the preliminary report issued by the Society of Aviation and Flight Educators (SAFE) following the GA Pilot Training Reform Symposium, MI LLC begins development of an entry-level flight instructor accreditation program.

THREE “MASTER INSTRUCTOR” PROGRAMS AVAILABLE

Although MICEP was the first accreditation program of its kind for aviation educators, it is not the only accreditation program on the market: NAFI and SSA offer their own Master Instructor designation programs as well. Unlike the NAFI and SSA programs, however, membership in a particular organization is not a prerequisite for participation in MICEP. This provides greater autonomy and ensures impartiality during the accreditation process.

Following is the approximate number of individuals participating in each of the three “Master Instructor” programs:

MI LLC Master Instructor Continuing Education Program (as of 08/11) =	180
NAFI Master Instructor Program (as of 05/11) =	40
SSA Master Instructor Cross-Country Program (as of 02/08) =	40

MICEP continues to dominate the industry in terms of the number of participants and the variety of designations offered. Additionally, it is possible for participants to hold designations granted by different organizations concurrently. For example, a few individuals hold separate MI LLC and NAFI Master designations, and at least one individual has held MICEP and SSA Master designations simultaneously.

For more information about MICEP and MI LLC, see <http://www.MasterInstructors.org>.

THE MASTER INSTRUCTOR COMMUNITY & THE GA AWARDS PROGRAM

The number of Master Instructors is small compared to the total number of CFIs; nonetheless, Master Instructors are overrepresented in terms of the impact they have had on aviation education and safety (see By the numbers: Inside the Master Instructor Community). Master Instructors have also distinguished themselves in the Certificated Flight Instructor category of the General Aviation Awards Program (GAAP). During the period 1999–2011 for example, 43 of the 93 Regional CFIs of the Year—all chosen by FAA personnel—were Master Instructors. And a Master Instructor has gone on to earn the National CFI of the Year honor each of those years (eleven doing so when MICEP was offered through NAFI; two since MI LLC began independently administering MICEP).

To reiterate: FAA personnel choose all of the FSDO- and Regional-level CFIs of the Year. A panel of volunteer judges representing the aviation industry is then tasked with selecting the year’s National winner from the pool of Regional winners supplied by the FAA. Though neither a requirement nor a judging criterion in and of itself, participation in MICEP clearly has served as a *de facto* mentoring program for the GA Awards Program, fostering well-rounded bodies of work that have translated into national caliber awards applications by deserving Master Instructors.

For more information about GAAP, see <http://www.GeneralAviationAwards.org>.

By the numbers

Inside the Master Instructor program

By **RICH STOWELL, MCFI-A**

For General Aviation News

The Master Instructor program offers a national accreditation for aviation educators based on advanced professional standards and rigorous peer review. In the words of former FAA Administrator Marion Blakey, this program “singles out the best that the right seat has to offer.”

Since 1997, 650 aviation educators in 49 states and seven countries have earned more than 1,400 designations. Even though the number of current Masters at any given time represents less than half of 1% of all CFIs, this small group is remarkably overrepresented in terms of work product, FAASTeam participation, and ultimately, its impact on safety.

Since the program's debut, for instance, each individual honored as FAA National Flight Instructor of the Year has been a Master Instructor. About 43% of National FAASTeam Representatives of the Year have also been Masters. Within the Master community:

- 74% hold ground instructor ratings,
- 72% participate in the FAA Wings program,
- 61% are FAASTeam Members (compared to less than 3% of all CFIs),
- 39% are Gold Seal instructors,
- 15% are women (compared to 6% of all pilots and 7% of all CFIs), and
- 13% are FAA or industry pilot examiners (compared to 1% of all CFIs).

Master Instructors teach in high schools, colleges, universities, and flight schools. Some are employees, others self-employed. They instruct in classrooms and simulators; gliders and single- and multi-engine aircraft; seaplanes, helicopters, LSAs, and more.

UNDER THE MICROSCOPE

Just how prolific this small community has been was revealed in a survey conducted by the program creators at Master Instructors LLC. For example, respondents collectively had been aviation educators for 1,300 years, including 330 years holding various Master designations. These Masters had received more than 175 aviation awards. They had amassed 380,000 hours of flight time, and provided 200,000 hours of flight and at least 120,000 hours of ground/simulator instruction. Respondents had administered 6,700 check rides/stage checks, and mentored 4,900 other aviation educators. Respondents also reported:

- 4,300 safety seminars given,
- 2,800 articles/white papers authored or edited,
- 1,700 books, newsletters, etc. authored or edited,
- 670 audio-visual programs hosted, scripted, or produced, and
- 60 aviation-related products, services, and processes developed.

The vast majority of Masters acknowledged that the program challenged them to become better educators. Master Instructors clearly recognize the importance of the program to their craft, their livelihood, and their marketability as well: Most reported a corresponding increase in income, typically from 10-40%; several reported more than a 100% hike in their sustainable hourly rates. Additionally, several flight schools provide incentive packages to their Masters worth more than \$8,000 annually.

Once designated, Master Instructors tend to be long-term participants in the program, loyally renewing their designations every two years. Take the inaugural class of Masters: Greg Brown (#001), Pat Knight (#002), Bill Otway (#004), and Ed Fink (#005) are all seven-time Master Instructors; Rusty Sachs (#003) is an eight-time Master; furthermore, Otway and Sachs have achieved Emeritus status. The 191 members in the current class of Master Instructors have averaged seven years apiece in the program.



Photo courtesy Rich Stowell

THE BOTTOM LINE

The successful outcome to an emergency can rarely be attributed solely to the teaching methods of any one instructor. Nevertheless, pilots who survive emergencies often attribute the successful outcome, in whole or in part, to an instructor. Indeed, survey respondents identified at least 43 such instances: The reported “saves” ranged from a flap failure during solo stall practice to partial and complete engine failures, some involving smoke and night flying. Other reports described post-crash survival, inadvertent spins, jammed controls, and vacuum system failures. One reported the safe response to a complete electrical system failure in IMC; others told of precautionary landings in various types of aircraft.

Though few in number, Master Instructors have indeed shaped the flight training landscape and improved safety. Their collective contributions to aviation education are both tangible and intangible, and have earned the Master community the respect and appreciation of the industry.

Based in Longmont, Colorado,

Sandy and JoAnn Hill began development of their Master Instructor program in 1995. The Hills administered the program through another organization from 1997 to 2008; in early 2009, however, they formed Master Instructors LLC to bring greater autonomy to the program, while preserving impartiality in the designation process. The program is FAA Wings-approved and is approved for flight instructor certificate renewals. Five Master designations are offered, as well as a three-tier Aerobatic Instructor Designation program. The Hills are working with others in the industry and the FAA to create additional Master designations.

Nine Masters serve on the Board of Review, with properly documented portfolios typically taking two to three weeks to process. Merely submitting an application, however, is no guarantee of a Master designation: Each is handled by at least two reviewers and the denial rate is 3%. The fee per two-year designation is \$169.

For more information: 303-485-8136 or MasterInstructors.org

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