

NAE Regional Meeting
Smarter Skies, More Resilient Systems: The Future of Commercial Aviation
Duke University
May 19-21, 2026

Tuesday, May 19

12:30-4:30 pm	<i>Campus Tours</i> Times vary by tour and will be shared with registrants. Express interest in tours here: Duke University Tours
3:30-5:00 pm	<i>NAE Member Meeting</i> 304 Teer Building 110 Science Dr, Durham, NC 27708, on Duke University's West Campus
5:30-7:45 pm	<i>Reception and Dinner for Speakers and Special Guests (invitation only)</i> Hosted by Provost Alec Gallimore Knight House 1508 Pinecrest Road Durham, NC 27705

Wednesday, May 20

Conference events will be held at the [Fitzpatrick Center for Interdisciplinary Engineering, Medicine and Allied Science \(FCIEMAS\)](#), 101 Science Dr, Durham, NC 27708, on Duke University's West Campus

8:00-9:00 am	<i>Attendee Check-in and Continental Breakfast</i>
9:00-9:05 am	<i>Welcome Remarks</i> Provost Alec Gallimore Duke University
9:05-9:15 am	<i>Welcome Remarks</i> Tsu-Jae Liu President, NAE
9:15-9:30 am	<i>Meeting Overview</i> Jerome Lynch, Yiran Chen, Hai "Helen" Li Duke University

Session 1

Modernizing Airspace: Safety, New Entrants, and Operational Realities

Rapid growth in aviation, advanced air mobility, and emerging vehicle concepts are placing new demands on the national airspace system. This session examines the operational pressures, technological developments, and policy challenges shaping the future of safe and efficient airspace management.

9:30-10:10 am	<p><i>Keynote</i> <u>Alton “Al” D. Romig, Jr.</u> Executive Officer, NAE</p>	<p><i>Talk Title:</i> The National Academies and the Nation’s Aerospace Program</p>
10:10-10:50 am	<p><i>Keynote</i> <u>Captain Jim Graham</u> Sr. VP of Delta Connection and CEO of Endeavor Air for Delta Airlines, Delta Airlines</p>	<p><i>Talk Title:</i> The Future of Airspace – Why Modernizing Air Traffic Systems Matters Now</p>
10:50-11:00 am <i>Break (10 min)</i>		
11:00-11:15 am	<p><i>Panel Talk</i> <u>Alan Epstein</u> R.C. Maclaurin Professor of Aeronautics and Astronautics Emeritus, MIT</p>	<p><i>Talk Title:</i> Commercial Propulsion: Continuing Challenges, New Opportunities</p>
11:15-11:30am	<p><i>Panel Talk</i> <u>Michael Guterres</u> Portfolio Leader, Mitre</p>	<p><i>Talk Title:</i> Advanced Air Mobility Landscape: Policy and Progress to Reality</p>
11:30-11:45am	<p><i>Panel Talk</i> <u>Pascal Joly</u>, Senior Director, Engineering and Operations, Safety, Security and Technical Affairs – AAW, Airbus</p>	<p><i>Talk Title:</i> How Modernizing Airspace Could Improve Flight Efficiency</p>
11:45-11:50 am <i>Mini Break (5 min) – Panelists to Front</i>		
11:50-12:30 pm	<p><i>Panel Discussion</i> Moderator: <u>Provost Alec Gallimore</u> Panelists: <u>Alton “Al” D. Romig, Jr.</u>, Executive Officer, NAE <u>Captain Jim Graham</u>, Sr. VP of Delta Connection and CEO of Endeavor Air for Delta Airlines, Delta Airlines <u>Alan Epstein</u>, R.C. Maclaurin Professor of Aeronautics and Astronautics Emeritus, MIT <u>Michael Guterres</u>, Portfolio Leader, Mitre <u>Gabriel Katul</u>, George Pearsall Distinguished Professor of Civil and Environmental Engineering, Duke University <u>Pascal Joly</u>, Senior Director, Engineering and Operations, Safety, Security and Technical Affairs – AAW, Airbus</p>	

12:30-1:30 pm	<i>Lunch</i>	
<p><i>Session 2</i></p> <p>Next Generation Aircraft Technologies: Design, Autonomy, and Sustainability</p> <p>Breakthroughs in aircraft design, autonomy, structural monitoring, and environmental science are reshaping the future of aviation. This session highlights emerging technologies that could enable safer, more efficient, and more sustainable aircraft systems.</p>		
1:30-2:10 pm	<p><i>Keynote</i></p> <p><u>Michimasa Fujino</u> Former President and CEO, Honda Aircraft Company</p>	<p><i>Talk Title:</i></p> <p>Development of Advanced Light Business Jet and the Future of Business Aviation</p>
2:10-2:50 pm	<p><i>Keynote</i></p> <p><u>Ella Atkins</u> Fred D. Durham Chair in Engineering and Department Head of Aerospace and Ocean Engineering, Virginia Tech</p>	<p><i>Talk Title:</i></p> <p>Contingency and Airspace Management Autonomy for Advanced Air Mobility</p>
2:50-3:00 pm	<i>Break (10 min)</i>	
3:00-3:15 pm	<p><i>Panel Talk</i></p> <p><u>John Hansman</u> T. Wilson Professor in Aeronautics, MIT</p>	<p><i>Talk Title:</i></p> <p>The Challenge of Breaking Out of Existing Paradigms in Air Transportation</p>
3:15-3:30 pm	<p><i>Panel Talk</i></p> <p><u>Michael Todd</u> Professor and Department Chair in Structural Engineering, UCSD</p>	<p><i>Talk Title:</i></p> <p>Can Aircraft Structural Health Monitoring be an Enabler for the Future of Air Traffic Control?</p>
3:30-4:10 pm	<p><i>Session 2 Panel</i></p> <p>Moderator: <u>Earl Dowell</u></p> <p>Panelists: <u>Michimasa Fujino</u>, Former President and CEO, Honda Aircraft Company <u>Ella Atkins</u>, Fred D. Durham Chair in Engineering and Department Head of Aerospace and Ocean Engineering, Virginia Tech <u>John Hansman</u>, T. Wilson Professor in Aeronautics, MIT <u>Michael Todd</u>, Professor and Department Chair in Structural Engineering, UCSD</p>	
4:10-4:20 pm	<i>Break (10 min)</i>	

Panel Session:

From Innovation to Implementation: Deploying the Future Aviation Ecosystem

This concluding panel synthesizes insights from across the meeting, focusing on how technology, operations, industry, and policy must align to successfully implement next-generation aviation systems at scale.

4:20-5:00 pm

Moderator:

Yiran Chen, John Cocke Distinguished Professor of Electrical and Computer Engineering, Duke University

Panelists:

Kerry Buckley, Vice President, Center for Integrated Transportation, The Mitre Corporation

William Sandifer, Executive Vice President and Chief Development Officer, RDU

Maria Gorlatova, James N. & Elizabeth H. Barton Associate Professor of Electrical & Computer Engineering, Duke University

Farhan Gandhi, Hassan A. Hassan Distinguished Professor in Mechanical and Aerospace Engineering, NC State University

5:00 – 6:00 pm

Break

6:00 - 8:00 pm

Reception & Dinner

Penn Pavilion, 107 Union Dr, Durham, NC 27710, on Duke University's West Campus
Al Roming, Earl Dowell, Alec Gallimore

Thursday, May 21

Conference events will be held at the Fitzpatrick Center for Interdisciplinary Engineering, Medicine and Allied Science (FCIEMAS), 101 Science Dr, Durham, NC 27708, on Duke University's West Campus

8:00 - 9:00 am

Continental Breakfast

Session 3

The Future of Air Transportation Systems and the Aerospace Economy

As aviation evolves toward increasingly autonomous and integrated systems, new business models and operational frameworks are emerging. This session explores the future of air transportation systems, market dynamics, and opportunities created by advances in technology and airspace operations.

9:00 - 9:40 am

Keynote

John-Paul Clarke

Ernest Cockrell, Jr. Memorial Chair in Engineering, UT Austin

Talk Title:

Innovation in Commercial Aviation: Challenges and Opportunities

9:40 - 10:20 am	<p><i>Keynote</i> <u>Ron Epstein</u> Managing Director, Aerospace and Defense Bank of America, Aerospace at the Bank of America/Merrill Lynch</p>	<p><i>Talk Title:</i> An Aerospace Engineer Walks into an Investment Bank</p>
10:20-10:30 am	<p><i>Break (10 min)</i></p>	
10:30-10:45 am	<p><i>Panel Talk</i> <u>Jesse Quinlan</u> Technologist, Advanced Air Vehicles Program, NASA</p>	<p><i>Talk Title:</i> Revolutionizing Future Aerial Mobility through Transformative Air Vehicle Concepts and Technologies</p>
10:45-11:00 am	<p><i>Panel Talk</i> <u>Miroslav Pajic</u> Director of Master's Studies, Professor in the Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering, Duke University</p>	<p><i>Talk Title:</i> When Autonomy Meets Adversarial Reality: Assuring the Future of (Urban) Air Transportation Systems</p>
11:00-11:05 am	<p><i>Mini Break (5 min) – Panelist to Front</i></p>	
11:05-11:45 am	<p><i>Panel Discussion</i> Moderator: <u>Jerome Lynch</u>, Vinik Dean of Engineering, Duke University Panelists: <u>John-Paul Clarke</u>, Ernest Cockrell, Jr. Memorial Chair in Engineering, UT Austin <u>Ron Epstein</u>, Managing Director, Aerospace and Defense Bank of America, Aerospace at the Bank of America/Merrill Lynch <u>Jesse Quinlan</u>, Technologist, Advanced Air Vehicles Program, NASA <u>Miroslav Pajic</u>, Director of Master's Studies, Professor in the Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering, Duke University</p>	
11:45-12:00 pm	<p><i>Closing Remarks</i> <u>Jerome Lynch</u>, Vinik Dean of Engineering, Duke University <u>Provost Alec Gallimore</u></p>	
12:00-12:30 pm	<p><i>Box Lunches</i></p>	
12:30-1:30 pm	<p><i>Campus / Lab Tours</i> – Tours of Yiran Chen, Miroslav Pajic and Maria Gorlatova's Labs</p>	

For answers to questions, please email NAE2026@duke.edu