

## **Samirah Zaina Abdelfattah, Mary McBurney Memorial Scholarship \$2000**

Samirah was raised in Phoenix, AZ by a single father who planted the aviation seed in her mind from a young age. It was not until she had a discovery flight that her fate to fly was sealed. Her path to becoming an aviator was not without challenges due to personal hardship, but she persevered paying for 100% of her flight training with student loans. While at Arizona State University (ASU), Samirah became involved in the local chapter of Women in Aviation (WAI). After attending her first WAI conference, she was inspired to volunteer and this began her legacy of volunteering in numerous aviation nonprofit organizations over the years. One of her most notable memories as an aviator was when she volunteered to speak to fifth graders during their Space & Aviation course of study in Mesa, Arizona.

After she graduated with honors from ASU with a Bachelor of Science Degree in Air Transportation Management, Samirah moved to Los Angeles to build flight experience at Mt. San Antonio College as a certified flight instructor. Once she gained over one thousand hours of flight instruction given, she took a position as a single-pilot IFR captain with the largest Part 135 cargo airline in the country. She had many opportunities for advancement in management within the Flight Training Department. She also taught aircraft systems and standard operating procedures ground schools, conducted pre-interview simulator checks, reviewed technical manuals pending publication, and became a well renowned Part 135 check airman, administering flight examinations in multiple aircraft types.

Following these accomplishments, Samirah accepted a position with the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) as an air traffic controller. She certified at two ATCTs and one ARTCC all while continuing to fly, flight instruct, and volunteer with numerous organizations, including representing the Los Angeles Area Chapter of Women in Aviation as Vice President. During her time as an air traffic controller, Samirah enjoyed her role as an on-the-job training instructor (OJTI). She was also honored to work as a Training Program Instructor/Trainer to create a training program at Santa Monica Air Traffic Control Tower (SMO ATCT) that is still utilized today. At SMO ATCT, she served as a member of the Standard Operation Procedures Collaborative Work Group, an Integrated Safety Training Facilitator, and as the National Air Traffic Controllers Association (NATCA) Local President.

In 2015, Samirah attended her first PWC Conference in Kansas City, MO and got increasingly more involved as the years passed. She is currently the Southwest Regional Director. After 8 years of public service in the FAA working as an air traffic controller in 2018, Samirah was promoted to a pilot position for the FAA's Washington Flight Program (WFP) in Washington, D.C. based at Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport (KDCA). She was the valedictorian of her class at Flight Safety. Samirah has accepted a furtherance within flying for the United States of America as a B737 pilot.

Obtaining a Master of Public Administration from the University of New Mexico is a personal as well as a professional goal Samirah holds. Her goal with this degree program is to blend her

aviation experience as an air traffic controller, a traffic management coordinator, and pilot to better enhance aviation within the public sector and the NAS as a whole. Samirah has vast experience in the aviation industry and she hopes to utilize the combined experience to lead and build further cohesiveness. I believe her favorite role is as a mentor, inspiring the future generations, especially young girls and women who find themselves aspiring to commence on this wonderful journey of aviation.