

UAL at a Glance

Pilots Joined ALPA: 1932

Number of Pilots:

Approximately 12,500

Headquarters: Chicago, Ill.

Pilot Domiciles: Chicago, Ill.; Cleveland, Ohio; Denver, Colo.; Guam; Houston, Tex.; Los Angeles, Calif.; New York City; San Francisco, Calif.; Seattle, Wash.; and Washington Dulles, Va.

Fleet: A319s, A320s, B-737s, B-747s, B-757s, B-767s, B-777s, and B-787s

United

A New Beginning for the United MEC

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For 1,249 days, the pilots of United and Continental Airlines traveled a long and winding path toward forming a unified pilot group. On Oct. 3, 2013, after nearly three and a half years of negotiations, special meetings, ratification of a new United pilot agreement, and the release of the integrated seniority list, the new United Master Executive Council (MEC) was seated.

The merger of the two pilot groups represented more than just the combination of two distinct pilot cultures with strong and proud backgrounds. It signaled a new beginning for 12,500 United pilots who constitute nearly 25 percent of ALPA's members.

It's a pilot group that brings a wide variety of talent and airline industry knowledge to United Airlines—abilities and skill sets that United

management should draw on heavily and work with closely to benefit the airline and its employees in this challenging environment.

Mindful of the diverse

heritage and backgrounds of the legacy United and legacy Continental pilots, the United MEC immediately embraced the opportunities that stand before it.

"For us to capture all the synergies and strengths that our two pilot groups bring, we must move forward as one," says Capt. Jay Heppner, the pilots' MEC chairman, who was elected on October 3 and immediately began his term. "We owe it to the pilots we represent to combine the best facets of both pilot groups and focus on our collective futures as we build our new history together."

In its first three months, the United MEC already has filled MEC committee rosters, conducted a strategic planning session, hosted a leadership conference, and concluded its first regular week-long meeting in which it addressed many challenging and difficult issues. The MEC's work toward adopting a new policy manual that will guide the governing body is nearing completion.

This MEC has dedicated itself to working together during this period of integrating two proud cultures and histories. "Understanding that our strength lies in our solidarity, we welcome this challenge and stand ready to embark on this new order within our pilot group, our profession, and our union," Heppner says.

On the safety front, United Airlines pilots have long been trailblazers in the area of airline safety, and they continue that tradition in promoting security measures in the post-9/11 world. The United MEC is at the

forefront of advocating that secondary cockpit barriers be required on all airliners and advocated against permitting passengers to carry certain items aboard airplanes.

The United MEC and its Legislative Committee, working with aviation security advocate Ellen Saracini, whose husband, Capt. Victor Saracini, died aboard United Flight 175 when it was commandeered by hijackers on 9/11, were instrumental in introducing the Saracini Aviation Safety Act of 2013 in the U.S. House and Senate. This legislation would require all airlines to install secondary barriers to protect cockpits.

"The horror of 9/11 must never again be experienced, and it is incumbent upon all of us to work toward making sure our skies are as safe as possible," observes Heppner, who has worked tirelessly with F/O Heide Oberndorf, the MEC Legislative Committee chair; the MEC Legislative Committee; and ALPA's Governmental Affairs Department staff to communicate to members of Congress the importance of passing the Saracini Aviation Safety Act.

"Our country has become complacent on so many levels. We as pilots have to consider our own fate on aircraft and adopt best practices to never again allow another 9/11," Heppner says.

As this issue goes to press, the Saracini Aviation Safety Act, sponsored by Rep. Michael G. Fitzpatrick (R-Pa.) in the House and Sen. Robert P. Casey, Jr. (D-Pa.) in the Senate, is currently working its way through both chambers of Congress. 



PHOTO BY C. DAVID KELLY

Ellen Saracini was presented with her husband's 25-year ALPA pin by Capt. Jay Heppner, the United MEC chairman, during an MEC meeting in 2013. Capt. Victor Saracini lost his life on United Flight 175 on Sept. 11, 2001. Heppner thanked Saracini for her tireless efforts to improve airline security. She continues to work closely with the United MEC to advance on Capitol Hill the Saracini Aviation Safety Act of 2013, which would require secondary cockpit barriers on all airliners.