

# AEROSPACE

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personal debt within four months of his hire. The 24-year-old Cal State Long Beach grad is now saving toward a down payment on his first home, which he expects to be able to purchase before his 30th birthday.

Like many new hires, Ellert landed his job with a bachelor's degree. But most aerospace companies offer generous tuition reimbursement so that employees can earn advanced degrees. Those who take advantage of this benefit usually remain on the job while attending evening or weekend classes; some enroll in online programs.

While tuition reimbursement is tempting, Hefazi said grads will be more marketable and better prepared for the rigors of an aerospace career if

they remain in school through a master's degree.

Engineers typically work no more than 40 hours a week. Many firms offer flex time and virtual office arrangements. Employees at The Boeing Co. can shorten their commute by working at special Boeing offices in hotels throughout the region, said Tammy Shilipetar, the lead recruiter for college and entry-level jobs.

Companies offer college internships that often involve working on real-world applications. At Boeing's Long Beach facility, a summer intern is working on the flight ramp for the C-17 Globemaster III, the troop and cargo air lifter used by U.S., British and Australian air forces. Boeing hires nearly 1,300 interns each year at competitive pay rates that include relocation benefits.

But young people who are

interested in an aerospace career need not wait until college to learn more about the field. Many companies have outreach programs in public school systems. Some even offer internships for high school students.

One thing you won't find much of these days is aerospace engineers wearing pocket protectors. "Engineers are cool people," Hefazi said.

## High-tech Training

Many California universities offer bachelor's and postgraduate degrees in aerospace and aeronautical engineering. Students should make sure that the program is approved by the Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology (ABET). To find out if a program is accredited, visit [www.abet.org](http://www.abet.org). The National Aeronautics and Space Administration offers helpful information for youngsters and teens who are thinking about an aerospace career. Visit [www.nasa.org](http://www.nasa.org) and write "aerospace engineer" in the search engine.



