



**Fly Champaign-Urbana Contact:**

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**USHERING IN THE NEW – FLY CHAMPAIGN-URBANA WELCOMES  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR GENE COSSEY**

*Event Celebrates New Opportunity and Development at Willard Airport*

**SAVOY, Ill. (Dec. 16, 2015)** – Today in a special event, the University of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana officially welcomed Gene Cossey to the community as the Executive Director for the University of Illinois – Willard Airport. Cossey’s selection to the Champaign-Urbana team followed a national search lead by a university-appointed committee. He has more than 25 years of airport management experience and most recently served as the Director of Operations at Eastern Iowa Airport in Cedar Rapids, Iowa.

"Gene brings a wealth of experience to Willard Airport and can begin work immediately on the strategic and air service development plan recommended by the Advisory Board and adopted by the University," said Associate Chancellor Michael DeLorenzo.

"I'm very happy to be joining the University of Illinois – Willard Airport team and thank the community for being so welcoming," said Cossey. "The Airport Advisory Board and University staff have already launched several programs to enhance growth at the Airport. I'm excited to take the role of leading these new initiatives and look forward to continuing the momentum they have already established."

During today’s welcoming event, the Champaign County Association of REALTORS® presented a check to the Champaign County Economic Development Corporation in the amount of \$5,000 to assist with obtaining an economic impact study for the Airport, a project in partnership with the University of Illinois. The study, which will be completed by Sixel Consulting Group, the Airport’s air service development consulting firm, will determine the current economic impact the Airport has on Champaign County while highlighting the potential impact that would come from improved services and additional flights. The Champaign County Association of REALTORS® obtained the funds through a Smart Growth Action Grant sponsored by the National Association of REALTORS®. The study will assist the University and community by showcasing growth initiatives that help position the Airport as a regional transportation asset.

"The Champaign County Association of REALTORS® is eager to support and help fund this economic impact study on the future expansion of Willard Airport," said Stefanie Pratt, president of the Champaign County Association of REALTORS®. "We believe this effort will provide long-term benefits for both the local housing and commercial real estate market, promote business growth, further the ongoing success of the University of Illinois and overall economic vitality of Champaign County. This study provides an opportunity to attract new residents and businesses to our community and further improve our area's image as an exciting place to live and work."

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In addition to the \$5,000 contributed by the Champaign County Association of REALTORS®, a number of other area businesses have contributed funds towards the study. Businesses that have contributed to the study fund include:

- Champaign County EDC
- City of Champaign
- City of Urbana
- Deep Silver Volition
- Farnsworth Group
- Flightstar Corporation
- Frasca International
- Human Kinetics
- Litania Sports Group
- Robeson's, Inc.
- Village of Savoy

During today's event, the Airport also showcased new American Airlines branding and terminal updates. The terminal updates have been underway and passengers will notice that the check-in area has been reskinned to align with the new American Airlines branding and that two updated kiosks are featured for easy, hassle-free check-in. The ticket counters in the departure lounge have been moved closer to the departure gate which has opened the room up and allowed for a more comfortable and welcoming area.

In August, the University of Illinois – Willard Airport along with members of the Airport Advisory Board unveiled new Airport branding initiatives which included new logos, a revamped [IFlyCU.com](http://IFlyCU.com) website and a social media presence on [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/IFlyCU), [Twitter](https://twitter.com/IFlyCU) and [YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/IFlyCU). To coincide with the brand unveiling, the Airport has been implementing a full strategic marketing and air service development plan which has included a traditional advertising campaign, social media and outreach efforts focused on both the general traveling public and local business communities. The goal of the marketing and air service develop plan is to encourage more travelers from Champaign County to utilize the Airport for their travel needs.

### **About Fly Champaign-Urbana**

When you Fly Champaign-Urbana you save time and money. Minutes from anywhere in Champaign County, University of Illinois – Willard Airport offers competitive fares with access to more than 175 cities on four continents with just a single stop. The Airport is served by American Airlines with six daily non-stop flights to Chicago O'Hare and a daily non-stop flight to Dallas/Ft. Worth on American Eagle. University of Illinois – Willard Airport boasts a terminal facility that is easy to navigate and parking is just a few steps from the plane. Next time you travel, remember to Fly Champaign-Urbana. For more information visit [IFlyCU.com](http://IFlyCU.com).

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