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LEGACY AND THE FUTURE: THE EVOLUTION OF THE DEPARTMENT OF AEROSPACE ENGINEERING

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ABSTRACT

This paper presents a comprehensive historical overview of the development of the Department of Aerospace Engineering at the University of Belgrade, the only state institution in Serbia providing continuous education in aerospace engineering at undergraduate, graduate, and doctoral levels. The roots of aerospace education are traced back to the broader evolution of mechanical engineering studies, beginning in the late 19th century with the introduction of technical disciplines at the Great School in Belgrade.

The formal establishment of aerospace education emerged gradually, influenced by global advancements in aviation and the growing recognition of its strategic importance. A key milestone was the founding of the Chair of Aeronautics in the early 1930s, followed by the introduction of specialized courses such as Flight Mechanics, Aircraft Structures, and Propulsion.

Despite significant disruptions during World War II, the post-war period marked a phase of rapid expansion, institutional independence, and modernization, particularly after the establishment of the Faculty of Mechanical Engineering in 1948. The development of institutional infrastructure, including the establishment of the Institute of Aeronautics, further strengthened the scientific and educational foundation of the field. The Department's progress was shaped by prominent professors and engineers whose academic and industrial contributions laid the groundwork for future generations.

Over almost nine decades of continuous work, the Department has educated over 3,000 aerospace engineers and has continuously adapted its

curricula in line with global trends and technological advancements. Today, it remains a central institution in the development of aerospace engineering in Serbia, with its graduates contributing to leading international companies and research centers.

This paper presents a historical overview of the Department's development, reviews its key research achievements, and discusses its current capabilities and selected ongoing projects.