



John S. Langford, III

John S. Langford, III Ph.D. is the President and CEO of Aurora Flight Sciences Corporation, which since November 2017 is a subsidiary of Boeing. He is a member of the National Academy of Engineering and serves as President of the American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics (AIAA).

Langford is an aerospace entrepreneur who started Aurora Flight Sciences in 1989 and Athena Technologies in 1998. Aurora uses autonomy and robotics to develop advanced aircraft, while Athena developed advanced flight control solutions. Athena was sold to Rockwell Collins in 2008 and Aurora was sold to Boeing in 2017. Reporting to the CTO of Boeing, Langford continues to lead Aurora as its President and CEO.

A native of Atlanta, Georgia, Langford earned his Bachelor's degree in Aeronautics (1979), Masters in Aeronautics & Astronautics (1984), Masters in Defense Policy (1983), and Ph.D. in Aeronautics and Public Policy (1987) from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). While at MIT, Langford organized and led a series of human-powered aircraft projects, culminating in the Daedalus Project, which in 1988 shattered the world distance and endurance records for human-powered flight with a 72-mile flight between the Greek islands of Crete and Santorini.

Prior to starting Aurora, Langford worked for Lockheed Corporation as an engineer on the development of the F-117 stealth fighter, and as an intern at the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy. He also worked for the Institute for Defense Analyses in Alexandria, Virginia.

In 2018, Langford was presented with the Aviation Week Philip J. Klass Lifetime Achievement Laureate. In 2014, the National Aeronautics Association (NAA) awarded John the Cliff Henderson Trophy for "significant and lasting contributions to the promotion and advancement of aviation and aerospace in the United States". He has also received the DeFlorez Prize from MIT (1979), the Kremer Speed Prize from the Royal Aeronautical Society (1984), the Young Engineer of the Year award from the AIAA National Capital Section (1989), the National Tibbets Award for outstanding contributions to the SBIR Program (1996), the Barry M. Goldwater Educator Award from the AIAA (2000), Virginia's Outstanding Industrialist award from the Commonwealth of Virginia (2004), and the NAR President's Award for Exceptional Service (2008) and the Howard Galloway Award (2014) from the National Association of Rocketry.

Langford was elected to the National Academy of Engineering in 2018. He is a Fellow in the American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics (AIAA) and is currently serving as President for the 2018-20 term. He is also a Fellow in the Royal Aeronautical Society (RAeS), and has served on academic advisory boards at MIT, the University of Maryland, and Mississippi State University. He has served on the Board of Directors of the NAA, the Executive Committee of the Aerospace Industries Association (AIA) (2012-2015), and the Institute Development Committee (IDC) of the AIAA. Langford served on the NASA Advisory Council (NAC) (2011-2015) and chaired its Subcommittee on Unmanned Air Systems. He has served on several study committees for the National Research Council. In 2015 he was named by the Governor of Virginia to chair the Virginia Commission on Unmanned Systems.

Langford is a lifelong aeromodeller, with memberships in the National Association of Rocketry (NAR) and the Academy of Model Aeronautics (AMA). He has been a competitor or U.S. team manager in twelve space model world championships and serves as the U.S. space modeling liaison to the Federation Aeronautique Internationale (FAI). In 2018 his family purchased Estes Industries, the world's leading manufacturer of model rockets and model rocket engines. Estes is based in Penrose, Colorado.