**Federal Aviation Administration Awards Aviation Workforce Development Grant to Virginia Space Grant Consortium**

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The FAA has awarded the Virginia Space Grant Consortium an Aviation Workforce and Development program grant focused on creating the precollege workforce pipeline for aircraft pilots. The 18-month, $474,000 project titled Virginia Pilot Pathways Program will prepare high school students for the growing future demand for commercial aircraft pilots and unmanned aircraft systems pilots and operators. The project will also provide teacher professional development to prepare high school teachers to teach UAS courses.

VSGC Director Mary Sandy notes, “This FAA-funded project builds on our current successful initiatives and will allow us to make significant strides in building the aviation and UAS workforce pipeline in the Commonwealth to meet critical future workforce needs for pilots.” According to a Boeing report, over 637,000 new pilots will need to join the workforce in the next twenty years.

The project has four components.

1. It will expand flight training opportunities for high school students through the Consortium’s [Pathways Flight Academies](https://vsgc.odu.edu/pathwaysflightacademies/) program. Pathways Flight Academies offer a free, 12-day immersive residential experience that provides ground school plus 10 hours of flight instruction with the potential to do a solo flight. Twenty additional students will be able to participate in the program in summer 2022, bringing the total number of students served to 45.
2. A free online private pilot ground school course will be offered through the Virginia Community College System for 100 students statewide. The one semester course will have two offerings during the grant period. Four dual enrollment credits will be provided by Thomas Nelson Community College.
3. Eleven flight training scholarships will be provided for 40 hours of flight training through Virginia flight school partners for Pathways Flight Academy students and Civil Air Patrol cadets who aspire to be commercial pilots.
4. VSGC will build on its work through the National Science Foundation-funded [GeoTEd-UAS](https://vsgc.odu.edu/geoted-uas/) project to partner with the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) to develop employer-aligned curriculum and teaching resources, develop and disseminate student recruitment materials, and train high school teachers who serve underrepresented and underserved students. Twenty teachers will obtain their FAA Part 107 Remote Pilot Certificate (RPC) and will receive hands-on training to prepare the future UAS pilot workforce. The project will provide teachers with classroom-ready resources and drones to teach the new Introduction to UAS course developed by VDOE’s Department of Career and Technical Education.

Project collaborators include VDOE, Blue Ridge Community College, Averett University, Thomas Nelson Community College, Virginia Tech, Virginia Department of Aviation, Part 171 private flight schools (Aviation Adventures, Rick Aviation, Heart of Virginia Aviation, Star Flight Training, and Blue Ridge Aviation), higher education faculty consultants, high school master teachers, and business/industry personnel representing Virginia’s aviation and UAS employment sectors.

The Virginia Space Grant Consortium, a NASA/state partnership, is a coalition of Virginia universities, NASA Centers, state education agencies and other organizations with a focus in aviation, aerospace and STEM education, workforce development and research. For more information on the Virginia Space Grant Consortium and its wide range of programming, visit <https://vsgc.odu.edu>.

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