Community College Faculty Are Learning to Operate Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS) in Virginia

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Explosive growth and innovation in unmanned aircraft systems (UAS) technology and applications will continue to create new jobs and a demand for a trained workforce in this emerging sector. With support from the National Science Foundation (NSF), Virginia's Community Colleges are at the forefront of preparing the UAS workforce of the future.

Funded by the NSF and administered by the Virginia Space Grant Consortium (VSGC), the Geospatial Technician Education-Unmanned Aircraft Systems (GeoTEd-UAS) project is providing professional development and training in UAS for educators. On May 20-25, the GeoTEd-UAS Faculty Cohort will return for their second UAS Faculty Professional Development Institute hosted by Virginia Tech's Department of Forest Resources and Environmental Conservation in the College of Natural Resources and Environment.

Attendees will gain hands-on experience in flying and operating small UAS to conduct a variety of missions. Faculty will plan and conduct manually-flown missions and autonomous UAS missions to collect data to make actionable decisions. Other Institute topics include UAS federal and state laws and regulations, repairing and maintaining vehicles, and integrating student service learning projects into the college pathways.

GeoTEd-UAS is a statewide partnership to develop the UAS workforce through new career pathways and building faculty capacity at Virginia's community colleges. Partners include Thomas Nelson Community College, Mountain Empire Community College, Virginia Tech, Virginia Community College System, and VSGC. The goal of the project is to train faculty to prepare students for success as UAS operations technicians who will plan and fly missions to collect and analyze data to solve problems and answer questions.

Media are invited to visit the Institute and the UAS training missions and can contact any member of the project team listed below for more information. http://geoted-uas.org/

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Educators in the 2018 GeoTEd-UAS cohort include:

Eric Beaver, Tidewater Community College
Peter Berquist, Thomas Nelson Community College
Charles Bundy, Southwest Virginia Community College
Steve Carrigan, Danville Community College
Sam Doak, Virginia Tech Agricultural Technology Program
Mark Fitzgerald, Blue Ridge Community College
John Floyd, Eastern Shore Community college
Judy Gill, Tidewater Community College
Jake Gilly, Mountain Empire Community College
Roger Greene, Mountain Empire Community College
Kevin Hamed, Virginia Highlands Community College
Eric Hoffman, Patrick Henry High School
Tamara Lasley, Virginia Highlands Community College
Scott Reigel, Dabney S Lancaster Community college
Shawn Shields, Germanna Community College
Veronica Spradlin, Montgomery County Public Schools
Kevin Stillwell, Southwest Virginia Community College
Douglas Williams, The Community College of Baltimore County (Maryland)
Maury Wrightson, Germanna Community College
Julie Young, Thomas Nelson Community College

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