

Trio of Kansas universities named to elite group for UAS research

- By TIM UNRUH Salina Journal
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Kansas' three largest universities are part of a team made up of the nation's leading institutions that will help integrate unmanned aerial systems into the nation's airspace.

The Federal Aviation Administration selected the team, led by Mississippi State University, as its Center of Excellence for Unmanned Aircraft Systems. The Center of Excellence will focus on research, education and training, according to a news release.

Kansas State University, University of Kansas and Wichita State University will be part of a "super conference for UAS research, development and industry growth," said Tim Rogers, executive director of the Salina Airport Authority.

"It places Kansas Board of Regents institutions clearly at the cutting edge as a trio," he said. "It's significant for the growth of the UAS industry in Kansas. It's a great achievement."

Mississippi State is the coordinating school in the alliance, said Kurt Barnhart, associate dean of research at Kansas State University Salina.

K-State being named to that alliance is "a good thing," he said. "Something we've been looking at for three years, maybe more."

Other team members are Drexel University; Embry Riddle Aeronautical University; Montana State; New Mexico State; North Carolina State; Oregon State; University of Alabama, Huntsville; University of Alaska, Fairbanks; and University of North Dakota.

Congress mandated in 2014 that the FAA establish the Center of Excellence.

Focusing on opportunities

In the release, U.S. Transportation Secretary Anthony Foxx referred to the group as a "world-class public-private partnership" that will "help us focus on the challenges and opportunities of this cutting-edge technology. We expect this team will help us to educate and train a cadre of unmanned aircraft professionals well into the future."

Like university think-tank partnerships, the Centers of Excellence will bring together the best minds in the nation to conduct research to educate, train and work with the FAA toward solutions for aviation challenges, according to the release.

"It's basically an opportunity to continue what we've been doing," Barnhart said. "It's a way to compete for research dollars a little bit easier than it was in the past."

Research areas will evolve over time, but initially will include, according to the release: detect-and-avoid technology; low-altitude operations safety; control and communications; spectrum management; human factors; compatibility with air traffic control operations; and training and certification of UAS pilots and crews.



**Federal Aviation
Administration**

FAA to Establish UAS Center of Excellence

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May 27– The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) today released a draft solicitation for a new FAA Center of Excellence for Unmanned Aircraft Systems (COE) that is expected to become an integral part of the agency's UAS research program on this emerging technology.

The solicitation will be open for comment through June 29. The FAA expects the final solicitation to be published in August.

Representatives from more than 100 colleges and universities, as well as 200 more people from industry and government, are expected to attend a public meeting on the COE solicitation May 28-29 in the Washington, DC area.

The FAA expects the COE to study several technical issues critical to safe and successful integration of UAS into the nation's airspace, including detect-and-avoid technology, control and communications, compatibility with air traffic control operations and training and certification of UAS pilots and other crewmembers.

University teams will include industry and other affiliates expected to support and serve on the COE team. The FAA will initially enter into a 5-year cooperative agreement with each COE core member university. The deadline for university teams to submit proposals is mid-September. The universities will be required to match federal grants, dollar for dollar, from nonfederal sources.

Exactly how the new COE will interact with six UAS test sites that the FAA selected last December will be determined once the COE team is in place and develops its detailed research plans. The agency expects any flight testing the COE wants to perform will occur at one or more of the test sites.

Congress mandated that the FAA establish the COE under the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2014.

Like university think tank partnerships, the agency's Centers of Excellence bring the best minds in the nation together to conduct research, to educate and to train, and work with the FAA toward solutions for aviation-related challenges.

> **Draft Solicitation** (http://www.faa.gov/about/office_org/headquarters_offices/ang/offices/management/coe/)

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