

Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS) Policy

Unit: [Compliance, Ethics, and Regulatory Affairs](#)

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Effective Date: 04/18/2015

Title: Executive Director for Institutional Compliance

Revision Date: 7/24/2019

Purpose

The operation of Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS) is regulated by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and relevant state law. The purpose of this policy is to ensure that The University of Alabama (UA) and the UA community acquire and operate UAS efficiently, safely, ethically, and in adherence to applicable laws and regulations.

Policy

- All operation and use of UAS, as defined by the [FAA](#), must comply with FAA regulations and local, state, and federal laws. Any operation or use of UAS that violates such regulations or laws is prohibited. It is the responsibility of the UAS operator to ensure that all applicable UA policies and relevant laws and regulations are adhered to during operation of the UAS.
- All flight plans should be coordinated through the Office of Compliance, Ethics, and Regulatory Affairs.
- Operators should be familiar with the difference between controlled and uncontrolled airspace, and understand the [Rules of the Sky](#). The operator is responsible for identifying [airspace restrictions](#) prior to taking flight.
- You must register your UAS according to the [FAA rules](#). If the UAS is not registered, the operator could be subject to the civil and criminal penalties defined in the U.S. Government UAS regulation terms.
- In addition to FAA registration, all intended usage of any UA-affiliated UAS, regardless of size, location or persons, requires coordination through the Office of Compliance, Ethics, and Regulatory Affairs.
- Any University employee or student wishing to operate a UAS as part of any University program must register their equipment, obtain the proper certifications to operate a UAS from the FAA, and submit a [UAS Request Form](#) to the Office of Compliance, Ethics, and Regulatory Affairs.
- The request for UAS usage will be used to coordinate with appropriate UA departments to ensure on and off campus flights follow FAA regulations and align with UA policies. If you need assistance with these requirements, contact the Office of Compliance, Ethics, and Regulatory Affairs.
- The University reserves the right to prohibit any UAS request that does not comply with FAA regulations. Additionally, UAS requests may be prohibited if the proposed flight:
 - Interferes with any University activity or program;
 - Poses a safety, security or privacy risk to the university community or property;
 - Fails to comply with this policy or applicable laws and regulations; or
 - Interferes with the University's mission.
- The exact requirements for UAS usage, including usage for academic, research, and commercial purposes, may vary according to the UAS being used, the conditions of use, and the ownership of the system.
- Under the guidelines of the FAA, UAS flights are generally prohibited on University properties during all outside events where large crowds congregate.
- UAS may not be used to monitor or record sensitive or personal information, or to monitor or record in any area where there is a reasonable expectation of privacy. These areas include but are not limited to: restrooms, locker rooms, individual residential rooms, changing or dressing rooms, and health treatment rooms. Additionally, UAS shall not be used to monitor or record sensitive institutional or personal information which may be found, for example, on an individual's workspaces, computer or other electronic displays.

- Any incidents, accidents, or injuries associated with the use or flight of a UAS should be reported to the [FAA](#) and the University according to established policies, including:
 - Notify UAPD (348-5454) for any incidents on UA Property so a report can be filed. Notify the appropriate law enforcement agency for incidents that occur off UA Property for reporting purposes.
 - Those involved should submit an [Injury and Illness report](#). The report should be submitted by individuals on UA's campus, including students, visitors, and other non-employees. Employees who have an injury or illness should also submit an Injury and Illness report and may be covered under the [UA On-the-Job Injury and Illness Policy](#).
 - Notify the Office of Compliance, Ethics, and Regulatory Affairs and provide copies or contact information for all of the above reports.
- The purchase of a University-owned UAS (or the parts to assemble a UAS) requires coordination from the Office of Compliance, Ethics, and Regulatory Affairs, regardless of the anticipated payment method or source of funding. Any University employee, student, or unit purchasing a UAS (or the parts to assemble a UAS) should contact the Office of Compliance, Ethics, and Regulatory Affairs to initiate the request and approval process via the UAS Request Form. This review documentation must accompany any official request to purchase UAS, i.e. via University Requisition, or as documentation to support a Procurement Card purchase. Approval to purchase is not to be construed as approval to fly the UAS. The UAS will be entered into inventory management database to ensure proper certifications and export control requirements have been satisfied.
- Small unmanned aircraft may not operate over any persons not directly participating in the operation, unless the individuals are under a covered structure or inside a covered stationary vehicle.
- For UAS usage required by University departments or programs, the overseeing departments are responsible for ensuring appropriate certification and/or providing training as needed for the use of the aircraft.
- Any restrictions described in this policy do not apply to those aircraft authorized by and in contact with air traffic control for operational or safety of flight purposes, i.e., Department of Defense, law enforcement, and air ambulance flight operations, Fire and Rescue, and Emergency Management Agency.

Enforcement and Penalties:

The FAA requires all UAS owners to register any UAS that is purchased weighing between 0.55lbs to 55lbs. Complete the online [UAS Registration application](#). FAA agents will review your application for omissions and errors. FAA agents will begin the registration process and a registration certificate will be emailed shortly after. At that stage, you will receive a registration number to mark on each UAS registered. Throughout this process, the FAA will communicate any further registration requirements directly with the registrant.

If operators meet the criteria to register an unmanned aircraft and do not register, they will be subject to civil and criminal penalties. The FAA states that failure to register an aircraft may result in regulatory and criminal sanctions. The FAA may assess civil penalties up to \$32,666. Criminal penalties include fines of up to \$250,000 and/or imprisonment for up to three years.

Using a UAS to monitor or eavesdrop may lead to criminal charges. Under state law (Ala. Code §13A-11-32(a)), "a person commits the crime of criminal surveillance if he intentionally engages in surveillance while trespassing in a private place." Further, Ala. Code § 13A-11-34 stipulates: "a person commits the crime of criminal possession of an eavesdropping device if he possesses, manufactures, sends or transports any device designed or commonly used for eavesdropping, and: (1) intends to use that device to eavesdrop; or (2) knows that another person intends to use that device to eavesdrop."

Persons who are on campus and/or operating a UAS on or above campus without approval from the FAA and coordination with Compliance, Ethics, and Regulatory Affairs are in violation of University policy and may be dealt with accordingly, including, but not limited to, being removed from campus and receiving an official trespass citation to remain off campus. Contractors and vendors are expected to comply with this policy and contract terms.

Student violations may be addressed in accordance with the Code of Student Conduct as well as other applicable policies and may include sanctions, up to and including expulsion.

Employee violations may be resolved in accordance with employer policies, up to and including termination.

Violators of local, state, and federal laws and regulations may be dealt with by appropriate law enforcement.

Definitions

Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS) - UAS are also known as or may be characterized as drones. According to the FAA, a UAS is defined as the unmanned aircraft and all of the associated support equipment, control station, data links, telemetry, communications and navigation equipment, etc., necessary to operate the unmanned aircraft. UAS may have a variety of names including quadcopter, quadrotor, etc.

University Property – Buildings, grounds, and land that are owned by The University of Alabama or controlled by the University via leases or other formal contractual arrangements to house ongoing UA operations.

Scope

This policy applies to faculty, staff, students, contractors, or non-UA affiliated persons who wish to fly UAS on UA grounds or on behalf of the University.

Office of the Vice President of Finance and Operations

DocuSigned by:
Signed: Cheryl Mowdy 7/24/2019
Cheryl Mowdy
Assistant Vice President for Finance and Operations