



Oregon

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Oregon Department of Aviation and Lane Community College Partner to Advance Drone Technology for Wildfire Mitigation and Workforce Development

SALEM, OR – The Oregon Department of Aviation (ODAV) and Lane Community College (LCC) have entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to collaborate on the use of uncrewed aircraft systems (UAS) and advanced sensors for wildfire mitigation research and workforce development.

The partnership establishes a cooperative framework to explore drone-based technologies, including Beyond Visual Line of Sight (BVLOS) operations and visual detection systems, to enhance wildfire detection, suppression, and public safety across Oregon.

“Lane Community College has one of the most cutting-edge UAS programs in the state,” said Kenji Sugahara, Director of the Oregon Department of Aviation. “This partnership not only helps us advance Oregon’s use of drone technology for wildfire mitigation but also builds a stronger pipeline of skilled workers ready to support the aviation and emergency management sectors.”

Under the agreement, LCC will integrate real-world data, case studies, and field-testing results into its UAS curriculum. Students will have the opportunity to participate in joint flight demonstrations, technology evaluations, and research projects supporting ODAV’s statewide initiatives.

“This is exactly the type of need we are seeing, and this collaboration on developing new, advanced drones and technology for fire science will not only focus drone technology where it is needed in our communities, it will also be one of the most advanced drone training opportunities in the country for our students” said Solomon Singer, the Director of the Lane Community College UAS Program. “This partnership with the Oregon Department of Aviation opens up the opportunity to involve our students in advanced UAS research, while helping support our firefighters and communities. We hope that our efforts will someday potentially save lives, and advance the use of drones in fire surveillance and control”.

The MOU underscores the importance of academic partnerships in developing sustainable, community-driven innovation. By leveraging the expertise and facilities of Lane Community College, ODAV aims to expand Oregon’s technical capacity in aviation and build public trust through transparent collaboration with local institutions.

This two-year partnership will also support statewide workforce planning and stakeholder engagement as ODAV continues to develop infrastructure and regulatory frameworks for integrating drones into Oregon's airspace.

For more information about the Oregon Department of Aviation, visit www.oregon.gov/aviation.

About the Oregon Department of Aviation

The Oregon Department of Aviation (ODAV) manages the state's aviation system, including 28 state-owned airports and 96 public-use airports. ODAV's mission is to enable and advocate for a safe and efficient aviation system that connects communities and drives economic growth.

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