

DEVELOPMENT OF UNMANNED AERIAL SYSTEMS

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KEY FACTS

- Oklahoma was one of the first states chosen as a testing site for small unmanned aerial systems (UAS)
- From 2015 to 2017, the UAS industry is expected to create nearly 600 new jobs and have a projected economic impact of \$51.7 million in Oklahoma
- Oklahoma has a dedicated hangar, runways and military airspace available for UAS research and testing
- More than 100 UAS specific companies operate in Oklahoma
- Oklahoma State University and the Spartan College of Aeronautics and Technology rank among the top 15 drone training colleges in the country

BACKGROUND

Oklahoma is uniquely poised to significantly grow the UAS market after having been chosen as the first state approved testing site for small unmanned aerial systems. A study found that the state is projected to create nearly 600 jobs from 2015 to 2017. This new sector in the aerospace industry is predicted to make a \$57.6 million economic impact in Oklahoma, and has the potential to create thousands of new jobs by 2025.

Oklahoma has positioned itself as a leader in UAS development by creating an infrastructure and research network that will advance the industry. In 2011, Governor Mary Fallin created the Unmanned Aerial Systems Council to make Oklahoma the “go-to” place for UAS research. Oklahoma State University was the first university in the nation to have a UAS-focused graduate degree. Since the program’s implementation it has earned five UAS world records.

Unmanned aerial systems have other important applications that can benefit business and industry. Agriculture is expected to be one of the largest markets for them by allowing farmers to more efficiently monitor crops and distribute pesticides. The systems could benefit 86,000 farms in Oklahoma. The oil and natural gas industry is exploring the utilization of unmanned aerial systems to survey pipelines and drilling rigs. Development of the UAS is also crucial to national security, disaster management and protection of our borders.

Expansion of the state’s aerospace industry is critical to creating a strong and diverse economy in the future. Development of the UAS industry in Oklahoma offers an opportunity for the state to capitalize on its unique assets and take a leadership role in UAS technology to sustain and grow Oklahoma’s aerospace economy.

STATE CHAMBER POSITION

The State Chamber supports the development of Oklahoma’s strengths and resources as a prime location for development, testing and flight of unmanned aerial systems. The UAS sector represents a growing market within the defense and business industries, and is expected to help save money as efficiencies are identified..