

Ozark aviation school to head state's first UAS maintenance program



OZARK-Enterprise State Community College's Alabama Aviation Center in Ozark will be the first to implement an unmanned aircraft systems maintenance program in the state, officials announced Tuesday.

According to a joint statement from the Ozark Economic Development Corporation and ESCC, the school received a \$360,000 grant from the state's Workforce Development office to develop and launch the first phase of a program that would certify technicians for both manned and unmanned systems.

A tentative start date for the program is January 2014.

According to information ODEC provided from the Association for Unmanned Vehicle Systems International, 23,000 unmanned aircraft systems jobs could be created in the U.S. over the next 15 years. The U.S. Air Force trained more unmanned aircraft pilots in 2010 than manned fighter and bomber pilots and the Pentagon purchased more unmanned aircraft than manned aircraft, according to the association.

ODEC Executive Director Eric Basinger said ESCC's new program was supported by ODEC and private-sector companies interested in expanding their unmanned aircraft capabilities.

"With its proximity to the U.S. Army Aviation Center of Excellence at Fort Rucker and the many aviation businesses in our region, ESCC's ability to provide comprehensive aircraft maintenance training will boost our ability to recruit and retain employers seeking such expertise for their employees," Basinger said in the statement.

http://www.dothaneagle.com/news/education/article_b4363c3e-6a6a-11e2-b9ac-001a4bcf6878.html