

# It's not a bird or a plane, it's a drone

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ALPENA — At Alpena Community College officials have realized some students' futures may be up in the air ... in a drone.

Because of this the college plans to have a non-credit class to prepare students to take the drone pilot test.

A drone is an unmanned aerial vehicle often used to take photos or video.

The new program is funded through a Trade Adjustment Assistance Community College and Career Training grant the college received two years ago, Stone said.

"There are four different tracts to provide grant money to; manufacturing, green energy technology, cyber security, this is the aerospace tract," grant administrator Dawn Stone said. "We've fallen into a industry that has become super duper dynamic."

Because the industry has many different avenues to explore and new regulations, the class was created. Stone said she estimates it will be available to students in winter.

The new regulations were released this year by the Federal Aviation Administration for people who use drones, ACC instructor Brian Dawson said.

One of the most important regulations, he said, states a person can't use a drone for commercial purposes without a drone pilot license. A person who uses it as a hobby does need to follow certain laws, but they don't need a license, Dawson said.

"This can affect the agriculture industry who may use drones to inspect crops, or a firefighter and law enforcement who use it on duty," Dawson said. "One of the biggest industries this affects is real estate who use them for taking images of homes and yards."

Dawson has a long history in aviation which includes years as active duty in the Air Force. He's also a licensed pilot and licensed drone pilot.

"So (ACC staff are) the first six people going through the curriculum," Stone said. "We're his guinea pigs so to speak. He's teaching it to us and is trying to iron out the kinks and once that happens we'll be rolling out the curriculum."

Stone said the test is not easy and much of the information has to be known by regular pilots.

"They want drone operators to know a lot," she said. "They have to be able to follow the rules the FAA has set. Our lead instructor Brian Dawson has to train people



**This Endurance drone is used to take aerial photos and video. This specific type of drone can handle many different kinds of photographing equipment.**

News Photo by Jordan Spence

on all this information drone pilots don't know."

Dawson said there are five main components he will teach: regulations, aircraft performance, weather, national airspace system and flight operations.

"A lot of what's in here is directly related to the pilot," he said. "It's somewhat advanced. It's also tailored to the written test."

He said there will be some hands-on instruction with a drone, but it will not be the

focus of the course.

Both Dawson and Stone said this will benefit students in one key way.

"When they go to work a student can say they are a certified drone pilot," Stone said. "Hopefully it will make

them more valuable to their future employers and in return they will be compensated for that."

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