USING DRONES AT WESTERN – POLICY SUMMARY

Thank you for taking the time to review and comment on this new draft policy. Drones are a transformative technology and present many unique opportunities for higher education, both academically and administratively. The objective of this policy is to bring a certain level of professionalism and structure to the University’s drone operations helping to ensure safety and privacy for the University community and others.

Summary of Key Policy Objectives

- University drones and third-party drones will only be flown for official University business and will comply with FAA Part 107 regulations. FAA Part 107 requires training and testing of drone pilots, leading to FAA certification. Drones are registered with the FAA and marked with an assigned registration number. Drone pilots will understand the FAA safety rules and will be able to safely fly within the national airspace.
- Drone pilots lacking FAA certification (e.g. University students) may operate drones under the direct supervision of a drone pilot who holds FAA certification, in compliance with FAA Part 107.
- Operators of University drones or third-party drones that are planning to operate from or over University property must obtain prior written approval from the Office of University Communications. However, University faculty, student and staff pilots of University drones that are flying from or over University property on official University business for educational, instructional or public safety purposes are only encouraged to notify the Office of University Communications to avoid potential conflict with other planned drone flights.
- A portion of the north end of the University’s main campus is located within Bellingham International Airport’s Class D controlled airspace. All operators must obtain FAA approval before operating within that portion of the airspace over the main campus. See image on next page.
- Drones may only be used for official University business when operating from or over University property. Recreational use of any drone is purely for fun or personal enjoyment and is not allowed from or over University property for safety and privacy reasons.
- All drones operating on official University business must have liability insurance coverage, which is provided under the University’s drone liability insurance program through Risk Management.
- Third-party drone operations for official University business require a written contract and insurance coverage.
- University drone videos and aerial photographs are subject to public records disclosures and records retention.
- Drone operators make privacy a priority while operating over places where people have a reasonable expectation of privacy. Public disclosure of images that identify a particular person require written consent from that person or obfuscation of the image.
- Operators report accidents or incidents, and violations to Risk Management.

Image: The portion of the north end of the University’s main campus located within Bellingham International Airport’s Class D controlled airspace. Image courtesy of Dr. David Wallin.