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FULLERTON COLLEGE CREATES FIRST DRONE PILOT APPRENTICESHIP

FULLERTON, CALIF. (October 28, 2022) -- National Apprenticeship Week will have new meaning at Fullerton College as the first-of-its-kind *Hornet Drone Piloting Apprenticeship Program* is introduced at the kickoff event on **November 17 from 9 AM-Noon**.

The US Department of Labor recently registered this apprenticeship as the first in California and the first from a college by federal standards in the United States. The Hornet Drone Lab will develop skilled pilots of uncrewed aerial systems (UAS) ready to work with industry partners in various industries such as utilities, public safety, and ecology.

“This program provides a great opportunity to help further develop the workforce of tomorrow,” said Jay Seidel, professor, and director of the Fullerton Drone Lab. According to recent research, the demand for drone pilots is expected to grow by 51% over the next five years.

Once accepted into the program, students complete 11 units at Fullerton College that will earn them their FAA (Federal Aviation Administration) and OSHA (Occupational Safety and Health Administration) certifications. Then, a partnership with Friends of Fullerton College Foundation (Friends) and Hope Builders Career Connections (HBCC), an Orange County-based social enterprise staffing agency, pairs students with employment partners to complete 600 hours of paid on-the-job training. Southern California Edison, Birds Eye Aerial, C2 Technologies, Flying Lion, and Orange County Vector Control have all signed up to employ student apprentices. The entire program, developed through the California Apprenticeship Initiative, can be completed within a year and move the new journeymen into the workforce.

This program begins a new **Classroom-to-Jobsite Pipeline (C2J)**, and brings another first. Besides the \$500,000 apprenticeship grant to start the program, Friends received funding from the Orange County Community Foundation, Samueli Foundation, and Edison International to create a social enterprise partnership that self-funds scholarships. Employers pay a finders fee that funds both the apprenticeship administration and scholarships for the next class in the program. They can hop the digital divide with a microloan of up to \$2,500 to pay for a drone and FAA testing.

“We have set the program up so a student with need can walk on campus and go from start to finish without having to pay a dime for the program. They just need to invest their sweat equity. We see this as a generational change for families. As the model for education improving lives, a drone pilot’s children will also see education as an avenue for them,” said Zoot Velasco, Executive Director of the Friends of Fullerton College Foundation.

The first apprenticeship cohort is expected in January and will complete a state and federally-registered program. Read more at the [Fullerton Drone Lab](#) website and in [Friends Annual Report](#)

(more)

DRONE APPRENTICESHIP

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The Fullerton Drone Lab at Fullerton College was established in 2018 and has become a drone training and education leader. Fullerton College, founded in 1913, is California's longest continually operated community college and offers academic and vocational education in many areas.

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