December 2, 2015

Dear Colleagues:

- All outdoor and unauthorized indoor use of “drones” is prohibited on and off campus for all representatives of SIUC (i.e., serving as faculty, staff, or students) until further notice;
- Indoor use on SIUC’s campus may be authorized, with approval from the OVCR via completion of a forthcoming questionnaire on needs and use;
- We are working to resolve this issue in a timely manner, recognizing that Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UASs) have many teaching and research applications.

As many of you may be aware, the use of any Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UASs), often called drones, by public entities such as SIUC is strictly prohibited by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) without the proper FAA approvals. SIUC must assure that our use of UASs does not threaten the national air space, violate any FAA regulations, or endanger people or property. There are serious risk management concerns whenever UASs are flown in any environment. This issue is not unique to SIUC. All public universities are grappling with the FAA requirements, and no uniform guidance is available.

In order to meet FAA regulatory requirements and protect the university and its representatives from liability, we have determined that an employee or student of SIUC cannot operate an UAS outdoors on university property. This includes Registered Student Organization activities, courses, research, cinematography, journalism, or other SIUC functions. UAS flight may occur in approved, dedicated indoor spaces on campus, with approval from the OVCR (see below for process).

In addition to the required FAA approvals, the SIUC campus is within 5 nm (nautical miles) of the Southern Illinois Airport and within 2 nm of the heliport at Memorial Hospital. Either of
these conditions make the main campus a no-fly zone for any outdoor UAS use and will likely remain that way even after approvals are obtained from the federal government.

SIU representatives planning to fly UASs at off-campus or non-university owned locations should be aware that the FAA regulations and liabilities still apply. Any outdoor flights conducted as a representative of SIUC are prohibited until the university has secured the necessary FAA approvals and risk has been assessed and managed. Please understand that a faculty member flying UASs on non-university property as part of a class, research effort, or any other university-sanctioned demonstration would be considered to be acting as a representative of the university and so would be conducting the activity without the necessary approvals. For now, indoor use of UASs on all off-campus properties is prohibited.

SIUC is pursuing the appropriate approvals with the FAA as quickly as possible and will institute a process by which SIUC students and employees may use UASs with the proper training and within the compliance metrics set by the university to meet FAA rules and manage any risk incurred. We anticipate that the FAA approval process will be in place by summer 2016. Use of UASs for indoor research and teaching on the SIU campus may be allowable, with OVCR approval. The process for seeking indoor use approval now and eventually outdoor use is described below.

As part of the process to apply for FAA approvals and underwriting, a questionnaire will be circulated within a week to collect information on on-going and anticipated UAS projects. Questionnaires will be sent to deans for circulation to appropriate departments and individuals. Copies can be obtained directly from OVCR by e-mailing ospa@siu.edu. A separate questionnaire needs to be completed for each project, providing as much detail as possible, specifying whether the project is for indoor or outdoor use. All questionnaires should be returned to ospa@siu.edu for processing. Projects involving indoor use of an UAS will be evaluated and forwarded to Risk Management in order to expedite insurance underwriting. Information on projects involving outdoor use of UASs will be consolidated for the university’s application to the FAA.
We understand that these restrictions potentially affect faculty members’ course planning and research efforts. We do want to find a resolution as quickly as possible and appreciate your patience.

Please direct any questions you have to the Office of the Vice Chancellor for Research (ospa@siu.edu).

Sincerely,

Jim Garvey
Interim Vice Chancellor for Research