

## Rice University Policy No. 847

### THE USE OF UNMANNED AIRCRAFT SYSTEMS (including Model Aircraft, Quadcopters and “Drones”)

#### I. General Policy

There are many ways that Rice University faculty, staff, students, and visitors use Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS). The purpose of this policy is to allow for these many uses while promoting safety, privacy, and compliance with relevant regulatory requirements.

Any individual who wishes to operate a UAS for any purpose on or immediately above the Rice University campus must receive permission from Rice University Public Affairs, must follow relevant state and federal regulations, and must meet the requirements of this policy.

#### II. Definitions

The terms “Recreation or Hobby Use;” “Unmanned Aircraft Systems” (UAS); “Model Aircraft;” “Operator;” and “Drone;” are defined by the relevant FAA regulation.

“Rice University Air Space” is the air space immediately on or over the Rice University campus and other Rice University property, consistent with federal law. For the purpose of this policy only, this refers to any activity occurring at a flight altitude of up to 400 feet above the ground.

#### III. Elaboration of Policy

##### A. Basic FAA Guidance

The FAA has promulgated two sets of rules concerning the operation of UAS, each with their own requirements. UAS must be operated under either the *Small UAS Rule* (Part 107) (for commercial uses, which requires a FAA certificate and registration, among other things); or the *Special Rule for Model Aircraft* (Public Law 112-95, Section 336) (for recreation or hobby use, which requires registration in most cases, among other things).

Operators should be aware that the FAA has imposed additional flight restrictions on operations at the main campus of Rice University and the BioScience Research Collaborative (BRC) due to the proximity of airports and helipads (commonly referred to as “Bravo Airspace”).

It is the responsibility of the UAS operator to act in accordance with FAA regulations.

##### B. Faculty and Staff

All faculty and staff who will operate UAS as part of their Rice University duties (including but not limited to course instruction or demonstration, club or extra-circular activities, research, surveying, filming, or athletics) must be licensed by the FAA and follow relevant state and federal regulations. This applies regardless of the location of the flight operation.

If the UAS will be operated on or over the Rice University campus, then permission must be obtained from Public Affairs.

### C. Admitted Students

Students who wish to operate any UAS on the Rice University campus must request permission from Public Affairs. Generally, permission will be granted for micro-UAS (total weight under 0.5 pounds) when operated up to 100 feet above ground, away from crowds, and without a camera or recording device.

Other UAS use by students will be decided on a case-by-case basis, and must generally conform to the policy for faculty and staff (Section III.B).

### D. Contractors, Vendors, and Visitors

Any individual who is not a current Rice University faculty, staff, or student must request permission from Public Affairs prior to operating any UAS on the Rice University campus. This permission request must state the rule under which the UAS will operate, the operator's name and license number, the time/location/purpose of the operation, and if the UAS will have a camera or other recording device.

### E. Authority and Privacy

Either Public Affairs or Rice University Police Department, acting in their sole discretion, retains the right to prohibit any UAS operation, cease any ongoing UAS activity, deny operation of certain UAS, or prohibit any operator from accessing Rice University Air Space, consistent with state and federal law.

Any UAS that has the ability to take photographs or videos must be operated in accordance with the Texas Privacy Act, and the Rice University Filming and Photography guidelines.

### F. Exceptions

Exceptions to this policy may be granted by the Vice President Public Affairs, in limited circumstances and with good cause. Any such exception must meet relevant state and federal requirements.

## IV. Cross References to Related Policies

Public Affairs [Filming and Photography Guidelines](#)

## V. Responsible Official and Key Offices to Contact Regarding the Policy and its Implementation

Responsible Official: VP Public Affairs

Other Key Offices: RUPD

## VI. Links to Additional Information

[FAA Guidance on UAS](#)

*Signed David W. Leebron* \_\_\_\_\_  
President

### Policy History

Issued: October 31, 2017