



**University of the Incarnate Word
Unmanned Aircraft Systems Policy**

Effective Date: January 27, 2026
Contact: Associate Vice
**President for
Communications and
Brand Marketing**

PURPOSE

The Federal Aviation Administration (“FAA”) and relevant state law regulate the operation of Unmanned Aircraft Systems (“UAS”) including drones and model aircrafts. The University of the Incarnate Word (“UIW”) seeks to permit UAS to be utilized productively in a manner that fully meets institutional, legal, public safety and ethical responsibilities. Operation of a UAS on or over UIW property, and the use of UAS by university departments and/or employees, must comply with this policy.

SCOPE

This policy applies to:

1. UIW students or employees operating UAS in any location on any property owned or controlled by UIW;
2. The operation by any person of UAS on or above on any property owned or controlled by UIW;
3. The purchase and operation of UAS with funding through the University, including grants; and
4. The hiring or contracting for any UAS services with an outside vendor by a UIW student, contractor, or employee, or on or above any property owned or controlled by UIW.

DEFINITIONS

Unmanned Aircraft System (“UAS”). Any remotely operated or controlled aircraft system intended to fly within the National Airspace System, commonly referred to as drones. UAS operations, regardless of size or weight, are governed by the Code of Federal Regulations (“CFR”) and the United States Code (“USC”) and overseen by the Federal Aviation Administration (“FAA”). For purposes of this policy, the definition of UAS includes UA’s and sUAS’ as defined in this policy.

Unmanned Aircraft (“UA”). A UA is the actual flying vehicle (i.e., the drone), operating without an onboard pilot.

Small Unmanned Aircraft System (“sUAS”). A subset of UAS weighing less than 55 pounds, including anything onboard or attached to the aircraft that can be flown without direct human intervention from within or on the aircraft.

University Property. Real property owned or controlled by UIW. This includes, but is not limited to, property leased or managed by UIW.

Model Aircraft. An unmanned aircraft system that is 1) flown for hobby or recreational purposes as defined in Section 336 of Public Law 112-95, as amended from time to time; 2) capable of sustained flight in the atmosphere; and 3) flown within visual line of sight of the operator.

Operator. Pilot or individual who is controlling, maneuvering, or commanding a UAS.

Remote Pilot Certificate. To fly a sUAS, FAA regulations require pilots to obtain a Remote Pilot Certificate from the FAA. This certificate demonstrates that the pilot understands the regulations, operating requirements, and procedures for safe operations.

NARRATIVE

I. UAS Oversight, Usage, and Approvals

The type of operation, purpose of flight, and weight of the UAS factor into the specific requirements or rules that govern use of a UAS on University Property. UAS use for the purpose of this policy shall fall into one of three categories as defined by the FAA:

1. Commercial Use (contracted vendor);
2. Private/Hobbyist use for educational purposes; or
3. Private/Hobbyist use for personal use (on or above university property).

All required procedures and processes for use of a UAS on or above University Property shall be made available with the Office of Communications and Brand Marketing (“OCM”) as well as the Office of Environmental, Health, Safety and Risk Management’s (“EHSRM”) website, and updated periodically with or without notice as reasonably necessary in the discretion of UIW. Person(s) wishing to operate a UAS on University Property are required to comply with the then-current UIW’s UAS Use Approval Process applicable to the respective UAS and purpose of use in question prior to operating same on or above University Property.

OCM, in collaboration with EHSRM and the UIW Police Department (“UIWPD”), shall be responsible for establishing, maintaining, and updating the processes and procedures governing use of a UAS on University Property.

II. FAA Regulations and UAS Compliance

Any individual or group, including employees, students, or contracted vendors, seeking to operate an UAS on or above University Property is responsible for obtaining all required documentation or certifications as then-required by the FAA and any applicable state or local requirements for the specific type of UAS in question and purpose for use prior to submitting a request for use at the University. This may include, but is not limited to:

- Obtaining a Remote Pilot Certificate;
- Passing the Recreational UAS Safety Test (“TRUST”) and providing proof of same;
- Registering your UAS with the FAA;
- Being Remote ID compliant; or
- Obtaining and airspace authorization from the FAA.

III. UAS Operational Requirements

To operate a UAS on or above University Property, the person or entity wishing to operate same must:

- Comply with all local, state, and federal regulations and requirements.
- Adhere to all licensure and certification requirements applicable to the UAS in question, or purpose of use.
- Follow the process, protocols, and safety parameters established in UIW's UAS Use Approval Process and receive approval for use prior to the operation of a UAS on or above University Property.
- Meet the requirements for use as established by UIW in its sole discretion.
- Obtain and provide proof of adequate insurance coverage as applicable to the respective UAS and purpose of use.
- Comply with all University policies and procedures as applicable, including the University's privacy policies then in effect.
- The operator or pilot of a UAS must remain in compliance with all applicable local, state, and federal regulations while operating a UAS on or above University Property.
- The operator or pilot of a UAS shall operate the UAS in a safe and proficient manner and within approved airspace.

IV. Prohibited Use

The following is prohibited for UAS usage or operation on or above University Property:

- Operation of a UAS on or above University Property without appropriate approvals.
- Operating a UAS in a dangerous manner, or in a manner that poses risk of safety to the University community or community at large.
- Operating a UAS outside permitted airspace or for purposes not specifically authorized by UIW.
- Flying a UAS at too high or too low an altitude.
- Flying a UAS in a manner that interferes with air traffic, or too close to another aircraft, UAS, or model aircraft.
- No UAS shall record, monitor, or photograph spaces where an individual has a reasonable expectation of privacy including, but not limited to, residence halls, residential lounges, locker rooms, restrooms, or other, private spaces as designated by UIW.
- Operating a UAS under the influence of alcohol or drugs.
- Private or Hobbyist use of sUAS' and model aircrafts for personal use on or above University Property is not permitted.

Violation of this policy may result in disciplinary action in accordance with the Employee, Faculty, or Student Handbook(s), as applicable.

IV. Resources

Additional resources for usage or UAS' are available here:

- <https://www.faa.gov/uas>
- <https://www.modelaircraft.org/club-finder>

OVERSIGHT RESPONSIBILITIES FOR THIS POLICY

1. Oversight of this policy is assigned to the Associate Vice President for Communications and

Brand Marketing.

2. The policy will be published in the Policy Library and on OCM's and EHSRM's website.
3. The Associate Vice President for Communication and Brand Marketing, in collaboration with the Director of EHSRM and UIWPD, will assure its compliance, and report results to the Vice President for External Affairs and Office of General Counsel.
4. This policy will be reviewed every three (3) years for possible updates.

First Approved: January 27, 2026

Dates Reviewed: <date>

Revised:

Revised: