

PRESS RELEASE

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For more information, contact:

Keanno Fausto
Communications Coordinator
NASA Guam Space Grant, University of Guam
Email: fausto9679@triton.uog.edu

UOG Drone Corps marks third year with new batch of licensed drone pilots

The University of Guam's (UOG) Drone Corps program has produced 12 new certified drone pilots.

The 12 students from UOG and the Guam Community College spent the past summer learning about drone regulation and flight safety in preparation for the Federal Aviation Administration's (FAA) Part 107 exam, which awards a remote pilot certificate upon successful completion. Individuals with this FAA certification are authorized to fly drones commercially.

Students in this cohort are in different fields such as engineering or studying marine biology, environmental science, accounting, secondary education, criminal justice, and nursing.

The newly certified students had hands-on flight time hours and opportunities to go with professionals on different drone missions through the NASA Guam Space Grant Professional Internship program.

The students have participated in research projects that use advanced remote sensing technologies to survey areas such as Guam's coral reefs, an archaeological site in Talo'fo'fo, and the UOG campus. The members are currently working on a video project that features aerial footage of Guam's scenic landmarks.

Sarai Vega, a UOG marine biology graduate student looks forward to using her new skill, especially in watershed and coastal research. “The work I will be doing with drones will enhance the geographic information system skills I have learned in previous years,” Vega said.

UOG Drone Corps program outreach coordinator Danielle Hagen, who helped develop the flight training curriculum this year, is integrating lessons into the curriculum that demonstrate the more unique applications of drones, such as coding and photogrammetry, to prepare pilots for a wide range of opportunities.

“By undergoing this curriculum, our newly licensed pilots can become proficient, confident, and prepared to safely fly their drone anywhere and under any circumstance,” Hagen said.

This is the UOG Drone Corps’ third cohort since its establishment in 2021. Administered by NASA Guam Space Grant and NASA Guam Established Program to Stimulate Competitive Research (EPSCoR), the program at UOG aims to build a pool of safe and responsible remote pilots who will contribute to Guam’s growing drone industry.

This year, the team worked with drone company 2cofly to offer lessons and provide training.

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Photo captions:

2023-DroneCorps1

Students from the third cohort of the UOG Drone Corps gather with the program’s administrators and instructors. From left, Thomas Torres II; Pretenciana Tiara Rosario; Wendy Fejeran; Shian Marie Aricheta; Sarai Vega; Daniel Ramos; Phil Joanne De Jesus; Dr. Leslie Aquino, Executive Director, NASA Guam EPSCoR; Dr. Romina King, Associate Director, NASA Guam Space Grant; Frank Lujan II; Motusaga Vaeoso; D’amy Steward; Pei Andriel Valerio; and Emmanuel Carino, instructor of 2cofly.

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Members from the third cohort of the UOG Drone Corps program observe 2cofly co-founder Dong Won Lee as he demonstrates how to properly prepare a drone for flight at the Valley of the Latte Adventure Park in Talo’fo’fo. From left, Motusaga Vaeoso, Shian Marie Aricheta, Sarai Vega, Phil Joanna De Jesus, Wendy Fejeran, Dong Won Lee, Daniel Ramos, and Ratu Uluviti with 2cofly.

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UOG Drone Corps program outreach coordinator Danielle Hagen demonstrates how to use a drone simulator remote controller during a STEM outreach event at the Agana Shopping Center.

Photos courtesy of University of Guam