



Aurora joins network of partners committed to economic development and workforce growth in southwestern Virginia

Company to help establish new drone training and operation curriculum at Mountain Empire Community College

October 26, 2016 — Aurora Flight Sciences has joined a network of businesses, organizations and institutions dedicated to enhancing economic prosperity in the Appalachian region. The Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) and Virginia Governor Terry McAuliffe announced today during a presentation at Mountain Empire Community College (MECC) significant federal investments funded through the Obama administration's Partnerships for Opportunity and Workforce and Economic Revitalization (POWER) Initiative. The purpose of these grants is to stimulate economic growth and opportunity in communities that have historically relied on the coal industry for economic stability.

One of the many Virginia POWER grants was awarded to the Industrial Development Authority in Wise County, which oversees the *Virginia Emerging Drone Industry Cluster Project*. This effort falls under an overarching mission by the Virginia Unmanned Systems Commission to make the state a leader in the unmanned aerial systems (UAS) industry while simultaneously establishing Wise County as a research, development, training and operational hub for UAS. According to ARC, "the funds will be used to position five counties in southwestern Virginia as a national destination for the development of a drone-operator workforce to support the emerging drone industry in the United States."

Aurora has partnered with Mountain Empire Community College (MECC) located in the Appalachian region to develop the first of its kind *Aerial Drone Geo-Spatial Mapping and Surveyors* course under the newly funded project. These courses will "train students, including former coal industry workers, to operate drones and drone sensors to provide commercial and government services – including geospatial surveys, close-up inspections of fixed structures, and mapping."

In addition to assisting with the development of MECC's new UAS curriculum, Aurora will be operating one of its Centaur DA-42 Optionally Piloted Aircraft (OPA) systems out of Lonesome Pine Airport in Wise County. "Aurora is pleased to be a part of the workforce growth in Virginia, particularly with the focus on unmanned systems," said John Langford, Aurora Chairman and CEO. "Whether introducing expanded drone use into the county by way of a specific curriculum or by conducting critical missions, we are enhancing the outreach and showing the benefits of this important industry."

With training and integration operations expected to begin in 2017, Centaur will support Virginia geo-spatial work and other contracted services such as supporting the college's planned geo-spatial courses for both flight and maintenance crews.

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About Aurora Flight Sciences:

Aurora Flight Sciences is an innovative technology company which strives to create smarter aircraft through the development of versatile and intuitive autonomous systems. Operating at the intersection of technology and robotic aviation, Aurora leverages the power of autonomy to make manned and unmanned flight safer and more efficient. Headquartered in Manassas, Virginia, Aurora operates production plants in Bridgeport, West Virginia and Columbus, Mississippi, has Research and Development Centers in Cambridge, Massachusetts, Dayton, Ohio and Mountain View, California, and a European office, Aurora Swiss Aerospace, located in Luzern, Switzerland. To view recent press releases and more about Aurora please visit our website at www.aurora.aero.

About the POWER Initiative:

The POWER Initiative is a multi-agency effort aligning and targeting federal economic and workforce development resources to communities and workers that have been affected by job losses in coal mining, coal power plant operations, and coal-related supply chain industries due to the changing economics of America's energy production. The POWER Initiative is part of President Obama's POWER+ Plan, a broader set of investments in coal-impacted communities, workers, and coal technology that is in the president's FY 2017 budget.

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