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Arizona State Board of Education  
1700 W Washington Street  
Suite #300  
Phoenix, AZ 85007

C/O Mike Walker  
[mwalker@aquafria.org](mailto:mwalker@aquafria.org)

### **Suggestion to implement sUAS Drone (14 CFR Part 107) Training and Certification Program in schools**

To whom it may concern,

I am writing to request the Arizona State Board of Education please implement and assist schools with a voluntary sUAS<sup>1</sup> drone training and certification program for high school students in the State of Arizona. 14 CFR Part 107<sup>2</sup> is the group of federal regulations which governs commercial sUAS drone remote pilot operations and certification in the United States. In short, this is often referred to as Part 107. The Federal Aviation Regulations contained within 14 CFR are governed by the Federal Aviation Administration, or FAA<sup>3</sup>.

For many years, I have been involved in educational programs, volunteer initiatives, and personally as I myself am an educator. Whether it was through the CTE standards validation meetings at the ADE offices or being a Judge and Chairman for SkillsUSA and FBLA, I have always witnessed first-hand the Board of Education's efforts to best prepare students for the real-world workforce. Part of these ongoing endeavors have been through the offering of voluntary training and professional certification programs to high school students involved in CTE programs such as those for Avid Media Composer, Final Cut Pro, and Adobe Premiere Pro.

In 2013 I graduated Scottsdale Community College's Film School with an Associate in Applied Science (AAS) degree in Motion Picture and Television Production, and a Certificate of Completion in Film Production. I then went on to earn a Bachelor of Science degree in Management with a Human Resources Emphasis from Northern Arizona University. Professionally, I am the Managing Member of Weecks Productions, LLC, a media production company currently working with government and private sector clients in broadcast and media productions. Through this line of work, I routinely hire and train newly graduated media professionals and see many resumes with a variety of voluntary certifications listed. Additionally, I am an airline pilot, FAA Certified Flight Instructor (CFI/CFI-I) and Chief Instructor at DW Aviation, LLC, a Arizona based flight training business. My aviation interests as a flight instructor and drone pilot allows me to instruct and sign off students to become Part 107 certified drone operators.

Overwhelmingly when making hiring decisions, I have noticed that potential new hires with currently offered voluntary media certifications are much less prepared, professional, and trained than those with

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.faa.gov/documentlibrary/media/advisory\\_circular/ac\\_107-2.pdf](https://www.faa.gov/documentlibrary/media/advisory_circular/ac_107-2.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> [https://www.faa.gov/air\\_traffic/publications/atpubs/foa\\_html/chap19\\_section\\_6.html](https://www.faa.gov/air_traffic/publications/atpubs/foa_html/chap19_section_6.html)

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.federalregister.gov/agencies/federal-aviation-administration>

similar experiences who have obtained a Part 107 certification. Along with many other industry employers with whom I've spoken I do not particularly care to see professional certifications like those from Adobe, Final Cut Pro, or Avid; such certifications do not provide adequate insight into the applicant and do not speak to professionalism, competency in situations serving a paying client, or critical thinking skills since they are predominantly achieved by rote memorization on a written test. A Part 107 program with an FAA certification however does provide some valuable insight to employers. Moreover it would teach students real-world responsibility by virtue of the fact that this certification requires technical skill and in-depth knowledge of advanced subjects such as federal airspace and aircraft systems. To pass the written exam, questions must be answered which are scenario based and thoroughly call on all aspects of the students' training. This is absolutely feasible for high school media students since the current age requirement to test for the Part 107 sUAS drone certification is 16 years old.<sup>4</sup>

Filmmaking is a technically intensive art form which requires very specialized and often cost prohibitive equipment. That is why aerial shots have been so elusive over the years, but now are almost within reach for young media students. Aerial imagery is often used effectively to portray scale, emotion, or specific messages through shot composition, but has historically only been available with expensive helicopters or fixed wing aircraft. Now due to recent technological advances, drone technology can replicate the same effect for a fraction of the cost and most importantly, with near perfect safety and completion records.

There is an existing fact sheet on the Arizona Board of Education's website<sup>5</sup> bundling remote pilot certification with the *Air Transportation* CTE program, however remote pilot training and certification is increasingly necessary to offer as a standalone program, and specifically to media and broadcast students. Doing so would propel current and future generations of media and broadcast students into the twenty-first century with both their curriculums and extra-curricular activities. I would strongly encourage the Arizona Department of Education to approve a new initiative to aid Arizona schools in allowing CTE educators not only to teach the knowledge and skills necessary to fly drones but to also facilitate media and broadcast students taking the sUAS Part 107 certification exam for an FAA drone operator certificate. The huge accomplishment of earning a federal certificate as a high school student would serve not only as a tremendous confidence boost but also would help to improve critical thinking, social responsibility, and technical skills. In fact, I believe that a Part 107 training and certification program would be more effective in satisfying these objectives more than any current certification program at the secondary level.

Please call or email me with questions at (623) 850-3275, or Dan@WeecksProductions.com.

With warmest regards,



Dan Weecks  
Managing Member  
Weecks Productions, LLC

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<sup>4</sup> [https://www.faa.gov/uas/commercial\\_operators/become\\_a\\_drone\\_pilot](https://www.faa.gov/uas/commercial_operators/become_a_drone_pilot)

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.azed.gov/sites/default/files/2019/07/FAA%20Ground%20Instruction%20Instrument%20Control%20Tower%20and%20Remote%20Pilot%20FS.pdf?id=5d1ccae61dcb251498a79fc5>