

DRAFTING A CAMPUS DRONE POLICY THAT BALANCES GROWTH WITH COMPLIANCE.

Our Client's Challenge

Drones are changing the way the way we view the world. The applications of unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) are growing as quickly as the technology itself, and higher education is no exception. From research to public safety, college and university campuses are teeming with potential uses for the technology. When it comes to drone policies, however, many institutions are not designed to keep up with the changing technology.

A leading research institution in the Southeast engaged Lightfoot to draft a comprehensive campus drone policy to encompass both today's uses and those not even yet contemplated. We had to ensure the policy was written in such a way as to cover any potential liabilities such as privacy issues and safety hazards. It also had to comply with all airspace and FAA drone regulations.

Our Approach

Lightfoot's blend of internal investigations (which includes higher education issues) and aviation experience is a skill set sweet spot for drafting campus drone policies. We have a deep knowledge of UAV technology, understand higher education culture, and are proficient in the legal issues surrounding aviation and aerospace.

Our mission is to craft inclusive drone policies that encourage proper use, empower universities, protect privacy rights and ensure public safety. However, you can't make a policy so restrictive that it limits research and development opportunities — that would defeat an institution's purpose to explore, educate and innovate.

For this client, our challenge was to balance growth potential with safety and regulations. Our policy met the technical and regulatory compliance needs of the institution but also accounted for future advancements. For example, we included language about payloads if and when drones are ever used to deliver packages. Plus, we included a catchall provision to fall back on in the event of unexpected developments, so the university has time to evaluate options going forward. And, we did all of this within the confines of some of the nation's busiest airspace.

The Result

We drafted a tailored campus drone policy for our client that is a flexible, living document. It will grow with ever-advancing drone technology and meet the needs of our client for many years to come.