



NEWS RELEASE
FOR IMMEDIATE USE

Contacts: MINDS-i Robotics President Mike Marzetta or
Pitsco Education Vice President Matt Frankenbery
skillsdrones@pitsco.com

Drones deliver in new SkillsUSA® event

Students learn safe and efficient use of drone technology as well as maintenance

LEESBURG, VA (January 29, 2021) – Four industry and education partners have joined forces to develop a SkillsUSA® competition focused on maintenance, flying, and knowledge of drones. The Commercial sUAS (Drone) Competition evaluates team members’ skills and preparation for employment in multiple career fields related to the safe and efficient use of drone technology in the National Airspace System.

CrossFlight Sky Solutions, MINDS-i Robotics, Pitsco Education, and the University of Florida’s Herbert Wertheim College of Engineering worked closely together to develop the new competition that can be conducted in person or virtually in 2021, enabling student participants to experience real-world, scenario-based situations involving small unmanned aircraft systems (sUAS), also known as drones.



“SkillsUSA’s new Commercial sUAS (Drone) Competition is a perfect example of how education and industry can work together to create compelling new opportunities for our students in some of the nation’s fastest-growing fields,” said SkillsUSA Executive Director Chelle Travis. “SkillsUSA is proud and excited to add this competition to the more than 100 skilled competitions we’ve already created in cooperation with our varied industry partners.”

The drone industry partners involved view the competition as an opportunity to expose students to a host of new and evolving career opportunities in aviation, engineering, transportation, energy and utilities, agriculture, surveying, real estate, and entertainment, among others.

“Our Commercial sUAS (Drone) Competition engages students in exciting real-life scenarios while teaching them the hands-on technology, maintenance, and piloting skills needed to successfully pursue a career in sUAS,” said MINDS-i Robotics President Mike Marzetta.

In addition to honing academic skills such as engineering design, technical literacy, problem-solving, and systems thinking, the drone competition evaluates students in four specific tasks: flight skills, maintenance troubleshooting and repair, Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) knowledge, and autonomous flight. Safety is emphasized throughout the event and competition.



CrossFlight Sky Solutions Vice President Justin Robinson noted that his company’s aim is to formally educate students so they can one day become FAA-certified drone pilots. “CrossFlight is excited to be a part of the first truly cross-disciplinary commercial drone competition in the world and to share in this opportunity with students from across the United States. CrossFlight has a mission of safe integration of drone technology into the aviation community and feels that what better way to achieve this than to start with the future workforce.”

Guidelines for the drone competition, available on the SkillsUSA website, explain official rules and point participants to a free learning management system where progress on the four primary tasks can be tracked. Students’ proficiency in the task areas will be evaluated by judges using a provided rubric during official competitions at the local, state, and national levels.

To express interest in competing, visit <https://my.crossflightkysolutions.com/2021skillsusa/> or email skillsdrones@pitsco.com.

Click to Tweet: New drones competition from @SkillsUSA can be conducted in person or virtually in 2021. Industry and education leaders @CrossFlightsky, MINDS-i Robotics, @pitscoed, and @UFWertheim make it all possible. <https://my.crossflightkysolutions.com/2021skillsusa/>

Links to SkillsUSA components:

- Competition guidelines: <https://www.skillsusa.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/CommercialsUASDroneCompetition.pdf>
- Competition overview video: <https://video.pitsco.com/default.aspx?vID=943>
- Drone (Pitsco): <https://www.pitsco.com/Tello-EDU-Drone-5-Pack>
- Drone (MINDS-i): <https://mindsieducation.com/collections/competition-gear>
- Field elements (Pitsco): <https://www.pitsco.com/Drone-Industry-Field-Elements-Kit>
- Arena (Pitsco): <https://www.pitsco.com/Drone-Arena-10-x-20> and <https://www.pitsco.com/Drone-Arena-20-x-20>
- FAA testing supplemental: <https://www.pitsco.com/FAA-Testing-Supplemental>

Learn more about the collaborating partners:

- CrossFlight Sky Solutions: <https://crossflightkysolutions.com/>
- MINDS-i Robotics: <https://mindsieducation.com/>
- Pitsco Education: <https://www.pitsco.com/>
- University of Florida’s Herbert Wertheim College of Engineering: <https://www.eng.ufl.edu/>

#