DRONE

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Among those invited are state Sen. Terri Bryant, a Republican from Murphysboro who is showing strong interest in the concept, Rose said. A bipartisan panel discussion is planned, she said.

A growing cross section of businesses, organizations and government are showing interest, she said.

A key goal of Aerial Sync's nonprofit's board is to bridge the gap for those in need of good-paying jobs. The drone industry promises just that, Rose said. Education is the key.

"This is not just about flying a drone. It touches on every aspect. Flying a drone is one thing but understanding the math, the science, data collection, the business aspect and the geospatial – all of this plays a part."

Ninety percent of current drone pilots are self-taught, she said, pointing out the growing need for professional certification.

She envisions a school where every student would graduate with an LLC, a drone pilot license under part 107 of FAA certification, and a small commercial drone. Anyone wanting to sell aerial photography, monitor their farming operations with a drone, or do any other business-related work with a drone must have a Part 107 license.

"They will understand they are future leaders of the America's 'fourth industrial revolution'," Rose said. "With artificial intelligence, 3-D printing, and drone technology crossing every industry, this is something we must be prepared for, or we'll fall behind and lose jobs to other states."

The idea is to quickly raise the necessary capital. The primary source of founds would be grants and tuition estimated at $18,500 for a year of intensive training.

"Once we have 100 students, we will be sustainable, and that's just the beginning," she said.

Rose said she has been working with many local experts, among them at Southern Illinois University Edwardsville and Madison County & Employment and Training.

Drones have a "cool factor" that she believes will attract students from outside Illinois.

The first phase of the Aerial Sync plan is to find a location and set up temporary classrooms while the organization continues pursuing grant funding for brick and mortar. The board could also decide on leasing an existing building.

"Then we will begin building this campus," she said.

A second phase would be working with companies to train their management. Also in that second phase is the potential for an FAA-recognized recertification program.

By the 26th, she expects the location will be known, as will the budget and the amount of money the organization hopes to raise.

Attracting students should not be a problem, she said, as people are already contacting her.

Rose was doing drone consulting when she enlisted WashU grad students to help with research more than five years ago.

The studies focused on how the technology was being applied in farming, construction, trucking, energy and other sectors in neighboring states and elsewhere. She now has an extensive database with which to work.

"This has been exploding the last two years," she said. "At first it was 'no interest, no interest,' and now there are drone taxis flying around out there. This industry is in its infancy still."

The industry "is poised to grow $21 billion between 2021 and 2025, according to MarketWatch," she said.

She said she has worked to keep the FAA informed throughout the process.

"We want the FAA to be very involved in our school. We want to make sure that everything we do works within the FAA regulations."

Anyone wanting more information on Aerial Sync Education can contact (314) 369-5547 or carla@aerialsync.com.

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