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Ribbon Cutting Marks Launch of Energy-Centric UAS Center for Critical Infrastructure Funded by the Virginia Tobacco Region Revitalization Commission

Multi-site Virginia initiative links energy innovation, unmanned systems, and workforce development

Dinwiddie, Va., December 8, 2025 – The Commonwealth Center for Advanced Logistics Systems (CCALS) announced today the establishment of an Energy-Centric Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS) Center for Critical Infrastructure, made possible through a $490,000 grant from the Virginia Tobacco Region Revitalization Commission's Energy Ingenuity Fund. The announcement was made during a ribbon-cutting ceremony at Richard Bland College, one of four Virginia locations that will host Center operations.

The Center will serve as a national resource for the development, testing, and deployment of energy-resilient unmanned systems and dual-use technologies. With multi-site operations at Richard Bland College (Petersburg) and three general aviation airports in Dinwiddie County, Danville, and Wise County (Lonesome Pine), the Center will establish a distributed innovation network that advances Virginia's strategic aviation priorities including efficiency, safety, and sustainability across the energy, logistics, and aviation sectors.

"The Tobacco Region Revitalization Commission is proud to invest in initiatives that foster regional innovation while strengthening Virginia's position as a national leader in energy and unmanned systems," said TRRC Chairman, Delegate Will Morefield. "The Commission's Energy Ingenuity Fund was created to drive forward-looking projects like this that connect technology, workforce, and infrastructure development. The Commission has a history of being ahead of the curve and investing in projects that pay dividends for our Southern and Southwest Virginia communities down the road, like our early investment in business ready sites across the footprint and our commitment to workforce training programs. This investment is another example of our commitment to proactively building the economy of the future, ensuring our region thrives for generations to come."

"As Vice Chair of the Tobacco Commission and as the State Senator representing this region, I am proud to see this investment from the Commission aimed to fuel game changing innovation and economic growth right here in Southside Virginia," said Senator Lashrecse D. Aird. "This new Energy-Centric Unmanned Aircraft Center will strengthen our local workforce, attract new business opportunities, and further cement Virginia's leadership in advanced manufacturing and

aviation technology. This kind of project means more good jobs and new opportunities for families and businesses across our region today and for years to come -- the exact priorities that are central to my work both on the Commission and as this region's representative in the General Assembly."

The Energy-Centric UAS Center for Critical Infrastructure will accelerate technologies that improve operational efficiency, workforce safety, and energy reliability - particularly for those working in and supporting the energy industry. Planned capabilities include:

• Hydrogen-hybrid UAS flight testing and infrastructure deployment to advance high-endurance propulsion systems.
• Secure communications and RF/ISAC evaluation environments for spectrum awareness and cyber-physical protection.
• Hydrogen-Hydrogen Hybrid enabled, FAA-compliant Beyond Visual Line of Sight (BVLOS) testing, training, and evaluation.
• Workforce training aligned with FAA, NIST, and emerging industry standards.
• Custom program and curriculum development.
• Technology demonstration projects and dual-use prototyping for public- and private-sector partners.
• Advanced manufacturing and drone validation programs to strengthen domestic supply chains.
• Advanced Air Mobility (AAM) modeling, testing, deployment, and regulatory alignment to support future integration of sustainable air systems.

“This award reflects the growing leadership of CCALS at the convergence of energy, aviation, and logistics.” Said Dr. Jeffrey Fox, CCALS Board Chairman. By championing initiatives that advance Virginia priorities and serve both commercial and national interests, CCALS is building strategic resources that support the Commonwealth’s competitiveness and the nation’s energy resilience.”

"**The Department of Aviation** is proud to collaborate on this initiative, which showcases how innovative, sustainable aviation technologies can be tested and deployed across Virginia’s diverse airport network," said Greg Campbell, Director.

"**The Virginia Clean Energy Innovation Bank** is proud to support CCALS in launching the Energy-Centric UAS Center for Critical Infrastructure. This forward-looking initiative is another example of our commitment to attracting innovative energy-related businesses to Virginia,” said Virginia Department of Energy Director Glenn Davis. “These efforts will enhance the efficiency and safety of our energy workforce and resources in the future."

“We are proud to support the launch of this new Center in Virginia, which exemplifies the type of forward-leaning innovation our teams strive to champion every day. This partnership directly advances our core pillars of accelerating technology, building safer and more resilient communities, and developing the skilled workforce needed to sustain the unmanned systems industry for decades to come,” said Kimberly Benson, Administrator, UAS Center at SBD.
The Center is led by CCALS and supported by a multi-institutional team including the Virginia Department of Aviation, the Virginia Tobacco Region Revitalization Commission, the Virginia Department of Energy, the UAS Center at SBD, George Mason University’s Rapid Prototyping Research Center, Richard Bland College, and general aviation airports in Wise County, Danville, and Dinwiddie County.

About the Commonwealth Center for Advanced Logistics Systems (CCALS)

The Commonwealth Center for Advanced Logistics Systems (CCALS) is a non-profit research and innovation organization tackling the most pressing challenges in logistics, energy, critical infrastructure, and emerging dual-use technologies. Founded through a collaboration of five Virginia universities and leading Virginia entities—The University of Virginia, Virginia Commonwealth University, Virginia State University, Longwood University, Old Dominion University, the Port of Virginia, the Virginia Chamber of Commerce, and the Virginia Economic Development Partnership (VEDP)—CCALS bridges academic insight with real-world impact. Learn more at www.ccals.com

About the Virginia Tobacco Region Revitalization Commission (TRRC)

The Virginia Tobacco Region Revitalization Commission is a 28-member body created by the General Assembly to promote economic growth and development in formerly tobacco-dependent communities across South and Southwest Virginia. The Commission’s Energy Ingenuity Fund supports projects that accelerate energy innovation, workforce readiness, and industrial competitiveness. Learn more at www.revitalizeva.org

About the Virginia Department of Aviation (DOAV)

The Virginia Department of Aviation supports and develops the Commonwealth’s system of airports, aviation education, and unmanned systems integration to ensure safe, secure, and sustainable air transportation for Virginia’s citizens and businesses. Learn more at www.doav.virginia.gov

About the Virginia Department of Energy (VAEnergy)

Virginia Energy is the state agency charged with advancing Virginia's energy, mining, and mineral policies and initiatives. Our mission is to ensure the Commonwealth has a secure, abundant, reliable, affordable, and increasingly clean energy future. The Virginia Clean Energy Innovation Bank (VCEIB) is tasked with accelerating the deployment of clean power generation and energy infrastructure across the Commonwealth. VCEIB mobilizes public and private capital to address critical financing gaps in the clean power generation and infrastructure sectors, supporting the goals outlined in Virginia's All-American, All-of-the-Above Energy Plan. www.energy.virginia.gov

About the UAS Center at SBD

The UAS Center at SBD, located at San Bernardino International Airport, supports advanced technology development, UAS flight testing, training, and evaluation across complex airport, urban, and wildland environments. Through its Norton Test Range (an FAA-designated UAS test range) and multi-agency partnerships, the Center accelerates innovation that strengthens workforce readiness, safety, and operational capability for public- and private-sector entities and operators nationwide. www.uascentersbd.com

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