



ANOTHER BIG INVESTMENT IN DEVELOPING SAN ANTONIO'S TECH TALENT

KELLY HERITAGE FOUNDATION GRANTS \$150,000 TO DEE HOWARD FOUNDATION TO PREPARE AREA STUDENTS FOR FUTURES IN DRONE TECHNOLOGY AND ADVANCED AIR MOBILITY.

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SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS – Beginning this fall, more than 200 area middle and high schoolers will be well on their way to future careers in drone technology.

As part of a two-year curriculum, students will learn assembly and repair, engineering and design, programming and operation of drone units. They will also learn about laws and ethics surrounding drone use and earn initial pilot certificates, as well as Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) licenses required for operating certain commercial units.



The effort marks the latest initiative by the locally-based Dee Howard Foundation, established in 2016 to preserve and honor San Antonio's long history of aviation and aerospace innovation while developing new learning programs in partnership with area school districts to empower the next generation of local industry talent.

The Kelly Heritage Foundation — a nonprofit affiliated with Port San Antonio that honors Kelly Air Force Base's legacy and Tech Port's future by raising and distributing funds to support educational and career opportunities —

has stepped up to fund the new drone program with a gift of \$150,000. This provides a strong start as the Dee Howard Foundation seeks to raise a total of \$400,000 by the beginning of the 2023-24 school year to support the curricula across multiple school districts.

Drone technology is rapidly expanding across many sectors with strong growth expected in related careers, including engineers, maintainers, programmers and pilots. Sectors that are quickly adopting drones as part of their operations include architecture, agriculture, energy, urban planning, real estate and law enforcement. And major retailers foresee a near future where drone technology will be a commonplace part of supply chains, including delivery of packages to consumers' homes.

A foundation in drone technology also prepares students to participate in upcoming advanced air mobility (AAM) and urban air mobility (UAM) initiatives — the development of aviation systems to transport cargo and people between places previously not served or underserved by aviation at the local, regional and intraregional levels.

Emerging AAM/UAM technologies include electric vertical takeoff and landing (eVTOL) vehicles that are currently being pioneered by several organizations.

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Conceptual rendering of planned vertiport at Port San Antonio.

Port San Antonio recently outlined its own plan to develop a vertiport facility to host eVTOLs and support research and development, and eventual commercialization, of the new transportation systems.

"We're thrilled that the Kelly Heritage Foundation immediately raised its hand to help us kick off an exciting new program this fall," said Dee Howard Foundation Executive Director Christina Martinez. "Students will be empowered with skills that are already very much in demand and expected to grow significantly. This will provide them with a solid

foundation to continue in related educational and future career paths."

"The Dee Howard Foundation has done exemplary work inspiring, preparing and connecting young people to futures in aerospace and an array of related industries thriving right here in our community," said Port San Antonio President and CEO Jim Perschbach, who is also a board member for the Kelly Heritage Foundation. "We're proud to be making an investment that helps broaden the reach of a great initiative and that has a lasting impact in the lives of students. This effort also adds to our community's ability to play a leading role in an exciting tech frontier."

The gift comes days after the completion of another major initiative supported by the Kelly Heritage Foundation. In late April, area students benefitted directly from an investment of more than \$200,000 by the organization, secured through more than two dozen donors. That effort — "Build Your Future" — was organized by the San Antonio Museum of Science and Technology (SAMSAT) and trained 100 area middle and high schoolers to build a high-end personal computer.

Students spent a Saturday afternoon at the arena at the Boeing Center at Tech Port assembling their systems with the support of an array of IT professionals, including cybersecurity experts from the 16th Air Force, which has headquarters operations at the Port. At the conclusion of the program, students got to keep the computers they built — valued at around \$3,000 each.



Among the many sectors that are quickly adopting drone technology are farming (above) — where units can be deployed to quickly monitor crop health and growth — and construction (below), where engineers, architects and other personnel can monitor progress and get a detailed view of parts of a project that are difficult or dangerous to reach. (Photo credits: Shutterstock)



Students and mentors take part in "Build Your Future" computer assembly day in April 2023 (Photo credit: Mark Sobhani/Port San Antonio)