



NEWS RELEASE

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CITRIS and DART Share Results of Workforce Skills Study in Monterey Bay Region

CITRIS and the Banatao Institute at UC Santa Cruz, through their CITRIS Initiative for Drone Education and Research (CIDER), and the Monterey Bay Drone Automation and Robotics Technology (DART) Initiative have released the results of a Workforce Skills Demand Study. Conducted within Santa Cruz, Monterey, and San Benito Counties, the study assesses the current and future workforce skills demand for the use of drones in agriculture, infrastructure inspection, construction monitoring, and related fields.

The study was undertaken through funding from The James Irvine Foundation with a goal to examine the current demand for drone operation skills in the tri-county area, and project demand 1-5 years in the future. Also central to the study was detailing the skills gap that needs to be addressed through training and development to meet the demands of area employers and the needs of workers. Working with local community groups, the project focused on identifying quality employment opportunities using this rapidly advancing technology to benefit the local workforce and help employers prepare for the ongoing shift to drone applications.

Findings from the study highlighted key growth opportunities in the areas of infrastructure inspection; agricultural applications, particularly aerial spraying; and related opportunities in the emerging regional aerospace industry. Results also emphasized the need for technical skills, including data analysis, equipment operation and piloting skills, along with strong demand for non-technical essential workplace skills. The study outlines clear opportunities for regional educational partners, including Hartnell College, Digital Nest, Rancho Cielo and ALBA, to prepare students for this new workforce demand.

“Drone technology is quickly revolutionizing key industries at the heart of the tri-county region. This study helps shed light on the emerging job opportunities around the technology as well as on the hard and soft job skills employers are looking for and which workers can train to meet. We’re looking forward to further using these insights to focus training programs on creating opportunities, particularly for community members who have been underrepresented in tech fields,” said Becca Fenwick, Director, CIDER UCSC.

“The Emerging Technology Skills Demand Study presents a contemporary snapshot of key skills regional employers across a range of sectors are looking for as emerging technology like drones and robotics gain market share,” says Josh Metz, Monterey Bay DART Executive Director. “This study builds on our long collaboration with CITRIS CIDER and contributes another strategic information asset to our collective efforts to inform workforce system evolution and support industry and community transitions into the future of work.”

The full study is available at both the [DART](#) and [CIDER](#) websites. Both organizations welcome feedback and questions at either cider@ucsc.edu or info@mbdart.org.

About UCSC and CIDER:

The University of California at Santa Cruz (UCSC) is a renowned public research university located in Santa Cruz, California. UCSC is committed to academic excellence, innovative research, and community engagement, fostering an environment of intellectual curiosity and critical thinking. The CITRIS Initiative for Drone Education and Research (CIDER) is the first of its kind in the UC system, housed with the The Center for Information Technology Research in the Interest of Society and the Banatao Institute or CITRIS for short, which is a multi-campus initiative focused on research and emerging technologies across the UC Berkeley, Davis, Merced and Santa Cruz campuses. The UCSC CITRIS Initiative for Drone Education and Research (CIDER) offers educational training and research support for the development and use of drone technology across all academic disciplines and many industry sectors, as well as workforce development expertise. Students benefit from career-enhancing experiential learning opportunities, hands-on field research, flight time, and FAA licensure.

About Monterey Bay DART:

Monterey Bay Drone Automation and Robotics Technology (DART) is a leading organization dedicated to promoting the safe and responsible integration of drones and other emerging technologies into various industries. DART fosters collaboration among private sector companies, government agencies, and educational institutions to build community workforce programs, critical resources and infrastructure towards thriving innovation ecosystems and impactful economic development outcomes.