

Florida Tech launches first student-built rocket from Cape Canaveral

June 29 2006

Amid victory yells, a Florida Institute of Technology student-developed and built Pathfinder vehicle launched yesterday at 2:30 p.m. from Launch Complex 47 at the Cape Canaveral Air Force Station. The rocket, dubbed "Panther 1" for the Florida Tech mascot, followed a perfect parabolic path to splash down in the Atlantic as planned. The team, with assistance from Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University (ERAU), achieved the first student launch from the site.

The students are involved in Florida's Space Pioneer Cup. This is a university competition to launch a student-designed and built rocket into space and a way to involve students in the "real-world" rocket launch process.

"Future plans for the Pioneer Cup include additional Florida universities in the competition and possibly growth into a national event," said Glenn Vera, deputy director at the Florida Space Authority (FSA). The competition is co-sponsored by the Florida Space Authority and the U.S. Air Force 45th Space Wing with funding from the Florida Department of Education. Expertise and launch support assistance is also provided by the Florida Space Grant Consortium and the Florida Space Institute.

"We are excited to be involved in developing the next generation of rocket scientists and technicians," said Capt. Winston Scott, executive director of the FSA and a Florida Tech faculty member.

The Florida Tech and ERAU students have developed and flown

numerous test vehicles since last year's competition announcement. The universities have also reached out to include high school and middle school students in their projects through tours, program briefings and participation in rocket design reviews.

The FSA is working closely with 45th Space Wing Range Safety to develop a Pioneer Cup rulebook that details the critical design parameters and information, which student teams must supply in order to obtain acceptance for flight on the Eastern Range.

Source: Florida Institute of Technology

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