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Cal Poly Aviation Design Team Flies High in Wichita

SAN LUIS OBISPO – On April 16-18, in the skies over Cessna Field in Wichita, KS, an aircraft designed and built by Cal Poly students flew and carried a variety of specified payloads, earning fifth place in the 14th annual Cessna/Raytheon Missile Systems Design/Build/Fly (DBF) Competition.

“This was a very impressive showing in an extremely competitive event,” noted Cal Poly DBF faculty adviser Rob McDonald.

The nationwide contest drew more than 600 students and faculty and consisted of a written report, technical inspection and flyoff. Sixty-nine teams participated, 62 of which made at least one flight attempt, with and without payloads of mixed-size softballs and bats.

“The main drivers in the flight score were reducing system weight, flight time, and loading time,” explained team president Brian Borra. “We experimented with various composite and core material layups to find the optimal strength-to-weight construction material; the manufacturing and construction was invaluable experience that isn’t taught in the ordinary curriculum.

“Our team worked hard and often throughout the school year; steady progress led to a sound design, well prepared team and well tested airframe. If I had to pick a particular part of the project, testing the airframe and system concepts is where our team stood out.”

The Cal Poly DBF club was sponsored by local companies, including AeroMech Engineering and Bob Smith Industries, along with Kansas-based HitecRCD, Castle Creations, and Neu Motors.

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