



## **Rocketplane Kistler Announces the “Bridges” Competition to Stimulate Microgravity Research**

OKLAHOMA CITY, OK: AUGUST 7, 2006: Rocketplane Kistler’s (RpK) K-1 launch vehicle and XP Spaceplane will bring low-cost microgravity research opportunities to America’s science and research communities. Rocketplane Kistler announces the creation of its “Bridges Competition” to stimulate innovative use of the microgravity environment and to ensure that the United States reaps the unique benefits of these two launch systems.

The university-level Bridges Competition is designed to build bridges between the research community and industry, with a focus on microgravity projects that have near-term commercial applications. The Bridges Competition is inspired by, and fully synergistic with, the PACE Act (Protecting America’s Competitive Edge) recently passed by Congress.

RpK recruited the AERO Institute of Houston, Texas, to facilitate this competition. AERO, a National Space Grant Foundation institution, will solicit proposals from graduate students at the 550 Space Grant colleges and universities around the nation. Additionally, AERO will solicit proposals from entrepreneurial firms and non-traditional industries.

The Bridges Competition is a three-tiered selection process with cash awards at the first two tiers and the finalist(s) to receive payload space on RpK orbital or sub-orbital launches. AERO expects dozens of semi-finalists at the first stage. The competition will be monitored by a distinguished panel of judges from the scientific and business communities.

AERO will announce a major corporate sponsor to underwrite portions of the competition when arrangements are in place. AERO Houston is headed by Morgan A. Hill, principal in Morgan Hill Interests, a real estate and investment firm, and Kenneth J. Cox, Ph.D., a 40-year veteran of NASA’s digital flight systems.

Rocketplane Kistler’s K-1 launch system is a finalist in NASA’s Commercial Orbital Transportation Services (COTS) competition. The K-1’s hardware is 75% complete, and is scheduled for first flight in 2008. Rocketplane Kistler’s XP Spaceplane is 50% complete, and scheduled for first flight in late 2008.

For information regarding the Bridges Competition, or to be placed on a mailing list for updates and applications, contact Morgan Hill at 713-355-1100, or via email: [morgan\\_hill@sbcglobal.net](mailto:morgan_hill@sbcglobal.net).

### *About Rocketplane Kistler*

Rocketplane Kistler (RpK) brings together two industry-leading makers and future operators of the next-generation orbital and suborbital space transportation vehicles. RpK was formed when Kistler Aerospace Corporation and Rocketplane Limited, Inc. were brought under common ownership. RpK markets the services of the fully reusable, two stage Kistler K-1 orbital launch vehicle and the fully reusable, suborbital Rocketplane XP Spaceplane, both of which will be first to fly in their respective markets. Visit the websites for more information: [www.rocketplane.com](http://www.rocketplane.com), [www.kistleraerospace.com](http://www.kistleraerospace.com).