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STUDENTS ROCKETING INTO HISTORY

A group of students from Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University, Fla., are spending their spring break traveling 800 miles in an attempt to make history. They have planned, designed, fabricated, tested and are now preparing to stage and launch their own suborbital rocket.

Launching from NASA's Wallops Flight Facility, Wallops Island, Va., Icarus is projected to reach an altitude of 40 miles. If all performs nominally, the 16-foot tall rocket will set an altitude record for a university built vehicle.

Icarus is scheduled for launch between 6 and 9 a.m. EDT on Thursday, March 22, with March 23 as a backup date.

"The Embry-Riddle student designed rocket is the most complex student project we have supported to date," said Phil Eberspacher, chief of NASA's Sounding Rockets Program Office. "NASA subjects these student rockets to the same scrutiny as a NASA sounding rocket to ensure the flight can be conducted in a safe manner."

The 15-pound payload on the rocket contains accelerometers, spin sensors and pressure sensors. In addition, the students will use global positioning satellite (GPS) systems to determine the location of the rocket during flight.

Project Icarus was founded in the fall of 2003 by the Embry-Riddle Future Space Explorers' and Developers' Society. Icarus is the society's flagship vehicle. The purpose of the mission is to combine classroom knowledge with hands-on experience in rocketry and engineering.

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“The Embry-Riddle students have shown a lot of professionalism in the development of their student rocket. That professionalism, mixed with 80% rocket science and a little bit of luck, should lead to a safe and successful flight,” Eberspacher said.

The Embry Riddle project is one several university student design activities being supported by the NASA Wallops Flight Facility. These projects develop critical skills and capabilities needed to support science research and the Vision for Space Exploration.

For more information about the NASA Wallops Flight Facility on the Internet, visit
<http://www.nasa.gov/centers/wallops/home/>

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