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# Seven students propose new flying lesson idea

Joe Blow, who has never set foot in an airplane cockpit and veteran of only two commercial flights, straps into the bucket seat of a two-place aircraft and starts a pre-flight check.

Moments later, a rail-mounted ground truck eases into motion, a nylon rope tightens and the plane moves forward.

Speed builds, the canard-type glider rises silently into the air and the instructor turns the control stick of the 20-foot-long aircraft over to the fledgling pilot.

Far ahead over the circular rail, another plane dips its wing into a gentle turn. The side perspective reveals a rather unusual airplane configuration.

A slender nose section carrying the stabilizer nine feet ahead of the wing tapers back to the side-by-side seating cockpit. The plane's 41-foot wing expanse is connected to the fuselage on the very back section. Twin rudders bracket an area in which a pusher-configuration engine could be mounted.

This scene is painted in a technical proposal by seven Texas A&M aerospace engineering seniors. The idea and design answers Dr. Charles A. Rodenberger's "proposal request" for a recreational airpark at which people can learn to fly. Very safely and at low cost.

Proposals tendered by two other seven-member groups of students in the aerospace vehicle design course take more standard approaches to low-cost, high safety factor planes that could be flown in an airpark or sold as certificated aircraft.

The airpark concept proposals called for Rodenberger take into consideration that disposable income has been growing constantly in the last decade and money spent on recreation has been growing even faster.

"Income expenditures related to boating has doubled since 1966," the professor points out. "During the same period, general aviation sales have increased by only one half."

An innovation approach such as an airpark would help establish aviation as a recreation and increase the number of persons who participate in flying.

"The aircraft would be designed so that it would be completely safe to fly with a minimum amount of instruction. Being restricted to the airpark boundary, it would not require licensing," Rodenberger added. "The theory is that people would learn to fly in a safe vehicle in the airpark and thus be encouraged to enter general aviation."

Built-in safety is the main factor of the "backward flying" craft designed by a student-team headed by Charles W. Dickson III of Houston.

They designed the canard so that it stalls—or loses lift—before the wing stalls as the plane approaches a nose-up attitude.

"But instead of stalling completely, the canard is designed to gently lower the nose of the aircraft to regain a safe flight speed," the students' report states. The action of the canard

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