



August 2026

To Interested University Students & Faculty:

The Request for Proposal for the 44th Annual (2026-2027) Vertical Flight Society's (VFS) Student Design Competition, sponsored by **Bell**, is now posted at [VFS SDC](#). Bell and VFS encourages universities from around the world – *except for countries or persons prohibited by the United States Government* - to form teams and take part in this exciting vertical flight endeavor.

The design competition sponsorship rotates between Airbus, Leonardo Helicopters, The Boeing Company, Bell, Sikorsky a Lockheed Martin Co., and DEVCOM Army Research Laboratory.

This year's Student Design Competition is "*VTOL Aircraft Supporting South America Offshore Oil & Gas Production*". Bell challenges the engineering academic community to design a vertical takeoff and landing (VTOL) aircraft to support oil and gas production off the South American coast.

Bell will provide the funds for the awards through the Society and final submissions are judged in three (3) categories:

Undergraduate category:

- 1st place: \$2,000
- 2nd place: \$1,200
- 3rd place: \$750

Graduate category:

- 1st place: \$2,500
- 2nd place: \$1,800
- 3rd place: \$1,000

Best first time entrant for eligible university teams (refer to the RFP):

- \$500 (Undergraduate)
- \$750 (Graduate)

Important deadline dates:

- Letter of Intent (LOI) to participate and first round Request for Information (RFI) **Oct. 26, 2026**
- Bell response to first round of RFIs **Nov. 20, 2027**.
- Round two Request for Information **February 1, 2027**
- Bell responses to second round of RFIs **Feb. 22, 2027**
- Final Proposals **May 31, 2027**

The Society recommends that you read the white paper [Student Design Competition on Judging](#). Please address all correspondence to jmgibbs@vtol.org or through my contact information below.

Good Luck,

Julie M. Gibbs
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