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UNH Media Relations

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Media Relations

March 3, 2014

UNH Hosts District FIRST Robotics Competition March 6 – 7, 2014

DURHAM, N.H. – The University of New Hampshire’s Lundholm Gymnasium will buzz with balls and goals March 6 and 7, 2014, but not the usual basketballs and hoops. Instead, robots powered by teenage controllers will take on each other in the District FIRST Robotics Competition. UNH will host more than 1,000 high school students from nearly 40 team from New Hampshire, Maine, Massachusetts, Connecticut, and Rhode Island in the competition that’s been called a “varsity sport for the mind.”

[FIRST \(For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology\) Robotics Competition](#) pits teams of high school students, mentored by professional engineers, against each other for a shot at the national championships and millions of scholarship dollars. Each team has six weeks to build a robot that will meet the challenge of the competition’s game from a common kit of parts. This year’s game is called Aerial Assist ([watch it in action](#)).

“The students who participate in the FIRST Robotics Competition are not only building robots, they are building character, self-respect, and relationships with their peers,” said Dean Kamen, president of Manchester’s DEKA Research & Development, who founded FIRST in 1989. “Winning the game is fun, but the importance of FIRST is that you’ll get much more out of it than you put in, and it’s going to change the rest of your life.”

At the UNH competition, which is free and open to the public, high school teams will benefit from the mentoring, volunteer support, and inspiration of UNH faculty and students, including some former FIRST competitors. Representatives from some of UNH’s most impressive STEM-related student projects, like the [LunaCats](#), the [Precision Racing Team](#), and [SeaPerch](#) underwater robotics, will be on hand to meet and mentor the FIRST competitors.

“This is a great opportunity to promote STEM education and to feed the STEM pipeline,” says Brad Kinsey, professor of mechanical engineering and a veteran FIRST judge. “When he started FIRST, Dean Kamen said he wanted kids to get as excited about technology as they do about sports. That resonates with the mechanical engineer in me.” Kinsey will serve as judge co-advisor for the UNH event, helping the many judges make decisions on the awards, which are both technical and non-technical.

In addition to Kinsey, other UNH faculty will assist as mentors, judges, and referees. UNH’s [College of Engineering and Physical Sciences](#), which is coordinating much of the competition, will host a reception and campus tours in collaboration with the [Office of Admissions](#).

A week prior to the UNH event, Feb. 28 and March 1, 2014, Nashua High School South hosts the state’s other regional championship.

Accomplished inventor [Dean Kamen](#) founded [FIRST](#)[®] (For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology) in 1989 to inspire an appreciation of science and technology in young people. Based in Manchester, N.H., *FIRST* designs accessible, innovative programs to build self-confidence, knowledge, and life skills while motivating young people to pursue opportunities in science, technology, and engineering. With support from over 200 of the Fortune 500 companies and more than \$19 million in college scholarships, the not-for-profit organization hosts the [FIRST[®] Robotics Competition](#) (FRC[®]) for students in Grades 9-12; [FIRST[®] Tech Challenge](#) (FTC[®]) for Grades 7-12; [FIRST[®] LEGO[®] League](#) (FLL[®]) for Grades 4-8; and [Junior FIRST[®] LEGO[®]](#)

[League](#) (Jr.FLL®) for Grades K-3. [Gracious Professionalism](#)® is a way of doing things that encourages high-quality work, emphasizes the value of others, and respects individuals and the community. To learn more about *FIRST*, go to www.usfirst.org.

The [University of New Hampshire](#), founded in 1866, is a world-class public research university with the feel of a New England liberal arts college. A land, sea, and space-grant university, UNH is the state's flagship public institution, enrolling 12,300 undergraduate and 2,200 graduate students.

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