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March 9, 2015

UNH Hosts District FIRST Robotics Competition March 21-22, 2015



FIRST participants benefit from mentoring by UNH faculty and students, some of them former FIRST competitors. Photograph by Mike Ross, University of New Hampshire.

DURHAM, N.H. – Robots (and their teenage controllers) will invade the University of New Hampshire's Whittemore Center March 21 and 22, 2015, when UNH hosts the 2015 District FIRST Robotics Competition for the second year. Almost 2,000 high school students from nearly 40 teams from New Hampshire, Maine, Massachusetts and Connecticut will participate 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 [Recycle RushSM](#) ([watch](#) it in action).

"FIRST is more than robots. The robots are a vehicle for students to learn important life skills," says Dean Kamen, president of Manchester's DEKA Research & Development and FIRST Founder. "Kids often come in not knowing what to expect – of the program nor of themselves. They leave, even after the first season, with a vision, with confidence, and with a sense that they can create their own future."

Participants – human and robot – bring game-day frenzy to the FIRST competition, as teams of robots square off in a new challenge each year. This year's [Recycle RushSM](#) is a recycling-themed game played by two teams of three robots each. Robots score points by stacking totes on scoring platforms, capping those stacks with recycling containers, and properly disposing of pool noodles, representing litter. In keeping with the recycling theme of the game, all game pieces used are reusable or recyclable by teams in their home locations or by FIRST at the end of the season.

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](#), [ET-NavSwarm](#) and the UNH chapter of the [National Society of](#)

[Black Engineers](#), will be on hand to meet and mentor the FIRST competitors, as will representatives from UNH's renowned [InterOperability Lab](#).

"We're pleased to welcome these FIRST 'athletes of the mind' back to UNH and to the Whittemore Center," says Samuel Mukasa, dean of UNH's [College of Engineering and Physical Sciences](#), which is coordinating much of the competition. "I'm proud of the many CEPS students and faculty who, along with our industry partners, have volunteered to support this next generation of STEM leaders."

CEPS faculty will assist at the competition as mentors, judges and referees, and participating teams will have access to expertise in CEPS machine shops in Kingsbury Hall for on-the-spot repairs. UNH's [Office of Admissions](#) will host tours for participants.

Accomplished inventor Dean Kamen founded FIRST® 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. 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.

Photographs available to download:

<http://www.unh.edu/news/releases/2015/03/images/firstoverview-3269.jpg>

The University of New Hampshire will host the District FIRST Robotics Competition March 21-22, 2015, at the Whittemore Center.

Photograph by Mike Ross, University of New Hampshire.

<http://www.unh.edu/news/releases/2015/03/images/firstreferee-5827.jpg>

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Photograph by Mike Ross, University of New Hampshire.

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