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Faculty Highlight Second Annual Robots in the Roses Research Fair

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The Naval Postgraduate School (NPS) hosted its second annual Robots in the Roses Research Fair in the grounds of the rose garden on campus, May 10. The event, sponsored by the Consortium for Robotics and Unmanned Systems Education and Research (CRUSER), is intended to offer the CRUSER community of interest (COI) an opportunity to share research and educational opportunities in robotics and unmanned systems fields.

“Robots in the Roses is really the opportunity to exchange ideas across all aspects of the employment of unmanned systems including sea, air and land,” said Senior Lecturer and Program Director of Maritime Defense and Security Research Programs, retired Navy Capt. Jeffrey E. Kline. “We invite the students and their families so they can see exactly what they are working on. We also invite members of the community to attract new students to do research in these areas.”

COI groups from around the area set up displays and showcased some of their work. There were systems present from all aspects of robotics research, from an entertaining Carmel High School basketball-shooting robot that amused the crowd with its hoop skills, to the latest military unmanned systems being developed at NPS such as the Wave Glider, a remotely piloted vehicle that can be used in ocean monitoring and research.

“We have a motto in CRUSER,” said Assistant Professor in the System Engineering Department, Dr. Timothy Chung, about the importance of holding these events. “Conversation leads to collaboration, and collaboration leads to Innovation,’ and that’s what we want from these interactions.”

The fair served as the conclusion to a series of concurrent NPS and CRUSER events held in the area. The CRUSER Technology Continuum integrated within the 10th International Mine Warfare Technical Symposium, which was held May 7-10.

Also, following his Secretary of the Navy Guest Lecture (SGL), Under Secretary of the Navy, the Honorable Robert O. Work, served as guest of honor and gave an opening speech to everyone attending. Work, who charted the CRUSER program, said that the research on unmanned systems was vitally important to the future of the navy.

Work likened the significance of unmanned systems to the introduction of guided missiles into the Navy’s arsenal. He said that in the same way that guided missiles changed the way the Navy fought not so long ago, unmanned systems would completely revolutionize the way the Navy fought in the future.

Since this was a family event, kids attending the fair were able to interact with all these systems and ask questions about them. As a grand finale, they also got the opportunity to enter in a rubber duck race held in the newly remodeled reflecting pool at the Roman Plunge. Dozens of rubber ducks were tossed in the water to see which one would make it across the pool first and claim a prize.

Chung noted that these events not only bring together researchers, faculty and students with members of local industry and agencies, but are also opportunities for younger students to get inspired by what they see. In recent years, NPS and CRUSER have become increasingly involved in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) educational initiatives to promote interest in these fields in a younger generation of students.

“The thing about kids is that they love to be inspired,” said Chung. “Robotics has been wonderful at being able to inspire kids to study these STEM fields. We want to show them that there are lots of things that they can learn and do if they study these fields.”