

FIRST Robotics: The Most Influential Experience of my High School Career

Throughout my high school career, I have been involved in many activities that will have a bearing on my future. Of all of the programs offered at Hauppauge High School, no program has been more influential on me than the FIRST Robotics program. This program has not only personally given me values which I will continue to follow for the rest of my life, but has also shown me a career path that I wish to follow.

During my four years in High School, I have been very involved in the FIRST program. Each year, I have put in at least 100 hours into the preparations of our robot. As a result of my diligent work in both ninth and tenth grade, I was awarded the honor of driving our robot in the regional and national competitions in my sophomore year. Continuing with my desire to help the team out as much as possible, I became the Vice President of the club in my junior year and am now, more importantly, the head student engineer of the club. With the help of a robust robot that we designed in eleventh grade, our team made it further into the playoffs in the national competition than we ever had. For my senior year, I hope to improve upon the building success that the team has shown and help to lead us to a national championship.

The FIRST Robotics program has not only taught me how to apply what math and science I know, but has also taught me many different values that will continue to be important to me throughout life. Through building the robot, much of what I learned in school began to show real-world applications. For example, we cannot design the robot to be too top-heavy. Due to torque, the robot could fall over with the easiest push because the force on top would be too great for the robot to overcome. The program has

also taught me the value of teamwork, especially while working on a large project such as this. Whether it be building the robot, scouting other teams, recruiting, programming, or even just helping to fund the team, each and every person on the team serves a purpose. Everyone also helps to make sure that every job is done right, with people like drivers helping out the scouts in between our matches. The team is nothing when we are just a scattered group of teens, yet it is something great when teamwork is employed. I know that the usage of teamwork is essential to becoming a great engineer, and I am thankful that FIRST has helped me to realize this.

FIRST Robotics gave me first-hand experience in the field of engineering and showed me that it is what I want to do for the rest of my life. The feeling of accomplishment felt when our mechanized creation can finally drive and perform tasks is unrivaled. Through engineering, I actually feel like I am doing something constructive with my knowledge. Whether it was building Legos when I was young or building models, I have always loved to design and build things throughout my life. FIRST showed me a field in which I could apply this fascination and actually do something important with it, all the while enjoying the process.

FIRST Robotics has forever changed my life. Through FIRST, I discovered the engineer within me. I will always be thankful to the program and its founder, Dean Kamen, because the program has helped me to find a career that I enjoy and I can see myself pursuing for the rest of my life.