



**For Immediate Release**  
**March 16, 2017**

**STEM Stars: High School Students Showcase Engineering Excellence in *FIRST® STEAMworks<sup>SM</sup>*  
*Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute Set to Host Fourth Annual New York Tech Valley Regional FIRST® Robotics Competition March 16-18***

Troy, N.Y. — This year, 36 teams of high school students from the Capital Region, New York state, South Carolina, Canada, India, and Turkey, along with hundreds of teachers, industry mentors, parents, and 3,000 pounds of metal, gears, and electronics, will test their skills in a unique competition where math, science, and engineering excellence are celebrated. [Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute](#) will once again host the [New York Tech Valley Regional](#) competition, March 16-18, on the Rensselaer campus in the East Campus Athletic Village.

The New York Tech Valley Regional FIRST Robotics Competition combines the excitement of sports with the rigors of science and technology. In its fourth year, the [New York Tech Valley FIRST®](#) Regional Robotics Competition is the ultimate Sport for the Mind™ where imagination and innovation come together. Working with adult mentors, students had six weeks to design, build, program, and test their robots to meet the season's engineering challenge. By combining the excitement of sport and beauty of art with the rigors of science and technology, teams of high school students are challenged to design a team "brand," hone teamwork skills, and build and program robots to perform tasks against a field of competitors, according to the organization.

The 2017 competition, [FIRST STEAMworks<sup>SM</sup>](#), invites two adventure clubs from an era in which technology relied on steam power to prepare their airships for the ultimate long-distance race. Each three-team alliance scores points and prepares to take flight by building steam pressure, gathering materials to start the rotors, and boarding robots onto their airships. The adventurer club with the highest score at the end of the match is the best prepared for the race and wins.

The competition schedule for March 16-18 includes:

- **Thursday, March 16:** Robot Inspections: Students calibrate controls and electronics for optimizing robot performance, 8:00 to 11:00 a.m. Practice matches will take place from noon to 6:00 p.m.
- **Friday, March 17:** Opening ceremony at 8:15 a.m. with brief remarks from several sponsors. Qualifying matches will immediately follow through 5:45 p.m.; Awards ceremony, 5:45 to 6:45 p.m.
- **Saturday, March 18:** Opening ceremony begins at 9 a.m., with remarks from sponsors and state/local elected officials. Qualifying matches will take place until noon. Final rounds, 1:30 to 4:30 p.m. Awards ceremony and closing sponsors remarks from 4:45 to 6 p.m.

This year, participating teams have an opportunity to earn a spot at the FIRST® Championship to be held April 19-22 at the George R. Brown Convention Center in Houston, Texas or April 26-29 at the Edward Jones Dome in St. Louis, Missouri. The FIRST Robotics Competition anticipates that 3,336 teams in the U.S. and 24 countries worldwide will be competing in 55 regional events and 80 district events.

"The FIRST Robotics Competition isn't just about the robots," said [Paul Schoch](#), associate professor in the Rensselaer [Electrical, Computer, and Systems Engineering](#) department, and director of the university's [Center for Initiatives in PreCollege Education \(CIPCE\)](#), who is serving as a co-chair along with Mary Burke.

The FIRST Robotics Competition New York Tech Valley Regional sponsors and volunteers come from some of the most highly regarded organizations, including Bechtel, GE, National Grid, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, GlobalFoundries, ASML, KLA-Tencor, M+W Group, Mattson Technology Inc., Turner Construction Company, AMAT, Lam Research, SCREEN Semiconductor Solutions, Wonik IPS, Edwards Vacuum, Applied Materials, nrastructure, and PDF Solutions.

Sponsors provide resources including time and talent from professional mentors, services, equipment, financial contributions, and volunteers.

For more information about the New York Tech Valley Regional Robotics Competition, visit: <http://techvalleyfirst.org/>.

**Media Parking:** Media may park in the upper level parking, East Campus Athletic Village D lot, provided media credentials are displayed.

### About *FIRST*<sup>®</sup>

Accomplished inventor [Dean Kamen](#) founded *FIRST*<sup>®</sup> (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 \$30 million in college scholarships, the not-for-profit organization hosts the *FIRST*<sup>®</sup> Robotics Competition for students in Grades 9-12; *FIRST*<sup>®</sup> Tech Challenge for Grades 7-12; *FIRST*<sup>®</sup> LEGO<sup>®</sup> League for Grades 4-8; and *FIRST*<sup>®</sup> LEGO<sup>®</sup> League Jr. for Grades K-4. *Gracious Professionalism*<sup>®</sup> 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.firstinspires.org](http://www.firstinspires.org).

### About Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute

Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, founded in 1824, is America's first technological research university. For nearly 200 years, Rensselaer has been defining the scientific and technological advances of our world. Rensselaer faculty and alumni represent 85 members of the National Academy of Engineering, 17 members of the National Academy of Sciences, 25 members of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, 8 members of the National Academy of Medicine, 8 members of the National Academy of Inventors, and 5 members of the National Inventors Hall of Fame, as well as 6 National Medal of Technology winners, 5 National Medal of Science winners, and a Nobel Prize winner in Physics. With 7,000 students and nearly 100,000 living alumni, Rensselaer is addressing the global challenges facing the 21st century—to change lives, to advance society, and to change the world. To learn more, go to [www.rpi.edu](http://www.rpi.edu).

### CONTACTS

#### *FIRST*

Ana Martinez

Mobile: (917) 361-2257

Email: [anayz@firstinspires.org](mailto:anayz@firstinspires.org)

Jessica Otitigbe | News and Editorial Services| Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute

Office: (518) 276-6050 | Mobile: (518) 466-3907 | Email: [otitij@rpi.edu](mailto:otitij@rpi.edu)

Follow Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute on Twitter at: <http://www.twitter.com/RPInews>

For more story ideas, visit the Rensselaer research and discovery blog at: <http://approach.rpi.edu>

