



For Immediate Release

## MEDIA ADVISORY

### Local Students Explore the Challenges of Long-Distance Space Travel as they compete in the New York Tech Valley Regional 2019 *FIRST*<sup>®</sup> Robotics Competition hosted by Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute

**DATE:** March 7-9, 2019

**TIME:** Three-Day Competition ([See Schedule here](#))

**PLACE:** Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, East Campus Athletic Village (ECAV)

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Hundreds of high school students will find themselves immersed in a challenging simulation in space as they compete for a slot in the *FIRST* World Championship and more than \$80 million in scholarship funding when Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute once again hosts the three-day New York Tech Valley *FIRST* Robotics Competition starting on March 7, 2019.

“Rensselaer values STEM education and inspiration in STEM. That is what we’re celebrating with this competition,” said Paul Schoch, director of Rensselaer’s Center for Initiatives in Pre-College Education, and a member of the New York Tech Valley *FIRST* planning committee.

Founded by famed inventor Dean Kamen, *FIRST* is a national organization that designs accessible, innovative programs to build self-confidence, knowledge, and life skills while motivating young people to pursue opportunities in science, technology, and engineering. In the annual *FIRST* Robotics Competition, teams of high school students must build a robot in response to a specific challenge.

The 2019 *FIRST* Robotics Competition game, [FIRST DESTINATION: Deep Space<sup>SM</sup>](#), finds teams collecting samples on Planet Primus. Two competing alliances will combat unpredictable terrain and weather patterns, making remote robot operation essential to their mission on the planet. With only two minutes and thirty seconds until liftoff, the alliances must gather as many cargo pods as possible and prepare their spaceships for departure before the next sandstorm arrives.

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 strong competitors.

“The *FIRST* Robotics Competition provides an opportunity for our students to apply what they are learning in the classroom to real-world scenarios and to work with professionals from STEM fields. This helps make the coursework meaningful to students and allows students to explore future career opportunities,” said Diane Irwin, K-12 Coordinator of Science for the Ballston Spa Central School District, and a member of the New York Tech Valley *FIRST* planning committee. “We have seen students that participate in the *FIRST* Robotics program grow in their confidence, leadership, teamwork, communication, and problem-solving skills.”

The event will bring together student teams from across the Capital Region, New York State, New Jersey, Canada, and Brazil. In its sixth year, the [New York Tech Valley \*FIRST\*<sup>®</sup>](#) Regional Robotics Competition is the ultimate Sport for the Mind™ where imagination and innovation come together.

“The open-ended, competition-based experience provides students with rich opportunities to work together to solve problems and communicate their solutions to one another at competition,” said Rose Barra, Integrated Business, FACS & Technology Academic Administrator for the Shenendehowa Central School District, and a member of the New York Tech Valley *FIRST* planning committee.

The competition schedule for March 7-9 includes:

- **Thursday, March 7:** 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 8:** Opening ceremony at 8:30 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 9:** Opening ceremony begins at 8:30 a.m., with remarks from sponsors and state/local elected officials. Qualifying matches will take place until noon. Final rounds will run from 1:30 to 4:30 p.m. Awards and closing ceremony will take place from 4:45 to 6 p.m.

**FIRST Robotics** Competition New York Tech Valley Regional is sponsored by:

**Lead Co-Sponsors:** ASML, GE, GlobalFoundries, KLA, National Grid, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute

**Captains of Innovation:** Applied Materials Foundation, AMD, Lam Research

**Friends of the Future:** Edwards Vacuum, Infrastructure, Regeneron Pharmaceuticals Inc., SCREEN Semiconductor Solutions, the Pickett Family Foundation

**Contributors:** Accumetra, TEL US, and Westerwood Global LLC. For more information about the New York Tech Valley Regional, 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®**

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 \$80 million in college scholarships, the not-for-profit organization hosts the [FIRST® Robotics Competition](#) for students in Grades 9-12; [FIRST® Tech Challenge](#) for Grades 7-12; [FIRST® LEGO® League](#) for Grades 4-8; and [FIRST® LEGO® League Jr.](#) for Grades K-4. [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.firstinspires.org](http://www.firstinspires.org)

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