



CENTER FOR MATHEMATICS
AND SCIENCE EDUCATION
THE UNIVERSITY OF MISSISSIPPI



FTC Special Report

Mississippi Prepares for Robot Invasion

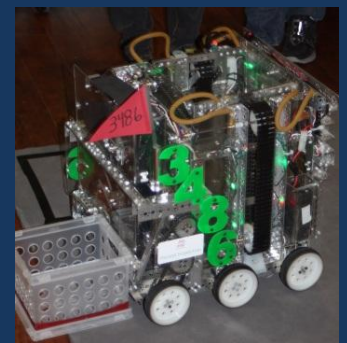
Oxford, MS – September 8, 2012 – Almost 150 people, including over 100 students in grades 7-12, attended the first-ever Mississippi *FIRST*® Tech Challenge (FTC) Season Kickoff Event held at the University of Mississippi's Center for Mathematics and Science Education (CMSE). FTC is a middle and high school level robotics program sponsored by *FIRST* (For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology), a New Hampshire-based non-profit organization. This year's challenge, called Ring It Up!SM, will challenge the teams to place plastic rings onto pegs on a center rack. Teams will also be challenged to detect special "weighted" rings to earn a bonus points as well as raise their alliance partner to a maximum of 24 inches to earn even more points. Competitions are part sports event, part rock concert, part ballet, and all fun. *FIRST* programs bill themselves as the "hardest fun anyone can have." As he welcomed the crowd to the CMSE's newly renovated space at the Jackson Avenue Center, Dr. John O'Haver, Director said, "As an engineering professor, educator, and the parent of two high school students, I am very excited about being part of expanding the impact of FTC robotics in Mississippi. The kids do real engineering. They improve their ability to think, reason, apply math and science, and program as part of an effective team. And through it all, they have a LOT of fun. What more can you ask for?!"

FTC is a new middle and high school robotics competition for Mississippi. The CMSE is excited about bringing it to the students of the state. The attendees at the Kickoff got a sneak peak of the game prior to it being released internationally from *FIRST* and immediately asked questions of one of the Game Designers and FTC Program Manager for the CMSE, Mannie Lowe. Mr. Lowe and the CMSE are tasked with helping start and support 50 rookie teams throughout Mississippi – 15 of them attended the Kickoff event. New FTC teams from schools, community organizations, after-school programs, or neighborhoods, will receive their initial robot kit, a laptop computer, training and support throughout the season. At the end of the season, the teacher/coach will receive a \$250 stipend from the CMSE if they participate in the Championship Tournament to be held in early March.

In attendance at the Kickoff were Dr. Daniel Jones, University of Mississippi Chancellor; Dr. Morris Stocks, Provost; Dr. Maurice Eftink, Associate Provost, and Dr. Alex Cheng, Dean of the School of Engineering. Also in attendance were University Benefactors Mr. James Barksdale and Mr. Marty Clapton. All were very impressed with the turnout and the enthusiasm that the students exhibited throughout the day. Dr. Eftink spoke to the students at the start of the program about the importance of STEM education and CMSE programs like FTC giving them the opportunity to go far in school and in life.

Prior to the release of the game, all attendees rotated through three mini training sessions that discussed the following:

- What to expect at an FTC Tournament (led by Teresa and Harrison Lanum of FTC Team #3486 – Techno Warriors Advanced)
- What is *FIRST* and FTC (led by Mannie Lowe and Mike Long, assistant coach of FTC Team #3486)
- How to prepare for Judging (led by Mississippi FTC Judge Advisor Jeff Lanum)



FTC

FIRST® Tech Challenge





Students also saw videos from *FIRST* founder and inventor Dean Kamen and Dr. Woodie Flowers, Professor Emeritus at Massachusetts Institute of Technology and *FIRST* co-founder about the importance of *FIRST* not only to the students in attendance, but also to colleges/universities and businesses in general. Said Kamen, "Companies looking for the next generation of scientists and engineers need look no further than *FIRST* to see where the talent lies." All of *FIRST*'s programs emphasize Gracious Professionalism® and Coopertition® where teams compete like crazy on the playing field, but help each other do better off the field. It is better and more satisfying to win a match 100-95 than it is 100-10.

After the Q&A sessions several groups of students toured the CMSE's new acquired portable Planetarium and learned about the program that will be starting in the schools in October. The teams also immediately began to develop strategy and robot design to compete in this year's game.

About *FIRST*®

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 three out of every five Fortune 500 companies and nearly \$15 million in college scholarships, the not-for-profit organization hosts the *FIRST*® Tech Challenge (FTC®) as well as the *FIRST*® Robotics Competition (FRC®) for high-school students, *FIRST*® LEGO® League (FLL®) for 9 to 14-year-olds, (9 to 16-year-olds outside the U.S., Canada, and Mexico) and Junior *FIRST*® LEGO® League (Jr.FLL®) for 6 to 9-year-olds. Gracious Professionalism, a *FIRST* Core Value, 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.usfirst.org.

About CMSE

The Center for Mathematics and Science Education (CMSE) at the University of Mississippi seeks to improve mathematics and science education in Mississippi by fostering interaction between academic and K-12 education communities, supporting the implementation of research-based methods in the classroom and promoting interest in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) fields. To achieve our mission, CMSE works closely with students, current teachers and administrators, and those involved in preparing teachers for the future. CMSE offers a variety of programs and opportunities for all who are involved in mathematics and/or science education including professional development sessions for teachers and administrators, summer camps for mathematics and engineering, and other competitions including the Real World Design Challenge for high school students and MATHCOUNTS for middle school students. To learn more about the CMSE, please visit <http://cmse.olemiss.edu>.

