

FIRST

FIRST (For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology) is a not for profit 501 (c) (3) organization founded in 1989 to interest and inspire students in mathematics and science. **FIRST** was founded by Dean Kamen, President of DEKA Research and Development Corporation.

Compared with students from other industrial countries, students in the United States do not rank highly in math and science. There has also been a decline in enrollment of young adults entering science and engineering programs at our universities. These trends, if not reversed, will eventually lead to a loss of leadership in advanced technology fields.

FIRST is taking a leadership role in reversing this trend by stimulating interest in science, math, and technology in our nation's youth through programs such as the **FIRST** Robotics Competition.

***FIRST* Vision:**

"To transform our culture by creating a world where science and technology are celebrated and where young people dream of becoming science and technology heroes."

Mission Statement:

Our mission is to inspire young people to be science and technology leaders, by engaging them in exciting mentor-based programs that build science, engineering and technology skills, that inspire innovation, and that foster well-rounded life capabilities including self-confidence, communication, and leadership.

Gracious Professionalism, A *FIRST* Credo

Dr. Woodie Flowers, *FIRST* National Advisor, asks and provides his view regarding the question, "Why do *FIRST* folks talk so much about that phrase?"

*"Obviously it would not make sense to endorse 'asinine professionalism' or 'gracious incompetence.' It is, however, completely consistent with the *FIRST* spirit to encourage doing high quality well informed work in a manner that leaves everyone feeling valued. Gracious professionalism seems to be a good descriptor for part of the ethos of *FIRST*. It is part of what makes *FIRST* different and wonderful.*

Gracious professionalism has purposefully been left somewhat undefined because it can and should mean different things to each of us. We can, however, outline some of its possible meanings. Gracious attitudes and behaviors are win-win. Gracious folks respect others and let that respect show in their action. Professionals possess special knowledge and are trusted by society to use that knowledge responsibly. Thus, gracious professionals make a valued contribution in a manner pleasing to others and to themselves.

*In *FIRST*, one of the most straightforward interpretations of gracious professionalism is that we learn and compete like crazy, but treat one another with respect and kindness in the process. We try to avoid leaving anyone feeling like they are losers. No chest thumping barbarian tough talk, but no sticky sweet platitudes either. Knowledge, pride and empathy comfortably blended.*

*Understanding that gracious professionalism works is not rocket science. It is, however, missing in too many activities. At *FIRST* it is alive and well. Please help us take care of it.*

In the long run, gracious professionalism is part of pursuing a meaningful life. If one becomes a professional, and uses knowledge in a gracious manner, everyone wins. One can add to society and enjoy the satisfaction of knowing that you have acted with integrity and sensitivity. That's good stuff!"

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For more information on *FIRST*, please see our website at <http://www.usfirst.org>

The 2012 *FIRST* Robotics Competition schedule will be posted on the *FIRST* website at: <http://www.usfirst.org/roboticsprograms/frc/regional-events> when available



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FIRST® Senior Mentor Program 2011-2012

Demand for FIRST® has increased so rapidly and organically that FIRST® continues to face a growing challenge to recruit and support new volunteers. The FIRST® Senior Mentor program has been a critical addition to FIRST's volunteer resource management infrastructure. FIRST® Senior Mentors (FSM's or SMs) are a group of highly skilled and talented, technical and non-technical individuals whose main focus is to identify, recruit, and support teams, mentors and coaches in all FIRST® programs. FIRST® Senior Mentors are recruited locally at the recommendation of their Regional Directors because of their previous relationships with FIRST® Programs and their general understanding of the culture of the organization. Most, if not all FSMs have had existing relations with FIRST® as Team Mentors, Coaches or event volunteers. Working in a part-time capacity, (10-15 hours per week), and through constant communication and collaboration with each Program Lead; their area Regional Director, Regional/Planning/Operational Committees, Program Partners, and VISTA Volunteers(if applicable); they recruit and support FIRST® Team Mentors, Coaches, Teams, and Event Volunteers. FIRST® Senior Mentors provide support and services for all FIRST® Programs including; the FIRST® Robotics Competition (FRC), the FIRST® Tech Challenge (FTC), the FIRST® LEGO League (FLL), and the Junior FIRST® LEGO League (Jr. FLL) programs.

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**FIRST AmeriCorps*VISTA Program 2011-2012**

The Memorandum of Agreement governing the *FIRST*® AmeriCorps VISTA Program allows *FIRST*® to recruit up to five VISTA members who can be located in any one of twelve states from Maine to MD. Potential VISTA members apply on line through the AmeriCorps website and can choose from a variety of programs across the US. At *FIRST*®, we review applicants who chose our program looking for experiences and skills that best enable them to meet the goals we've set for the program. The AmeriCorps/*FIRST*®, VISTA mission is to create and expand the vision of *FIRST*® by working in areas that have been deemed underserved: low-income individuals and communities, areas where there are no teams, defining and locating rural areas and the potential for *FIRST*® to penetrate these communities.

Nationally, our VISTAs are managed by the *FIRST*® Senior Mentor/AmeriCorps*VISTA Programs Coordinator in Manchester. Locally, each VISTA has a Site Supervisor with whom they work closely on a daily schedule. The *FIRST*® Regional Directors fill the role of the Site Supervisor in each area where a VISTA is located. In addition, through the development of their Individual Service Plan (ISP,) the VISTAs are tasked to collaborate with other Key Volunteers in their area. In an effort to create a plan of action at the outset of their service, the VISTAs complete the ISP, identifying cross- program needs and initiatives under the direction of Program Leads including the Regional Director and the FLL and FTC Area/Operational Partners. The ISP is updated on a semi-annual basis. And, in some instances where possible, the VISTA works collaboratively with a *FIRST*® Senior Mentor, should there be one in their service-area.

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