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CONTACT: Cheryl Walsh
FIRST, Marketing/Media
603-666-3906, X460
cwalsh@usfirst.org

FIRST[®] and MIT Announce Strategic Alliance to Inspire K-12 Students about Science and Technology Education and Careers

Pilot Program in Five U.S. Regions Inspires MIT Alumni to Join as FIRST Coaches, Mentors, Volunteers

MANCHESTER, N.H., and CAMBRIDGE, Mass., December 14, 2009 — [FIRST[®]](http://www.usfirst.org) (For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology), a not-for-profit organization founded by inventor Dean Kamen to inspire young people's interest and participation in science and technology and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) today announced a global strategic alliance and a U.S. pilot program to promote the importance of science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) in K-12 education. Specifically, *FIRST* and the MIT Alumni Association will marshal resources to collaborate and promote K-12 STEM education through after-school *FIRST* robotics programs.

Many education experts say the next generation of youth in the United States is not prepared to take on the challenges of the 21st century since as many as 80 percent of jobs created in the next decade are expected to require math and science skills. A National Science Foundation study found that many students say that they would rather clean their room, eat their vegetables, go to the dentist, or take out the garbage rather than learn math or science.* *FIRST* and MIT have consistently demonstrated the power of robotics programs to unleash the creative spirit in our young people.

The Alumni Association will leverage MIT alumni and their broader communities around the world beginning in the pilot year with those in Eastern Massachusetts, New York City, Northern California, Central Ohio and North Georgia, who are committed to act as *FIRST* coaches, mentors, volunteers and sponsors. The pilot will also serve as a model for future MIT/*FIRST* programs in the U.S. and abroad that aim to expand the size and effectiveness their volunteer initiatives across other regions and organizations

"This is a classical win-win!" said Dr. Woodie Flowers, alumnus and faculty emeritus of MIT and *FIRST* Executive National Advisory Board Chairman. "It simply makes sense that we would have an alliance between the world's most famous science and technology university and the world's most effective and fastest growing organization devoted to inspiring young people to seek the knowledge and professional attitudes they need to solve the world's problems."

"The MIT Alumni Association is in a unique position to further the shared mission, vision and values of *FIRST*," said Judith M. Cole, executive vice president and chief executive officer of the MIT Alumni Association. "This synergistic relationship with *FIRST* and its dedication to attracting and inspiring students with an interest in science and technology clearly puts the intellectual energy of the MIT community to work where it is needed the most — igniting the minds of young people."

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FIRST will assist the MIT Clubs and the MIT Enterprise Forum chapters across the country with resources such as instructional materials, guidelines for starting robotics teams, and marketing support. MIT staff and volunteers across the nation will be matched to *FIRST* partners and will support events in their geographic areas to begin local collaborations.

“Having a strategic channel that allows MIT graduates across the country to act as coaches and mentors for our students gives *FIRST* tremendous volunteer resources,” said Paul R. Gudonis, president of *FIRST*. “As a leader in science and technology, MIT and its graduates are in an enviable position to give *FIRST* students the kind of expert guidance and instruction that can ultimately solve many of society’s major challenges.”

About the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) and the MIT Alumni Association

The Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) is a world leader in science and technology education and research. MIT, located in Cambridge, MA, has five schools and one college, containing 32 academic departments. MIT is a private land-grant university as well as a sea-grant and space-grant university.

MIT alumni are members of one of the world’s most diverse, talented, and invigorating communities. The Alumni Association is a gateway to this community, more than 120 thousand strong. The Association provides services and resources that strengthen alumni ties to MIT and to each other across every stage of life and around the globe.

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 the support of many of the world’s most well-known companies, the not-for-profit organization hosts the *FIRST*[®] Robotics Competition (FRC) and *FIRST*[®] Tech Challenge (FTC) for high-school students, *FIRST*[®] LEGO[®] League (FLL) for children 9-14 years old, and Junior *FIRST*[®] LEGO[®] League (Jr.FLL) for 6 to 9 year-olds. To learn more about *FIRST*, go to www.usfirst.org.

*Source: National Science Foundation and 2005 Raytheon Corporation Survey

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