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# NATIONAL INSTRUMENTS™ NAMED STRATEGIC PARTNER by *FIRST*™ ORGANIZATION

*Powerful industry-standard technology and multi-million dollar donation provides hands-on learning to next generation of scientists and engineers*

**MANCHESTER, NH and AUSTIN, TX April 14, 2009** – *FIRST*™ (For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology), an organization founded by inventor Dean Kamen to inspire young people's interest and participation in science and technology, today announced National Instruments (NI) (NASDAQ: NATI) of Austin, Texas, as a Strategic Partner to the organization, the highest sponsorship level currently granted by the organization, through the year 2013. NI has given millions of dollars to *FIRST* through its cumulative support of annual in-kind donations, resources, technology, training, and employee volunteerism, and is one of the largest US contributors to all programs in the *FIRST* competitions. Starting in 2009, *FIRST* Robotics Competition teams will use the NI CompactRIO™ controller, powered by National Instruments LabVIEW™ graphical system design software, to create advanced robotics.

With the goal of creating a school-to-career pipeline through which young people are inspired to explore opportunities in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM), NI shares the *FIRST* philosophy that today's culture can be positively transformed by inspiring young people, their schools, and their communities to appreciate the need for STEM education in 21st century education.

"NI has been, and continues to be, a fantastic supporter of *FIRST*, the *FIRST* Robotics Competition (FRC), the *FIRST* Tech Challenge (FTC) and *FIRST* LEGO® League (FLL)," said *FIRST* founder, Dean Kamen. "They have opened up their technology, their resources, their training, their suppliers, and their employees to help us achieve our vision. As a Strategic Partner, NI will greatly assist us in realizing a world where science and technology are celebrated and young people dream of becoming science and technology leaders."

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NI has supported *FIRST* and its after-school programs for 11 years, joining with The LEGO Group to collaborate on the development of the programming software for the original LEGO MINDSTORMS® for Schools product in 1998. In 2006, the *FIRST* LEGO League adopted the MINDSTORMS NXT software provided by NI. To this day, *FIRST*, The LEGO Group and NI remain committed to inspiring creativity and innovation in students.

Through the collaboration between NI, LEGO and *FIRST,* an estimated 200,000 students in *FIRST* competitions worldwide gain hands-on experience with a robotics software continuum that starts with LEGO MINDSTORMS NXT-G and continues through NI LabVIEW. Based on technology widely used by professional engineers, this helps students gain skills they can use in college and their careers.

"We must inspire today's students to be tomorrow's innovators," said Ray Almgren, vice president of academic relations at National Instruments. "NI chooses to invest in *FIRST* because we know the program offers a dynamic, hands-on experience with a proven ability to spark student interest in engineering and science. Through our collaboration with *FIRST*, we provide students with the latest technology, powered by NI LabVIEW, which is used by engineers and scientists designing products and solutions to challenging and complex real-world problems."

**Growing Up with *FIRST***

Seventeen years ago, the initial *FIRST* Robotics Competition took place with 28 teams in a high school gym in New Hampshire. With the unwavering support of corporate sponsors and a global community of teacher, mentor and parent volunteers, *FIRST's* four robotics programs now serve more than 190,000 children around the world. Children are eligible to enter a program at age six; but can enter at any point afterwards and may participate through to high-school graduation.

- The ***FIRST* Robotics Competition** (FRC) combines the excitement of sport with science and technology to create a unique varsity sport for the mind. FRC helps high-school students discover the rewarding and engaging process of innovation and engineering by challenging them to work with professional mentors to design and build a robot, and compete in high-intensity events that measure the effectiveness of each robot, the power of team strategy and collaboration, and the determination of students.
- The ***FIRST* Tech Challenge** (FTC) provides a challenging mid-level robotics competition for high-school-age students who want a hands-on learning experience to develop and hone their skills and abilities in science, technology, engineering and math.
- Celebrating its tenth anniversary, the ***FIRST* LEGO® League** (FLL) asks kids, 9 to 14, to use the LEGO MINDSTORMS NXT robotics platform to solve real-world engineering challenges facing today's scientists. More than 13,700 teams of ten children participated in the 2008 Climate Connections Challenge.

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- **Junior *FIRST* LEGO® League** (Jr.FLL) introduces kids, 6 to 9, to the wonders of science and technology with a challenge based on the same real-world theme as FLL. FLL and Jr.FLL are a result of a partnership between *FIRST* and The LEGO Group. Jr.FLL is an exciting opportunity for the youngest budding scientists. It encompasses the core concepts of all *FIRST* programs to inspire, excite, and introduce kids to the wonders of science, technology, and engineering.

**About National Instruments in Academia**

National Instruments is committed to enhancing engineering and science education worldwide by providing educators and students with powerful graphical system design software and modular hardware to connect the curriculum with the real world. Professors and students benefit from powerful, professional tools such as NI LabVIEW graphical development software, which helps students visualize and implement engineering concepts. The integration of LabVIEW in the classroom creates an effective, dynamic learning environment – from LEGO® MINDSTORMS® NXT in primary schools to research laboratories in universities. For more information about NI academic products, curriculum resources and discounts, visit www.ni.com/academic.

**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.



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