Alec Fujii

Vex Robotics Essay Challenge

This challenge is to write a short essay on what exactly VEX Robotics means to you. Tell the judges your own story of your involvement on a competition team, in a classroom, or as a hobbyist working with VEX. Perhaps VEX robotics has made you rethink your career plans, or made you want to study engineering in college, or helped you understand physics better. Maybe you have a friend or family member who learned something valuable from their VEX experience. However VEX robotics has improved your understanding, inspired you to try something you didn’t know you could do, or even changed the course of your education – we want to hear about it.

I was introduced to the world of VEX for the first time when I entered high school. As I was walking towards the gym for orientation, I saw a classroom door slightly ajar. I peeped in to find one of the most interesting places in the school that I have ever encountered: a small workshop with an organized wall full of tools and on the other side, a shelf with a myriad of boxes filled with different materials. As intriguing as everything was, my eyes darted towards the three robots centered on the bench.

As I gazed and touched these magnificent mechanical pieces, I heard the door close behind me. I turned around to come face to face with an older student. Freaking out, I started to apologize for touching the robots when I noticed that the older boy did not seem to be angry – in fact, he gave me the remote and asked if I wanted to try driving his robot around the room. As I controlled it, I suddenly knew at that moment this was something I wanted to do.

My first year on the robotics team, I was put into a team run by the student I had met. With no experience with robotics, I was assigned to build a Claw-bot and a Square-bot from scratch to learn the basics of building and programming. Simultaneously, I was taking the physics course and started to apply what I learned to my robots like making the arm of my Claw-bot stronger by using a 1:5 gear ratio instead of a 1:1. Finally, when my team felt my foundation to robotics was strong enough, I was finally able to help work on the competition robot.

Working on this robot really opened my eyes in terms of what I want to do in the future. Since finding something that I am really interested in and enjoy doing, I am focusing on developing and honing my skills. I am currently taking a math course that is a year ahead of my grade and multiple science courses including an honor class in physics. On top of this, I am learning different computer languages on my own.

I have always known that I wanted to go into the science field, for I have always been strong in this area and Math; however, until VEX, I never knew what specifically. As an athlete at my school, it never touched my mind that tinkering at something for hours while sitting down could be so interesting. However, it has shaped my life in terms of what I want to pursue in the future. By having this experience, I now want to do something that requires both types of engineering: mechanical and computer.