

The Journey with the DKU VEX Team

Grade Level: VEX U

Participated students: Ziqi, Yuchen

Team number: DKU

Location: No. 8 Duke Avenue, Kunshan, Jiangsu, China

Story of Ziqi

The journey with the DKU vex team is incredible. Though, honestly, I haven't experienced much in the team; the things that already passed can be more than I could cherish.

All this began when I first enter DKU. One day when browsing the Wechat messages, I accidentally found the recruitment poster for the DKU VEX team. I looked through the poster bearing a curious heart, then all the memories about machine building began to flood in.

When I was little, one of my favorite TV programs was *I Love Inventing* from CCTV-10. I remember the inventors created so many useful and wonderful machines which could make our lives much more convenient. Not all of the inventors were professional, some of them were even students or workers. However, they invested their energy and time to create such ingenious machines, whom I couldn't help showing my appreciation and respect to, or in other words, who were my STEM role models. I cannot even recall their names, but what I shall never forget is their hard work and intelligence which still incentivize me when building our own robots.

Acting on a sudden impulse, I immediately signed up for the team recruitment and was lucky enough to get my dream position – builder. I remember the day when our new members were first trained, I was so astonished to find that girls made up a large proportion of our whole team. They were either excelling at programming or building or even driving. It was then that I realized robotics or engineering are never a patent of men; women are also strong enough to be dominant. Just as the word 'Girl Powered' indicates, we are stepping into a more inclusive world where girls can be equally competitive. So, if you ask me what is the first thing I think of when seeing the word 'Girl Powered', I will definitely answer our DKU VEX Team, a truly

diverse and inclusive team.

What is equally special about our team is that we all come from various majors, but we are all crazy about robots, and everyone heads towards the big goal together. Among our teammates, some of them are from the major of Public Policy, some of them are from Applied Mathematics, and some of them are even from Political Economy.



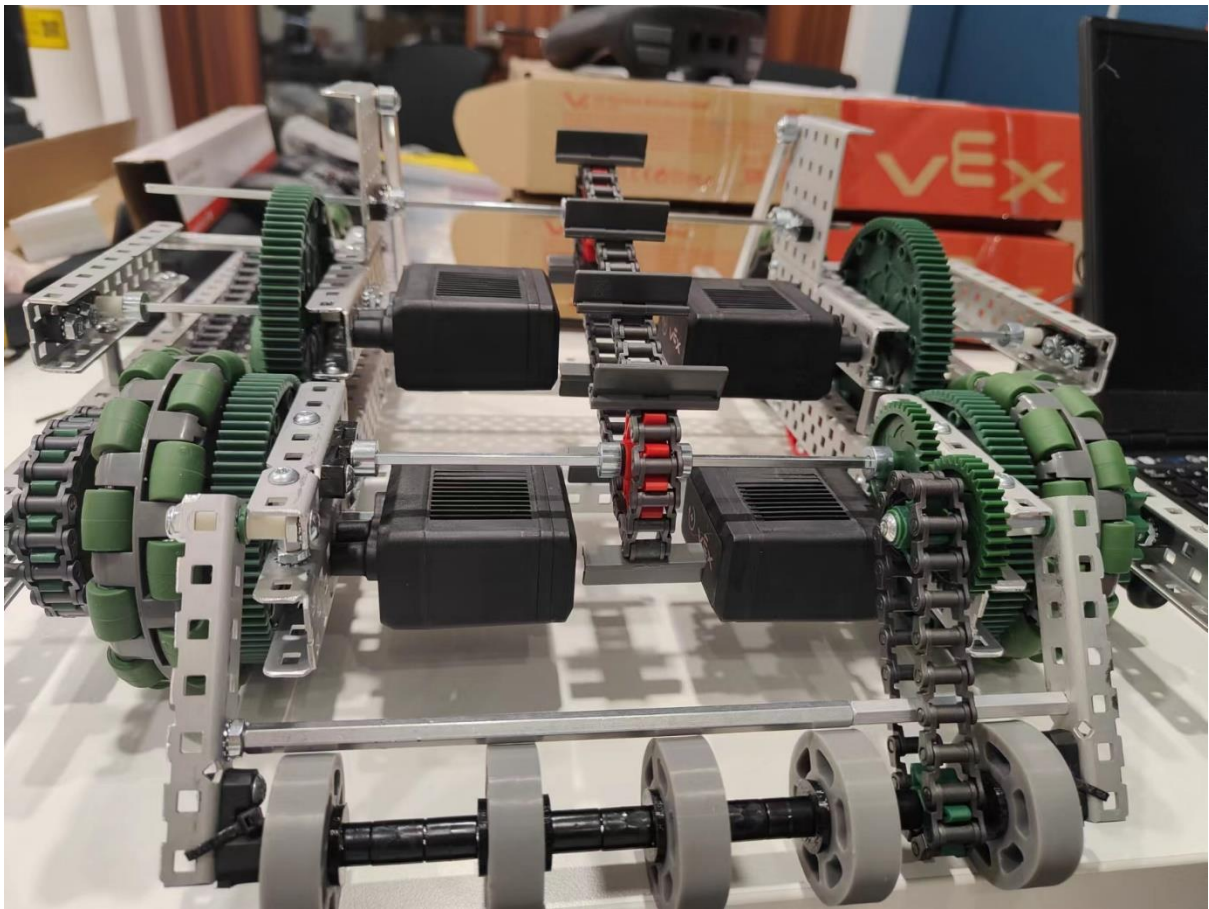
Name	Class	Major	Team Role
Binyan Sun	2025	TBA	Builder
Yiming Yuan	2025	TBA	Builder & Finance Manager
Tsz-lung Chau	2024	Institution and Governance	Co-founder
Yuchen Song	2025	Public Policy	Programmer
Eddie Lin	2025	TBA	Programmer
Beilong Tang	2025	TBA	Programmer
Yuchen Song	2026	TBA	Programmer
Boyan Zhang	2026	TBA	Driver
Sidong Duan	2026	TBA	Driver
Yinuo Guo	2025	Applied Math/CS	Programmer
Yifei Wang	2024	Political Economy	Builder
Zhirong Zhou	2025	Computer science	Programmer
Yidan Mao	2025	computation and design with track in computer science	Builder
Heng Yu	2025	Computation and design with track in computer science	Programmer
Ziqi Li	2026	TBA	Builder
Chen Lyu	2023	Material science physics track	Builder

Such diverse backgrounds have helped our robotic design a lot. Everyone gives their opinions according to their knowledge and it really creates chemistry.

Not only our teammates' background is various, but their occupations are also various. Besides everyone's main role, lots of us can also do another job. A friend of mine is a builder and a driver at the same time, and through his building experience, he discovered some special traits which can affect his driving strategies. His driving needs also inspire him to build a better frame to satisfy himself. From my point of view, taking two jobs at one time is indeed hard, but the knowledge and growth one gets can be even happier.

As for myself, as a builder, I am still learning about some basic skills of building a robot.

Every training is an enjoyment for me. We have such an inclusive environment that everyone is willing to help. I remember the first time that I learned to build a base plate, our leader just patiently guided me on how to do it. Even sometimes I made a mistake, and he will just gently tell me to practice again. It took me a really long time to finally complete the work, but I really gained much through this experience.



I guess it is exactly the diversity and inclusiveness that our team possesses that makes our DKU VEX Team so popular and unique. It has been a great pleasure working with the team, and I believe it will be even more exciting in the future.

Story of Yuchen

My journey with DKU VEX team is an open ended story with the theme of embracing diversity.

Growing up, I kept doubting against the stereotypes of the world. Those who like Mathematics and programming are geeks is the stereotype of the STEM subject. Girls can not learn STEM well is the stereotypes of the girls. I like Mathematics since I was a child. I enjoy solving the puzzles and tricky math problems in primary school. It was in middle school when I joined programming club and really start my journey with programming.

The first day I enter the club, I confessed that I was a bit shocked when I looking around and find most of the members are boys. However, most of them were nice and did not treat girl differently like in my primary school. I later learned that it was because a senior girl, Maggie. She was excellent in programming and STEM subjects and offered warm help to many of them. She is outstanding but never proud, likes challenges as well as collaborating with others, which won her respect from other club members.

As a girl, she provided new prospectives from boys which are novel and different from the traditional type of clever. She is, indeed, more circumspect but as clever and creatives as boys can be. She once told me that girls and boys are different, but not in intelligence and creativity. Girls have power of breaking stereotype and adding diversity to the club. She is my STEM role model. I haven't truly understood the meaning, but Maggie's spirit encourages me ever since. After entering DKU, I signed up for DKU VEX team to be a programmer. I was confident to get the position because of my previous programming experience. To my surprise, after entering the team, the team leader encouraged me to try different roles and do not be limited

by my experience. What's also astonishing me was that, unlike traditional robot club, DKU VEX team recruit many girls. The team leader's words remind me of Maggie: One should not be limited by stereotypes of others and comfort zone of the past, and should try to embrace the possibilities and inclusiveness.

Most of the team members have access to learn about different roles. A builder may learn about driving, which helps him acquire the attributions of the robot better in return. I would never know the magic of gears and mechanism until I learned something about building a robot. Learning about building also helps me adjust the parameter of the motor and wheel more accurately.

What's more special about the team is that team members have really diverse background. This greatly helped our robot designed. Team members majored in Physics can give suggestions based on load-carrying capability, members majored in Math can help with refined calculation of the structure and members good at Arts helped with the drafts of blueprint. Boys' circumspection contributes. Boys' force also contributes. That's the boys' power. Girls' carefulness helps. Girls' strength also helps. That's the girls' power. It was then I understood that the magic of 'Girl Powered' is never all about the qualities of girls, it is about the concept of being open to possibilities and embracing the diversity.

It is the same enthusiasm and interest in robot get us together, but the diversity and open-ended possibilities makes DKU VEX team special and great. It was only half a year working with the team and I haven't learned enough knowledge about robot, however, I have seen and learned too much about being open to the diversity and inclusiveness in the team and learned the true meaning of "Girl Power" in Maggie's words.