MSU to welcome Michigan VEX Robotics State Championships on Sunday, Feb. 24

The state’s largest ever Michigan VEX Robotics State Championships is headed to Jenison Field House at Michigan State University on Sunday, Feb. 24.

Around 500 of the state’s best high school robotic minds will compete in two divisions during the 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. tournament. Opening ceremonies begin at 9:15 a.m. The event is free and open to the public.

Drew Kim, assistant to the dean for recruitment, scholarship and K-12 outreach in the MSU College of Engineering, said this year’s competition will challenge 72 high school teams from all over Michigan’s lower peninsula. Championship games for middle school teams are at Monroe Community College this year.

“VEX Robotics introduces students to basic robot innovation, working together, troubleshooting, and having fun in a team setting,” Kim said. “We’re so proud to nurture these young engineers and designers at one of Michigan’s biggest STEM events for students each year.”

Kim explained that students build innovative robots and then compete on a 12-foot by 12-foot playing field. This year’s game, VEX Turning Point, uses caps, flags, three-inch balls, and three platforms to score points during timed contests. Two alliances, made up of two teams each, compete in qualifying matches.

Much like March Madness in college basketball, elimination rounds determine the best teams in the state. Awards are presented for design, robot skills, and judges’ choice along with Amaze, Innovate, and Think Awards. Top honors include Tournament Championship trophies, for the top competition winners, and the Excellence Award Winner, for the best overall team in the state.

“Teams have been qualifying at local tournaments since October,” explained Bob Watson, K-12 outreach/robotics coordinator for MSU Engineering. “Teams that win at the local tournaments then qualify for the Michigan VEX Robotics State Championships.”
High school teams will come from Battle Creek, Bloomfield Hills, Cass City, Detroit, DeWitt, Grandville, Haslett, Harbor Beach, Hudsonville, Novi, and Traverse City, among others. View the team list.

Fourteen high school teams will advance from Michigan’s championship to the 2019 VEX Robotics World Championship in Louisville, Kentucky, April 24-27. About 1,500 teams are expected to compete at the world games.

Kim noted that MSU is able to host the state competition because of the many volunteers who contribute time and support, including the MSU student volunteers who help VEX participants learn the principles of engineering as they design and build their robots.

“This year, we’d especially like to thank the men and women of the MSU Air Force ROTC for their years of setting up tables, chairs, and competition fields and presenting the U.S. flag during opening ceremonies -- without which our large state championship wouldn’t be possible.”

There are around 255 high school VEX teams in Michigan. MSU is the largest university sponsor of VEX Robotics in Michigan, supporting 15 teams around the state. Many of MSU’s teams are from schools with underrepresented student populations.

“We are committed to continually working on the pipeline for technical workers,” Watson added. “VEX Robotics helps STEM students build skills and a friendly professional network for their future.”

For more on the Michigan VEX Robotics State Championship, visit the event website.

Related Website: Communications contact: Patricia Mroczek

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