# Autodesk Provides Students with Competitive Design Edge at FIRST Robotics Championship

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Autodesk and FIRST inspire enthusiasm for science, technology, engineering and math among high school students worldwide

ATLANTA, April 15 /PRNewswire-FirstCall/ -- Thousands of high school students are jumping ahead of the curve at the 2008 FIRST Robotics Competition Championship this weekend, with the help of $17 million in professional software and mentoring resources provided by Autodesk, Inc. (Nasdaq: ADSK). The April 17-19 event at the Georgia Dome attracts more than 20,000 spectators and is a culmination of 41 regional competitions involving more than 37,000 students from all over the world. Autodesk is sponsoring the competition for the 17th consecutive year, working with Dean Kamen's FIRST organization (For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology) to help inspire student interest in science, technology, engineering and math and to train the next generation of professionals to fill an impending global engineering talent shortage.

(Photo: http://www.newscom.com/cgi-bin/prnh/20080415/AQTU102-a
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Students participating in the competition are well-positioned to help fill a void noted in U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics figures, which project scientific and engineering job opportunities will continue to grow more rapidly than jobs in general (26% versus 15% overall) through 2012(1), Further, U.S. graduation rates for students declined by 23 percent between 1985 and 2000, and Europe and Asia now graduate three-to-five times as many engineers as does the United States.(2) The shortage is compounded by poor performance, with U.S. students ranking only 12th among developed nations in median science test scores(3). This engineering gap exists globally as well, as only 25 to 30 percent of India's engineering and science graduates are "suitable" for careers in their chosen field, according to the head of India's National Association of Software and Services companies.

"Sliding student science scores, combined with a wave of retiring Baby Boomers, mean the United States will face a serious engineering gap in the very near future," said Paul Mailhot, senior director of worldwide education programs at Autodesk. "Autodesk and FIRST are helping to close this gap by inspiring enthusiasm and excitement for science and math at an early age, a focus that helps spur student interest in the pursuit of advanced education and future careers in design and engineering. Gaining real-world experience by using tools used by professionals, while working side by side with mentors who might one day employ them, FIRST students have a competitive edge and are our nation's hope for a strong engineering workforce in the future."

Through its 17 years of supporting the FIRST Robotics Competition (FRC), Autodesk has provided students more than $100 million in mentoring resources and advanced design and engineering software, including Autodesk Inventor, 3ds Max and Autodesk Combustion. Autodesk is proud to participate in a program that has produced quantifiable results in career development. A Brandeis University study(4) compared FIRST student participants to their counterparts not involved in FIRST, finding:

-- FIRST students are more than three times as likely to major specifically in engineering;

-- More than twice as likely to pursue a career in science and technology;

-- Nearly four times as likely to pursue a career specifically in engineering;

-- More than twice as likely to volunteer in their communities

"My involvement with FIRST has led to tremendous success," said Robert Thacker-Dey, former FIRST participant and current honors student at Penn State University. "For four years, I lived and breathed Autodesk Inventor, and Autodesk professionals actually told our team that we use the program more efficiently than some professional engineers. I was able to obtain a full academic scholarship, in large part because of my participation in FIRST and exposure to Autodesk tools. FIRST has given me the motivational legs to walk on, and Autodesk has given me the thinking process and strategy to become an engineer with a three-dimensional mindset."

To help spark further student excitement around engineering and design, Autodesk is once again hosting two companion competitions in conjunction with the FRC. The Autodesk Inventor Design Competition (http://firstbasefrc.autodesk.com/?nd=competition) recognizes the team with the top mechanical robot design using Autodesk Inventor software, which is the foundation for Digital Prototyping. The Autodesk Design Visualization Competition awards the team with the best 3D animation, using award-winning Autodesk 3ds Max (http://usa.autodesk.com/adsk/servlet/index?id=5659302&siteID=123112) modeling, animation and rendering software. To qualify for the Visualization award, the animation must fit this year's challenge to develop community-enhancing inventions, such as, multiple uses for grey water, alternative transportation, alternative energy, automated trash collection, car and traffic safety, water testing, etc. Overall winners of these competitions will be announced this weekend at the championship event.

Autodesk is also sponsoring the FIRST Tech Challenge (FTC) through donations of Autodesk Inventor software and customized training, and resources to student competitors. The FTC is complementary to the FIRST Robotics Program, bringing its spirit and values to a greater number of students and schools of varying resources. More than 8,000 high-school-aged students from the United States, Canada and competed in FTC tournaments from November 2007 through April 2008 and will also hold their final activities at the FIRST Championship in Atlanta, Georgia.

For more information please visit the Autodesk FIRSTbase Web site (http://www.autodesk.com/firstbase).

1 National Science Foundation, "Science and Engineering Indicators 2006," National Science Foundation (2006)

2 American Society for Engineering Education, "ASEE Announces Newly Improved K-12 Outreach Program Database," American Society for Engineering Education (April, 2006).

3 Organization for Economic Cooperation & Development, World Bank (BusinessWeek, Feb. 2008)

4 Center for Youth and Communities, "More than Robots: An Evaluation of the FIRST Robotics Competition Participant and Institutional Impacts," Heller School for Social Policy and Management, Brandeis University

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 and FIRST Tech Challenge for high-school students, the FIRST LEGO(R) League for children 9-14 years old, and the Junior FIRST LEGO League for 6 to 9 year-olds. To learn more about FIRST, go to http://www.usfirst.org.

About Autodesk Education

Autodesk supports worldwide academic achievement and lifelong learning by providing 2D and 3D solutions for teaching and learning design in the fields of manufacturing, industrial design, architecture, construction, civil engineering, and media and entertainment. Autodesk is committed to helping the next generation of engineers, architects and designers experience their ideas before they are real by making state-of-the-art digital prototyping solutions available inside and outside of the classroom through substantial discounts, subscriptions, grant programs, training, curricula development and community resources. For more information about Autodesk education programs and solutions, visit http://www.autodesk.com/education.

About Autodesk

Autodesk, Inc. is the world leader in 2D and 3D design software for the manufacturing, building and construction, and media and entertainment markets. Since its introduction of AutoCAD software in 1982, Autodesk has developed the broadest portfolio of state-of-the-art digital prototyping solutions to help customers experience their ideas before they are real. Fortune 1000 companies rely on Autodesk for the tools to visualize, simulate and analyze real-world performance early in the design process to save time and money, enhance quality and foster innovation. For additional information about Autodesk, visit http://www.autodesk.com.



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