

YOUR GUIDE TO EDUCATION, CAREER, AND GOING BEYOND WITH YOUR FIRST® EXPERIENCE



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Dear FIRST® alum,

Welcome to the rest of your life!

You may be thinking, "I miss FIRST." The good news is this: As a FIRST alum, you are part of the FIRST community for life. We're here for you when you need us (and we give great high fives when you've got something to celebrate).

You may be about to graduate high school, a recent grad, or looking to make a career change. You may be wondering, "What should I do next?" Enlist in a public service? Pursue a degree? Seek opportunities in a new industry? Get certified in a skilled trade?

That's a deeply personal question, one only you can answer. But the good news here is that your *FIRST* experience and network can help you find a meaningful, fulfilling career by pursuing any of those paths.

We've designed this handbook as a resource for you and your entire network of *FIRST* alumni. We'll share tips, advice, and stories from your fellow *FIRST* alumni to help you make the most of your *FIRST* experience. We'll also share how you can stay connected to your robot friends – and keep the inspiration flowing – through the *FIRST* community.

Every career journey is different, so we've included some notes pages in the back to help you customize yours.

We'd love your feedback on the *FIRST* Alumni Handbook. Send your thoughts to *alumni@firstinspires.org*.

Peace, love, and robots, Your friends at FIRST

FIRST prepares students for a STEM future.

By their fourth year of college, **FIRST alumni** are more likely to be majoring in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) fields than comparison group peers.

Major in STEM

FIRST ALUMNI

83%

COMPARISON GROUP

61%

Major in engineering or computer science

FIRST ALUMNI

61%

COMPARISON GROUP

26%

Young women in *FIRST* have significant gains in all STEM areas including STEM interest, career interest, activity, knowledge, and identity compared to young women in the comparison group.

Major in engineering or computer science

FEMALE FIRST ALUMNI

51%

COMPARISON GROUP

16%

More likely to take engineering courses or computer science courses

3.5x

2.5x

"x" = times as likely ENGINEER

COMPUTER SCIENCE

FIRST students are significantly more likely to show **gains in STEM outcomes** than comparison students.

2x

STEM Interest STEM Career Interest STEM Knowledge STEM Activity STEM Identity

"x" = times as likely

SOURCE: FIRST Longitudinal Study: 10 Year Final Report, Brandeis University, 2024; The study included 551 FIRST students and 371 comparison group students. The comparison group included students who did not participate in FIRST programs but were enrolled in science and math classes at the same schools. All students received a baseline survey and follow-up surveys each year. Overall, 72 percent of students remained in the study at year 10.

Detailed information about the study can be found at www.firstinspires.org/impact.

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LUIZA CAMARGO

FIRST Alum + Robotics and English Educator, Colégio Criativo



When you join FIRST you discover a new world. A new passion. It is as if all the years of your life have been waiting for that moment. And now that you are living this experience, make every second really worthwhile. Give yourself wholeheartedly to this experience: be inspired, design, build, connect, present, write, program. But above all, live it intensely and allow yourself to be transformed by it. Remember: FIRST is not just about what you do, it is who you are, and I can assure you that from now on, you and your life will never be the same.



Colleges and universities value the skills that *FIRST* alumni bring to their campuses, and some even make scholarships available for you. The cost of school and value of scholarships are one part of the decision on which pathway is right for you. Consider other important factors when exploring education such as:

- Your end goals or fields of study you're interested in.
- Opportunities available to you after graduation.
- Community culture.
- FIRST alumni groups on campus.

www.firstinspires.org/alumni/scholarships



It's never too early for you to establish professional online resume profiles on platforms like LinkedIn and Tallo. Use them to show schools, scholarship providers, and companies the impact of your *FIRST* experience. You can also grow your network on these platforms throughout your career.



How does the FIRST Scholarship Program work?

- In addition to the experiences you have in FIRST that have prepared you to apply for any scholarship opportunities you find, the FIRST Scholarship Program also has opportunities exclusively available to the FIRST community.
- FIRST Scholarships are funded and administered by FIRST Scholarship Providers.
 Scholarship providers are primarily four-year colleges and universities, but also include community colleges, technical schools, corporations, and associations.
- Each scholarship has its own application process and may require an essay and/or a recommendation letter from a mentor or coach. Find applications, deadlines, and more at www.firstinspires.org/alumni.
- New in 2026, FIRST has partnered with Pearson Futures Portal to give you more access to more scholarship and career opportunities.



Not sure if college is the right step for you? There are lots of resources for exploring your pathways like American Student Assistance Futurescape, asafuturescape.org.



INTERNSHIP AND CAREER OPPORTUNITIES

Companies that support *FIRST* want to hire **YOU**. *FIRST* Strategic Partners like RTX, Qualcomm, and Rockwell Automation are eager to connect your *FIRST* skills with career opportunities.

Some supporters, like BAE Systems, even have specific internships for *FIRST* participants/alumni, and others, including branches of the U.S. military, ask if you're a *FIRST* alum as part of their application form.

Be sure to include *FIRST* experience on your resume. Whatever your *FIRST* experience is or was it is ALL applicable to a work environment. You've learned all the skills that are necessary to make you a valuable employee and leader. Learn more at https://community.firstinspires.org/do-i-put-my-first-experience-on-my-resume



Grow With Career Exploration & Skill Building

Continue learning with $\underline{\textit{curated resources}}$ for FIRST alumni — career exploration tools, tips, and industry certifications.



"Whatever your FIRST experience is – it's all applicable to a work environment"

 Ilene Rein, Job Search Strategist & Executive Recruiter, Pounding Pavement 101, poundingpavement101.com



For many students, myself included, FIRST was a vehicle that helped to create a spark while developing values and traits such as Gracious Professionalism, Coopertition, and grit. As a FIRST alum, I received a FIRST STEM Community Innovation Grant to help spread the vehicle to impact more students. I'm excited to see FIRST continue to impact the lives of so many others, just as it has my own.



CHELSEY ROEBUCK

FIRST alum + community nonprofit leader

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When you become a FIRST alum, you understand just how wide the FIRST network reaches and just how willing and excited that network is to help you achieve your goals. I got involved with FIRST years ago, and it's been amazing to see the ways in which FIRST and the connections I formed through it have shaped my journey ever since. I graduated from a FIRST partner school, Yale University, and now work as a mechanical engineer for Dean Kamen's R&D company, DEKA, where I get to work every day on really cool, lifechanging medical technology.



NAOKA GUNAWARDENA

FIRST alum + mechanical engineer



SUMMARY

A meticulous designer with experience guiding projects from inception to resolution.

Uses 7 years of FIRST mentorship and 4 years of visual design experience to complete projects in STEM and design related fields while managing and coordinating 100 person teams.

CERTIFICATES & AWARDS

Creativity & Creative Problem Solving

Sheridan College & SUNY Buffalo State. May 2019

Oakville FIRST Hero Town of Oakville, Dec. 2019

Mental Health First Aid for Adolescents

Mental Health Commission Canada, Nov. 2019

Certificat d'Études Françaises Halton District School Board, Jun. 2015

Solidworks Associate
Javelin Technologies, Aug. 2014

SKILLS

FIRST Lead Mentor
FIRST Event Organizer
Team Management & Organization
Creative Problem Solving
Graphic Design
3D Modelling & Laser Fabrication
Adobe Creative Cloud
Web Design & Maintenance

ASSOCIATIONS





KASS WRENCH

Strategic Designer & STEM Educator

KassWrench@examplemail.com | (123) 456-7890 LinkedIn.com/in/KassWrench 123 Alumni Way | Oakville, ON, Canada | A1A 1A1

FDUCATION

Sep '15 -Present Honours Bachelor of Interaction Design Certificate in Creativity & Creative Problem Solving

Sheridan College, Oakville ON Canada

In partnership with FIRST Canada, researched, designed, & produced a traveling robotics education experience. This year long senior project utilized design sprint frameworks, rapid prototyping, and creative problem solving tactics.

EXPERIENCE

Jun '19 -Present FIRST Alumni & Sponsor Relations Intern

FIRST Headquarters, New Hampshire USA

Assists in developing strategic initiatives for key partners from 2020-2025. Designing and creating informational booklets for prospecting clients and providers. Manages social media and blog post curation on global website.

May '18 -Aug '18

- Public Creativity Intern

Sheridan College, Oakville ON Canada

Worked in interdisciplinary studio to research, design and propose enhancements to Community Public Spaces & feelings of belonging within a space.

Featured at Art Gallery of Mississauga Jan-Mar 2019. Permanent display at Sheridan College

May '16 -Aug '17

5 Junior Interactive Design Intern

g '17 Geotab Inc., Oakville ON Canada

Researched, designed, and assisted in creation of customer marketing resource in addition to content management upon creation of the portal.

Sep '15 -Present FIRST Mentor & Technologies Class Assistant

Oakville Tragalgar High School, Oakville ON Canada

Leads meetings of 60-100 students in planning future community engagement, team strategy, and marketing content. Currently managing web and social media content marketing in addition to maintaining communications with team sponsors and implementing community outreach through volunteering events.

CAREER OPPORTUNITIES

Any meaningful participation you've had in *FIRST* is relevant experience for a work environment, whether you led the programming team, presented to sponsors, or coached a *FIRST* LEGO League team.

FIRST is real-world experience and should be presented as such on your resume. Note your role(s) on your team and projects, awards, and achievements, and capture any additional volunteer experience, too.

Not sure how to highlight your accomplishments? Check out the resources at **www.firstinspires.org/alumni**.

Resume tips

- The summary section is your elevator pitch to companies and a chance to show your passions.
- Were you nominated for a Dean's List Award, or did your team receive the Chairman's or Inspire Award? Note relevant awards, certificates, or recognitions.
- List important skills and relevant industry keywords so recruiters will find you.
- List FIRST activities as school activities, accomplishments, and extracurriculars.
- Use full program names.
 - **✓** FIRST Robotics Competition
 - **X** FRC
- Use action verbs like "designed" and "managed" to define your ownership of a task and highlight holistic skills (like project management, teamwork, and communication) using specific examples of how your skills improved results for your team.
- Research resumes from your target industry to identify standards for resume template and length.



Make sure to identify yourself as a *FIRST* alum on networking platforms like LinkedIn and Tallo!

CHOOSING YOUR CAREER PATHWAY

Meaningful, fulfilling, and good-paying careers are available no matter what pathway you choose after high school. While certain jobs require higher levels of education, there is growing demand for professionals to fill jobs in the middle of the labor market, such as manufacturing, machinery operation, inspection, electronics, mechanics, and healthcare technicians.

Opportunities abound in these "middle skills" careers, which require more than a high school education, such as a certification or apprenticeship, but less than a four-year college degree. These careers are more advanced and safer than they once were, requiring a whole range of skills, from advanced technology and digital literacy to problem solving and teamwork – skills you have as a *FIRST* alum. Many companies are eager to hire *FIRST* alumnito fill these roles

Middle-Skills Job Opportunities

PERCENTAGE OF THE U.S. LABOR MARKET THAT CONSISTS OF MIDDLE-SKILLS JOBS

53%

PERCENTAGE OF THE U.S. WORKERS WHO ARE TRAINED TO THE MIDDLE-SKILLS LEVEL

43%





ACE YOUR INTERVIEWS

Many industry leaders want to hire FIRST alumni like you for your problem-solving, critical thinking, and digital literacy skills. It's important that you communicate your experience, knowledge, skills, and abilities on your job application and in your interview. FIRST Strategic Partners Dow and Qualcomm offer great advice on their websites to help you succeed. Here are just a few of their tips:

- Your experiences beyond your previous work roles are important. Use your volunteer and extracurricular activities to highlight your accomplishments.
- For your interview, have a few personal stories in mind that demonstrate your skills, experience, and style. These "behavioral" interview questions help a potential employer understand your capabilities and fit.
- And finally, send (or email) a follow-up note and thank you. Expressing your interest in the position and appreciation to the hiring team for their time can never hurt. Your recruiter can forward your message along to the team.

Need more advice? Check out the FIRST Career blog posts from Pounding Pavement 101 https://www.firstinspires.org/community/alumni/updates/action-verbs-pp101



It's helpful to talk about your FIRST experience in your interviews, not only because it's relevant, but because you may discover your interviewer is part of the FIRST community, too.



FIRST provided me with a robust foundation I have relied on throughout my career across the private and public sectors. The foundation of invaluable skills includes teamwork, leadership, public speaking, stakeholder management and more. FIRST has changed my career and my life.



SHREY MAJMUDAR

FIRST alum + Associate, McKinsey & Company

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Every opportunity to engage with the community and educate others is what inspired me to go get a degree in education in the first place. Being a part of *FIRST* helped me find who I am. Knowing I could help bring these opportunities to other students made me jump at the chance to serve. The experiences I had, while challenging, were incredibly rewarding. I made amazing friends and connections that helped me achieve not only my service goals but personal goals.



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KATE SAMPLE

FIRST alum + education specialist, MPA, MS



STAY CONNECTED

Your FIRST network isn't limited to your former teammates or friends you met at events. There are FIRST alumni all around the world who share your passions and experience with our community – people who have also repeated the phrase, "I can't... I have robotics," more times than they can count.

Joining a FIRST alumni group is the easiest way to connect with FIRST alumni wherever you are. The FIRST Alumni Networking Group on LinkedIn was designed to connect FIRST alumni to one another for education and career guidance, mentorship, and opportunities.

Local *FIRST* alumni groups have grown across the world to engage and support *FIRST* alumni on college campuses, in regional areas, and at companies. Join or start a group at *www.firstinspires.org/alumni/alumni-groups*.



Be sure your firstinspires.org dashboard account is under your active email so we can stay in touch and share news, tips, and opportunities. The dashboard is also your place to register *FIRST* teams, become an event volunteer, and log your volunteer hours.

ATTEND FIRST EVENTS

For FIRST students, mentors, and coaches, few things are more meaningful than seeing alumni come out to competitions to support the team. Showing up at a FIRST event and visiting the pits is a great way to support your team and inspire all FIRST students. Plus, we know you miss the thrill of competition days.

Even if you no longer live in your hometown, there's likely a *FIRST* event happening near you this year. Whether you're looking for a bit of inspiration, for a chance to meet new people or network with like-minded peers, or just for something to do on a weekend, check out an event near you at *www.firstinspires.org/team-event-search*.

FIRST and its supporters also host special events just for FIRST alumni. These are great opportunities to meet fellow alumni and industry leaders, catch up with FIRST friends, and seek out advice or inspiration.



Follow *FIRST* on social media to keep up with season announcements, cool opportunities for students and alumni, and FOMO-inducing dispatches from *FIRST* events.





There are lots of ways to stay involved and give back to *FIRST* after becoming a *FIRST* alum. Many alumni are still involved in *FIRST* as mentors, coaches, or event volunteers. You may already be familiar with mentor/coach roles and event-day volunteering opportunities from the *FIRST* program(s) you participated in. BUT did you know that roles and time commitments vary from one program to another? You can volunteer for *FIRST* for as little as a few hours a season.

Volunteering is an awesome way to stay involved with *FIRST* and really pay it forward to the next generation. It's also a chance for you to continue building valuable skills and meaningful connections to advance your own career and personal development goals.



As a *FIRST* alum, you know what an impact participating can have on a person's life. For nonprofits like *FIRST*, every dollar makes a difference. If you can, make a small donation to *FIRST*, start a social media fundraiser, or talk to your employer about becoming a sponsor.

Getting started as a FIRST volunteer

I have a few hours or a few days to give:

As a *FIRST* event volunteer, you can join the global support system we've built to help young people find what makes them come alive – and be re-energized yourself. Find an event volunteer role that fits your personality: Get in the center of the action as a referee or field reset, or support teams in the pits as a judge or pit admin.

I'm looking for a long-term commitment:

As a FIRST team mentor or coach, you can empower young people to think big and feel hopeful for their future. You don't need particular expertise, but you do need a schedule that lets you make a reliable mentorship commitment throughout the season (varies by program and team). Online mentor training is available through FIRST.

To browse local volunteer opportunities and get started as a volunteer, create a *FIRST* dashboard account at *firstinspires.org*.





NICKI BONCZYK

FIRST alum + mechanical engineer



FIRST alum Nicki Bonczyk discovered her passion for engineering after joining her FIRST Robotics Competition team in west Michigan. After high school, she studied product design and manufacturing engineering, and while volunteering at a FIRST event, she learned about career opportunities at FIRST sponsor JR Automation. She took an internship and eventually landed a full-time job as a mechanical engineer working on robots (sound familiar?).

Recognizing the importance of the skills and passion she developed in those early days on her team, Nicki continues to do her part in making sure other students get the same benefits from *FIRST* that she did.

She encourages her coworkers to join her in volunteering at the many *FIRST* events in Michigan. She also mentors local teams with her parents. "Volunteering has allowed me to grow my *FIRST* family in ways I never thought I would," she says, "and I have one amazing extended family thanks to *FIRST*!"

NOTES

FIRST® ALUMNI HANDBOOK

NOTES



www.firstinspires.org/alumni

alumni@firstinspires.org

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