

Chairman's Award - Team 4125

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2020 - Team 4125

Team Number

4125

Team Name, Corporate/University Sponsors

Umatilla School District/21st Century Community Learning Center/State of Oregon/Umatilla Police Department/Umatilla Fire Department/Autodesk/Amazon Web Services&Umatilla High School

Briefly describe the impact of the *FIRST* program on team participants within the last five years.

As a nine year team we've seen many members of our team grow to their full potential because of FIRST. Since the beginning of our team, our members have had a 100% high school graduation rate, as well as having 90.6% of our alumni since 2015 enroll and continue onto college. Most of our members never even considered studying or working in STEAM fields before FIRST. This year 90% of our graduating members plan to enroll in college, 10% in military and 80% plan on pursuing a STEAM field.

Describe the impact of the *FIRST* program on your community within the last five years.

Our community is one of our most valuable renewable resources. We rely on our community for support. In exchange, we give back. Through Service Saturdays, we contribute to the community and help introduce people to FIRST. Parents rely on us to help with the STEAM Academy where we provide safe learning environments and free snacks and meals for our FIRST students. We are known around town at community events and City Council meetings where we often bring youth voices to community issues.

Describe the team's methods for spreading the *FIRST* message in ways that are effective, scalable, sustainable, and creative.

Dean Kamen told teams to make it loud and we listened. We spread the word of FIRST far and wide using the radio, websites, social media, and even a documentary produced by Blue Chalk Media. We share FIRST with businesses and have had members intern with industry experts. Our shared campaign, "Faces of Engineering" is devoted to increasing women and minorities in STEAM. We understand our responsibility as role models and know investing in our youth means recharging our future team.

Describe examples of how your team members act as role models and inspire other *FIRST* team members to emulate

Our FIRST program grew because past team members invested in us. It is our turn to play a part in the cycle. Our Code of Conduct ensures that we always stay Confidential. The team represents integrity, helpfulness, responsibility and commitment. We endeavor to be models of Gracious Professionalism. We strive to be the first to help, the most enthusiastic to dance, and the loudest to cheer. When teams struggle, we help, even if it means helping them beat us. When others are stronger, so are we.

Describe the team's initiatives to help start or form other FRC teams

The cost and time commitment of FRC is daunting. We recruit student advocates to help adults see the value of FRC beyond dollar figures. In '17 we helped start team, 6442, after having one of their FTC members travel with us for a season. In Fall of '19, we tackled the challenge at the state level by presenting to the Oregon School Boards Association. At this event, we explained the impact of FIRST on our community and encouraged School Board Members and Superintendents to start teams.

Describe the team's initiatives to help start or form other *FIRST* teams (including Jr.FLL, FLL, & FTC)

When we started, FIRST was unknown in our region. Over time we have started FIRST programs K-12 in our district and reached out to neighboring school districts by attending Superintendents' meetings and inviting teachers from to work with us so they can start teams. Now, we are proud to know that 59% of school districts in our tri-county area now have FIRST teams and 70% of school districts in Umatilla County now have teams. We offer support at events and grant help to teams to help them thrive.

Describe the team's initiatives on assisting other *FIRST* teams (including Jr.FLL, FLL, FTC, & FRC) with progressing through the *FIRST* program

Due to the growth of FIRST in Umatilla, we hosted our own FTC tournament and FLL pre-qualifier this year. At both events, alumni and Confidential members served as judges, referees, queuers, and managed facilities. We loved seeing competition through the eyes of future members. Within our district we have students mentoring and running FLL Jr., FLL, and FTC teams. In addition to local events, we've helped host the Yakima SunDome event. FTC members intern with our team to get the FRC experience.

Describe how your team works with other *FIRST* teams to serve as mentors to younger or less experienced *FIRST* teams (includes Jr.FLL, FLL, FTC, & FRC teams)

We mentor FLL Jr., FLL, and FTC teams in our district and FRC teams in our region. We have 12 members teaching at the STEAM Academy of Umatilla. We've partnered with 4980 to help them improve their Chairman's presentation. Since their rookie year in '17 we've mentored team 6442 and are happy to help with their evolving needs as their team grows. Annually, we invite nearby teams to join us for kickoff. We watch the livestream and host workshops, before getting to work and launching the season.

Describe your Corporate/University Sponsors

Recently, Amazon has come to our community. We seized the opportunity to gain them as a sponsor by having our team members show them around our shop and explain our continuum of FIRST. This outreach worked, and today, they are our largest corporate sponsor. They also are providing AWS Computer Science courses in our high school as a result of this connection. To help students gain access to college opportunities, we support our school's partnerships with BMCC, RCC, EOU and WSU TriCities.

Describe the strength of your partnership with your sponsors within the last five years.

One of the most important aspects that makes up our team is the community. They give us unconditional support. To show our gratitude, we participate in volunteer work and community outreach. In January, Amazon asked us to host a Girls in STEM event at our high school this fall. We also recognize our sponsors at kick-off and robo-reveal every year. Our robot is named after one of our sponsors each year. This season, our robot's name is Chief Hux in honor of the Umatilla Police Department.

Describe how your team would explain what *FIRST* is to someone who has never heard of it

FIRST is a safe space for participants to grow into their best selves. It is caring, open and helps students explore new ideas and build professionalism and skills. FIRST builds people and teams that become family. As a FIRST member, one learns what it means to be involved in something greater than oneself. It teaches deadlines and demands the best, but it does so in an environment to help everyone succeed. FIRST changes lives and we're honored to be a part of FIRST.

Briefly describe other matters of interest to the *FIRST* judges, if any

Our team is unique because it has always been student led. Coaches understand that this program is an opportunity for us to learn and grow and they allow us to do so. The team structure of leads and members supported by core values allows us to grow into leaders. Members work diligently each year to improve the team and community. We learn real life skills while making lifelong connections through FIRST. As members gain confidence they move up the ladder towards brighter futures.

For FRC teams older than 5 years, briefly describe your team's broader impact from its inception.

We understand what it means to grow up without resources and we instantly recognized that FIRST could become the ultimate resource. Little is expected of those living in a minority-majority, high poverty area. FIRST allows us to prove assumptions wrong. 100% of us graduate, 92% of 4125 alumni have enrolled and continued in college with 63% in STEAM. 56% of Alumni come back and volunteer. The secret to Confidential is out- FIRST helps all of Umatilla succeed and we cheer for the same for others.

Team Captain/Student Representative that has double-checked this submission.

Jackelin Escalante

Essay

At the dawn of Confidential, we started to grasp the resources of FIRST. The founding members learned how to convert community support into energy to power our team. Potential energy turned kinetic, as the founding members grew the team, the goal became ensuring that all students in our community benefit from the life-changing resources of FIRST.

Mr. Kamen's Kick-Off speech about the concept of renewable resources inspired us. Our team's charge for the past five years is renewing this energy so it continues for generations. Confidential has become a resource to students, teams, and others far and wide. The founders of Confidential did not know what the future entailed, but they did know that they were building our students for it.

Confidential generates a sustainable model by instilling FIRST early. We introduce FLLJr., FLL, and FTC, so our students can be fueled in the FIRST continuum. Students have the opportunity and support to plug into one program after another. We are able to accomplish this through our after-school program, the STEAM Academy of Umatilla (SAU). In 2016, FIRST let us know that we had the highest percentage of students participating in FIRST in any US school district with over 1,000 students. Since then, we've focused on ensuring sustainability by providing support for teams and helping with grants to grow.

Twelve of our members currently lead classes at the SAU. Confidential volunteers at competitions and mentors FLLJr. To FTC by coaching them through inspections, interviews and game strategy. This year we have 14 FTC teams and since we have generated so many we were asked by FIRST to host our own competition. Seven teams qualified for the Hood River competition in Oregon. We ran an FLL pre-Qualifier for 12 teams so our FLL kids could experience what a competition was like.

We teach a variety of STEAM classes, along with our FIRST programs, to charge our student's creative batteries. The SAU encourages its 718 enrolled students to problem solve with an outside the box mentality. We are proud to play a part in recharging this program through grant writing. We have renewed funding for the SAU into 2023 through the 21st Century Community Learning Center grant.

Through the SAU, we have created a FIRST cycle, and team Confidential is a direct representation of that. Ninety-two percent of current Confidential members have grown through our FIRST programs in FLL or FTC before becoming members of 4125. By forming a cycle of FIRST, we have built a system of renewable resources that recharges our team every year through the investing in youth.

Maintaining consistency in team member expectations requires shared and known values. Our Code of Conduct is based on the principles of gracious professionalism and we monitor its implementation through self-evaluation and team-lead feedback. The Code is a guideline on how our team members will represent themselves. When people think of Confidential, we want them to instantly think of a service oriented team who communicates well, values others and dances their way through stress.

We know that changing culture means starting with ourselves and modeling positivity for others. We focus on improving each other during team activities, and encourage our members to be involved in many clubs and sports to share the ideals of our code. Team Confidential members infiltrate broadly: 65% of team members are involved in sports and 100% of team members are involved in other clubs. We know that FIRST has given us a road map for success in our futures but we also know it's up to us to light our own paths. Team 4125 members have an average weighted GPA of 3.52 and earned over 496 college credits. We are set to graduate from high school with the skills to succeed and the will to honor our team and become models for future members.

Our team members are our resources and once they become Alumni the cycle does not end. According to five-year team data, 69.8% of our Alumni return to volunteer in FIRST. They help at various events and mentor our team. Confidential builds members who are ready to succeed in society. Our Alumni learn to be leaders and they come back so they too can help students be successful and experience the spirit of FIRST. 100% of our seniors over the past five years have graduated from high school and 90.6% went on to college, with 53% pursuing a STEAM field.

Not only are we sending our seniors into STEAM fields, we are also encouraging others to do so. We believe that females and underrepresented minorities are a scarce resource in STEAM and we are stronger with diversity. Through our partnership with 4980, The Canine Crusaders, we created the campaign I Look Like An Engineer. This campaign encourages underrepresented minorities to pursue STEAM fields. We spread the word by having booths at competitions, using the hashtag on social media, and promoting the effort on the Faces Of Engineering website. We also help 4980 prepare for Chairmans, and in the 2019 Sundome, we cheered gleefully for them when they won the award. We guided 6442 the Modern Americans to start their team by having one of their members follow us around for a year and helped them get funding to kickstart their team.

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Before a resource can be renewed, it must first be created. Without U.S. Senator Merkley, our team would not exist today. He was crucial in helping our superintendent envision how we could create and support a robotics team in an area more commonly known for a lack of resources. We have met with him annually since our team's inception and have hosted both his and Senator Wyden's town hall meetings. In 2018, Sen. Wyden held his town hall in our gym and honored Team Confidential for our work in STEAM across the region. We showed him the full progression of FIRST in our community by having our FLL Jr., FLL, FTC and FRC teams present their robots. His visit was especially exciting for our team, because he drove some of their FTC robots during his previous visit in 2015. The team members got to hand him the controls of our FRC robot while looking over at the awe in the eyes of the FLL and FTC students and remembering how it felt to be in those shoes just a few years earlier. Team members have also gone to Sen. Merkley's office in Washington DC to advocate for FIRST and STEAM.

National relationships are important, but state and local advocacy also matter. We have taken our teams to Salem on numerous occasions to help Oregon legislators see the impact of FIRST. In 2019, funding for FIRST was in jeopardy and we organized a letter writing campaign for Oregon teams at the Tacoma Dome to help legislators recognize the importance of continued funding. We were thrilled to see the funding remain in place and know that we played a part in creating awareness. Recently, we sent letters and a team t-shirt to Governor Brown when she was at the Western Governor's Conference where Dean Kamen was the speaker. We thanked her for her support of our team, and for supporting FIRST in Oregon. Locally, members created and served on the Youth Council for the City of Umatilla to help ensure student voice in major community decisions.

Working with legislators to secure funding and support for teams is important but leaders across the state need to know why FIRST matters. In fall of 2019, we presented at the Oregon School Boards Association Conference. This was a great way to help Board members and Superintendents understand why they should support FIRST in their districts. We hope that these efforts will ensure that FIRST is not just a resource in our community, but a resource that's spread, and renewed, throughout Oregon.

Resources are scarce in our community and we've had to work through this challenge. Our school district serves one of the poorest student populations in the state and has the second highest percentage of English Language Learners in Oregon. It has been hard to find corporate support, but our community has always helped us think around challenges. We were excited to present to Amazon in February of 2019. They have built a number of data centers in our community and we sought the opportunity to add them to the Confidential family. We were thrilled to recently learn that they have decided to sponsor our team! We look forward to learning from real STEAM professionals in our own backyard for the first time in our team's history to support the sustainability of our programs.

We are honored to have the Amazon support; but money doesn't replace the incredible moral support we've received from our community. Every time our batteries have been low, our community has stepped up to recharge us. They make quilts for us to auction and save cans for us to recycle. To thank them, we volunteer. After volunteering over 13,000 hours, we started Service Saturdays to help us keep up with the many requests for help. At least one Saturday per month, we prioritize needs, divide our team members, recruit help as needed and head out to serve. This past year, we have supported our STEAM Saturdays at the Public Library, put together food baskets at the Fire Station, wrapped donated presents for children in need, served meals, and done many, many hours of yard work. We love the opportunity to give back and believe that service is a great way to model FIRST core values in the community and introduce new people to FIRST.

As we think about the energy expended over the past five years, we are thankful for the opportunities we've been given, and we are committed to ensuring continued team success for generations to come. Our alumni created this journey for us, and we are honored to do our part to keep the cycle going for our youth. We are proud to be Confidential.