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News Release May 4, 2009

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Oregon Youth Robotics Teams Showcase Talent at FIRST World Championship *Six high and middle school teams show off their engineering skills and bring home accolades from Georgia*

[Portland, May 4, 2009]: The Oregon University System (OUS) is pleased to announce the accomplishments of six Oregon robotics teams at the *FIRST* Tech Challenge World Championship and *FIRST* LEGO League World Festival, April 16 -18, 2009 in Atlanta, Georgia. Four talented Oregon high school *FIRST* Tech Challenge teams and two middle school *FIRST* LEGO Robotics teams competed in robotics and research competitions against other teams of future engineers and technology enthusiasts from across the globe. **The Psychotic Strawberryz, a high school team from North Plains** came home with a prestigious Think Award as well as a Finalist Alliance Division Award, and all six teams came home with high rankings and pride.

For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology (*FIRST*) is an international education organization founded by Dean Kamen, a widely recognized US inventor, and produces the international Championship in which 584 teams from at least 26 countries competed this year in three competitions for awards and recognition. The Oregon Robotics Tournament & Outreach Program (ORTOP), housed in the OUS Industry Affairs division, implements the *FIRST* LEGO League and *FIRST* Tech Challenge pre-engineering programs in Oregon, and advanced teams from their state championship events have the opportunity to continue on to the world event each year. The pre-engineering programs are an important part of the state's strategy to grow student interest and skills toward technology and engineering careers in order to meet future industry needs and grow the Oregon economy.

At this year's *FIRST* Tech Challenge, the 100 participating teams were asked to design a robot from a Tetrax robotics system kit to make their robots roll down ramps, travel over uneven surfaces, use sensor technology for navigation and score hockey pucks, among other challenges. The teams were also interviewed by a technical judging panel for awards, and Oregon's FTC Team the **Psychotic Strawberryz from North Plains** excelled, winning this year's FTC World Championship Think Award Winner. At the awards ceremony, the judges noted the team's superior engineering notebook which documented the team's journey as they experienced the engineering design process. The team was also very successful on the robot field capturing a Finalist Alliance Division award demonstrating a robust robot, robot driving skills, and game strategy. "The *FIRST* program is so great because even if you focus on marketing, outreach or fundraising you still learn how to design, build and program a robot. There were four kids on our team and everyone contributed in several areas. It is a lot of hard work but amazing fun being on a *FTC* team," said Saren Pihlaja, a Psychotic Strawberryz team member.

Participating Oregon teams came home with high rankings but also with a strong sense of the educational value in their achievements. **Hillsboro High School's** rookie year as a *FIRST* Tech Challenge team was a remarkable one. The 5 member team redesigned their robot over spring break and surprised the field by placing in the top 8 teams after qualifying rounds. **Amity High School's** first trip to the World championship ranked them in the top 25% of the field after qualifying play. Coach Craig Hudson said, "They worked hard to get here and worked even harder over the last three days in competition play. Amity competed hard, learned a lot and came home a stronger team." A fourth Oregon rookie team, **Flaming Cup Noodles, from several Beaverton high schools** was surprised to make it to the World Championship their first year. "The national competition was everything I imagined it to be and more: tension, friendships, and hard work," said Beaverton student Kamel Chaya upon returning to Oregon. The team finished 28th in their division and are looking forward to competing again. All of the teams have vowed to help other Oregon high school students form *FTC* teams and participate in fall 2009

season. This spring the *FIRST* College Scholarship opportunities for high school seniors participating on *FIRST* teams totaled \$9.8 million dollars. Any high school senior participating on a *FIRST* Tech Challenge team is eligible to apply.

Two Oregon middle-school teams who are home-schooled competed in the The *FIRST* LEGO League (FLL) World Festival: **The Hobbots from Canby and Team Um from Beaverton's Village Home Education Resource Center**. These teams enjoyed meeting and competing against the other 82 FLL teams from 26 countries and 30 US states. Each year *FIRST* LEGO League (FLL) defines a challenge that drives team research activities, and this year's theme was *Climate Connections*. The Hobbots, winner of the Intel Oregon Championship, were acknowledged for their outstanding robot design work and posted a top 25% score in the *Climate Connections* robot game. Their research project featured innovative ways to combat climate changes effecting Oregon's wine industry. Team Um, from Beaverton, was one of fifteen FLL World Festival Core Values teams selected by an international committee to advance to the event. At the FLL Awards ceremony, Dr. Woodie Flowers, *FIRST* National Advisor and Pappalardo Professor Emeritus of Mechanical Engineering, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, acknowledged Team Um's outstanding teamwork and community service contributions.

Bruce Schafer, director of Industry Affairs for the OUS, says, "The ORTOP program and the incredible energy and ingenuity it sponsors among students and among volunteers are truly exciting for Oregon. We are very thankful to our supporters, our hundreds of volunteers, and our generous sponsors who help to nurture these students' talents and interests so that they can become Oregon's future innovators and engineers."

ORTOP offers free training workshops for prospective adult coaches and mentors to help them learn robot design, construction and programming for new teams. The *FIRST* Tech Challenge program is expected to substantially grow in coming years because of its ability to deliver a solid hands-on engineering experience for high school students at a low cost. ORTOP is one of the fastest growing youth programs in Oregon. In December 2009, an anticipated 400 teams and more than 2,700 students will participate in 20 qualifying tournaments in Oregon and SW Washington and the top 30% will advance to state championship events.

ORTOP thanks its generous sponsors that made the program possible in Oregon including **Intel Oregon**, the title sponsor for the event; **RadiSys**, **Mentor Graphics**, and **Rockwell Collins**, platinum sponsors; and **Bonneville Power Administration**, **Catlin Gabel**, **Fred Meyer**, **PGE Foundation**, **Hillsboro School District**, and **Pacific Power Foundation**, gold sponsors. Oregon technology corporations and industry associations collaborate with the OUS and major youth organizations to implement ORTOP. Since its inception in 2001, ORTOP has grown its participation six-fold. For more information on the program go to: www.ortop.org.



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