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UTEP Engineering hosts Regional Junior FIRST LEGO League and FIRST Lego League Championship

The College of Engineering will host the regional Junior FIRST LEGO League (Jr. FLL) and the FIRST LEGO League Championship for the third year. The tournament will take place at Memorial Gymnasium on the campus of The University of Texas at El Paso beginning at 8 A.M., Saturday, February 16, 2012.

Richard T. Schoephoerster, Ph.D., P.E, Dean of the College of Engineering, will welcome fellow competitors and officially open the event.

Founded nearly 20 years ago, FIRST (For Inspiration and Recognition in Science and Technology) is a national not-for-profit organization whose sole mission is to inspire young people to be science and technology leaders, by engaging them in exciting mentor-based programs designed build science, engineering and technology skills.

With this year’s theme, ‘Senior Solutions,’ participants will have a chance to explore the many ways they can help senior citizens in their daily life, improve independence, and engage and connect better with their communities.

Jr. FLL competition will challenge students in grades K-3, (ages 6 to 9). Students in grades 4-8, (ages 9-14) compete in the FLL competition. Both competitions challenge participants to build, test and program an automatic robot using LEGO MINDSTORMS to solve the presented mission on an obstacle course.

According to Virgilio Gonzalez Ph.D., Electrical & Computer Enigneering Senior Lecturer and Associate Chair, the FIRST programs provide students, from kindergarten to high school, with an exciting exposure to STEM areas (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics). The multiple robotic events that UTEP hosts actively engages young students to both think, explore, solve and create solutions as a means to introduce and inspire young minds to consider an engineering career, Gonzalez said.
“We are also very fortunate to have an enthusiastic group of engineering organizations volunteering time and resources to make this a success,” Gonzalez said.

FIRST competitions not only provides students with an experience to develop their math and science problem solving skill at an early age, it also teaches them to organize, communicate and delegate - both sets of skills are vitally important to technical careers.

The event is free and open to the public.