

***FIRST* Impact Award - Team 4125**

2024 - Team 4125
Team Number
4125
Team Nickname
Confidential
Team Location
Umatilla, OR - USA
Describe the impact of the <i>FIRST</i> program on team participants within the last 3 years. This can include but is not limited to percentages of those graduating high school, attending college, in STEM careers, and in <i>FIRST</i> programs as mentors/sponsors.
Examining the influence of FIRST on our alumni, we delved into our data. Analysis of the past three years reveals 43% of alumni return to volunteer in FIRST, contributing to events and mentoring our team. All seniors graduated high school, and 71% proceeded to college or a STEM internship, with the same percentage pursuing a STEAM field. Confidential molds individuals ready for success in society, nurturing the future STEAM leaders who, even as they advance, come back and contribute to our team.
Describe your community along with how your team addresses its unique opportunities and circumstances.
Our rural school is 100% poverty and 74.6% students of color, serving the second-highest percentage of English Learners in Oregon. The average enrollment of FRC teams at the PNW champs for '23 was 1,578 students. Our school had 423 students last year and was the only school in the PNW to support two FRC teams and both made it to championships. Connecting with alumni and nationwide contacts allows us to bring resources to our area. Over the years, we created, connected, and became what we needed
Describe the team's methods, with emphasis on the past 3 years, for spreading the <i>FIRST</i> message in ways that are effective, scalable, sustainable, and creative. How does your team measure results?
Our team uses diverse methods to share FIRST. We've been featured in a full-length documentary (21) and Amazon Mini Series (23), giving widespread attention for FIRST nationwide. Our communication includes social media, radio, and newspaper releases, ensuring a consistent outreach strategy. We frequently present at conferences. "Confidential Declassified," offers a behind-the-scenes glimpse into our team via a social media series. The first 30 days, it reached 28 countries and had 11,033 views.
Please provide specific examples of how your team members act as role models within the <i>FIRST</i> community with emphasis on the past 3 years.
Becoming the role models we admired, we recognize the responsibility of setting a positive culture for younger members. Adhering to a strict Code of Conduct, we require volunteering, honorable actions, and

demonstrating the essence of FIRST. Sharing a shop with Team 8532, we instill coopertition. Mentoring 298 FTC students and engaging 243 students through FLL classpack in the last 3 years. We also organize and host their events. Our commitment is to always embody behavior reflective of FIRST

Describe your team's initiatives to Assist, Mentor, and/or Start other *FIRST* teams with emphasis on activities within the past 3 years.

When we started out, FIRST was unknown in our region. Through presentations, direct contact and mentoring help, helped start and assist FIRST teams of all levels in nearby towns. This year, we have helped 9613 in their debut year with Zoom meetings and direct help. We started FRC team 8532 "Classified" in 2021. We are proud to have them competing in their third competition season. We started, and continue to support, our 14 FTC teams, and 243 students involved in FLL and Explore in classpacks.

Beyond starting teams, what initiatives have you done to help inspire young people to be science and technology leaders and innovators? What results have you seen from your efforts in the past 3 years?

When Amazon came to town, team members hosted visitors and advocated. We now have coding classes and internships sponsored by AWS as well as new equipment. At kickoff this year, three alums who finished the AWS internship and now work at Amazon came to support us. For the last two years we have hosted a Girls in STEM day for our region. At COSA we took our robot for kids of all ages to drive at Family Night. It has been exciting to see the next generation see themselves as the next STEM leaders.

Describe the partnerships you've created with other organizations (teams, sponsors, educational institutions, philanthropic entities, etc.) and what you have accomplished together with emphasis on the past 3 years

In 2022, we submitted an application for an AWS Think Big Space. In 2023, we celebrated a renewed shop and new equipment in our Think Big Space at kick-off. We partnered with Right to Play International and sent kits for FLL with laptops. We also have partnered with Oregon's school board and administrator organizations to speak at their conferences about the impact FIRST has made for our team. We also present on why other schools should start FRC teams and share our toolkit for those starting.

Describe your team's efforts in the past 3 years to promote equity, diversity, and inclusion within your team, *FIRST*, and your communities.

We live in a diverse community and are linguistically and culturally diverse and low-income. We are the underserved populations. We're passionate about providing access and opportunities to others. Many members were on our all-girl FTC teams, Smarties and Nerdy Girls, when in middle school. Classified began in 2021 as an all-girls team and helped develop skills and build female representation on their team, and ours. When recruiting, we seek those representative of our school's diversity.

Explain how you ensure your team and the initiatives you have created will continue to run effectively for the foreseeable future

Our organizational structure supports growth in individuals allowing students to grow into leadership roles and maintain culture. Team members report to team leads who report to project managers who consult with mentors. Jr and Sr project managers are in place for succession. This organizational framework is duplicated in team 8532. Current leaders train future leaders. We transfer knowledge by ensuring all new members are paired with experienced members with a mentor ready to consult as needed.

Describe your team's innovative strategies to recruit, retain, and engage your sponsors within the past 3 years

Most of our donors give less than \$50. We are fortunate to have AWS support, but the majority of our funds come from our community and grants. We volunteer to express gratitude and foster connections. Each member donates at least 50 hours of service each year- even during COVID closure. Our members assisted in meal delivery via buses ensuring food reached students and seniors. We know that many in our community cheer for our success and give what they can, so we do what we can for them.

Highlight one area in which your team needs to improve and describe the steps actively being taken to make those improvements.

Amazon in our area is great and has had a positive impact on the poverty of our community. This hasn't decreased poverty for our students. The needs of students remain. Our team has been heavily funded by the Rural Low Income Schools grant. Eligibility is based on community poverty meaning we are no longer eligible yet our needs remain. This is a loss of over \$30,000 for our team. We will need to make new partnerships with businesses and find new grants to replace this funding source.

Describe your team's goals to fulfill the mission of *FIRST* and the progress you have made towards those goals.

Confidential is committed to offering chances for students to explore STEAM fields. In our rural community, glimpses of such careers limited, but through FIRST, we not only get to witness but also engage with STEAM professionals. Collaborating with our younger students on FIRST teams and fostering mutual support, we cultivate an interest in FIRST and develop the professional skills required to eventually step into these roles and emerge as leaders

Briefly describe other matters of interest to the *FIRST* Judges, including items that may not fit into the above topics. The judges are interested in learning about aspects of your team that may be unique or particularly noteworthy.

Many teams charge for FRC, from joining fees to travel expenses. FRC often exists for those who can afford it. Here, FIRST is for all. Members pay in time- 90 shop and 50 service hours. This removes the financial barrier that could prevent equitable access. This access is seen in alumni and the community. Alums are in top colleges and many fields. Their lives were impacted by FRC and they return for kick-off to share experiences. Opening doors to all creates positive impacts for our whole town.

Judge Feedback

Who/When

Feedback

Apr 05,
2024
07:11:47
PM EST

How has your experience with FIRST influenced your perspective on STEAM education and its importance?

An area the team has an opportunity to improve.

Something that really impressed the judges.

Essay

As the 2024 stage beckons, our team is tuned and ready for the grand performance. Previous seasons have been a great rehearsal and as we prepare for this year, we like to look on past performances.

As the sad ballad of COVID continued into the 2021 era, our hearts sank when competing with friends across the PNW was impossible. Undeterred, we transformed our disappointment into an initiative for Gus, a child from Baker with spina bifida. A video from his mom prompted a request: could we create a 4x4 bike to enable Gus to hike with his family? Seizing the downtime during COVID, we initiated a fundraising effort, reentered our workshop, and completed his bike in the fall of 2021. Finally, in May of 2022, we joyfully delivered Gus's bike. The road trip to Baker hummed with anticipation, hoping our creation would meet his needs. Upon arrival, all worries left as Gus's joy reassured us. He promptly tested the bike and its safety features, darting across the parking lot, hitting a curb, and briefly tipping over. Breath was collectively held until his giggles assured us of his well-being. The afternoon was devoted to aiding Gus in mastering the bike, with team members acting as human obstacles in his course. It was a day destined for cherished memories. Remote learning forced us apart, forcing a fermata. Supporting our FLL and FTC teams became impossible. Determined, we understood the need for a change. Out of the challenges emerged Team 8532 "Classified," for our Freshman. When we finally returned, they joined forces with us. We take pride in assisting 8532 in their 3rd competition season while simultaneously reenergizing all 14 FTC teams. Hosting our annual FTC qualifier event in Umatilla is a highlight, an entire event orchestrated by alumni, members, former parents, and our community, united in supporting the upcoming generation. Spanning more than a decade, Confidential has been the constant anthem behind the FIRST journey for Umatilla students. Contributing to grant writing and actively participating in the STEAM Academy of Umatilla After-School Program, we nurture interest and FIRST engagement among students across our district. Presently, our involvement extends to mentoring 54 FTC members on 14 teams, guiding 7 FLL participants, and supporting 51 FLL and Explore students through classpacks. Recognizing the impact of mentorship from our alums, we understand the significance of giving back to the next generation. After a decade of robotics, we experienced a decrescendo in interest. Classified helped; however, we knew we had to show students that technology was still new, exciting, fun and ever changing. Four of our members presented to, and earned permission from, our school board to start an E-Sports team. We raised their start-up funds, built computers, and set up space in our shop and overlapped practice times to show them robotics while they were in E-Sports. Our team grew as a result of this effort and we learned some gaming tips too. Our team values are symphonized by each member, setting the tune for the entire team. Team activities are centered around mutual improvement, urging our members to participate in various clubs and sports to orchestrate FIRST values. At the core of our interactions is a Code of Conduct grounded in the principles of gracious professionalism. Regular self-evaluation and feedback from team leads serve as checks to uphold the Code. It functions as a set of guidelines, illustrating to our team members how to present themselves. Professionalism is crucial, especially for those team members interning through AWS or IMESD opportunities, relying on the Code to ensure exemplary representation. Confidential strives to be a service-oriented team, adept in communication, valuing others, and gracefully navigating through stress with a touch of dance. Advocacy has long been a Confidential value. Without U.S. Senator Jeff Merkley, our team would not exist today. We have met with him annually since our team's inception and have hosted his town hall. In January, we hosted U.S. Senator Ron Wyden's town hall meeting for the second time and had the opportunity to have lunch and visit with him before the event. We were able to talk about how we use tech and where we see the future of AI impacting us. During the event, we were able to showcase our STEAM Academy and unveil our new swerve drive. Locally, we have support from Oregon State Representative Smith, county commissioners Timmons and Shafer. In Umatilla, founding member, alum, and mentor, Caden, is our town's Mayor. We are thankful for the continued support of amazing leaders and appreciate their willingness to serve as role models. In 2022 we took advocacy to a new level when Senior Project Manager, Avery, and two mentors were able to travel to Washington DC.

This year, we took two students and two mentors again. Over the past two years, Confidential has met with the entire Oregon delegation, some of whom we've seen each year. In these meetings, we shared the importance of Federal 21st CCLC funding and Title IVB funding for robotics. We stressed the impact of the funding on our team's alumni and students. We also had dinner with a rep from the Mexican consulate to discuss potential partnerships for our team to connect with teams throughout Mexico. We strive to continue this as an annual event into the future. Working to secure support for FIRST is important but lawmakers and school leaders across Oregon need to know why FIRST matters. In fall of 2020, a member spoke at the first-ever virtual Oregon School Board's conference. In 2021, two members of Confidential virtually joined Supt Sipe at a National Supts conference. In January of 2023, we were honored to be asked by the Oregon National Guard to present with them at a career fair in Portland. In June of 2023, we were honored to present at the Coalition of Oregon School Administrators and show leaders across the state how to start and support teams. We have also hosted Superintendents and Principals from both Washington and Oregon in our shop so they can see FIRST live in concert. Ascending teams matters to us and we feel honored to speak to a variety of leaders. We celebrate when our presentations lead to new team creation. We Zoom, open our shop, share supplies and help run events for teams across the region and state. We have supported the Tri-Cities FLL and FTC competitions for the past two years in the hopes of seeing an FRC team in Tri-Cities. This year, we were excited to be helping Kennewick, team 9613 in their rookie year. Every time our text alerts buzz with a message from them, our hearts sing as we want to see them succeed and encourage growth in our region. Our school district serves one of the poorest student populations in the state and has the second highest percentage of English Language Learners. Historically, funding has been a challenge. In 2019 we had a chance to meet with Amazon. Team members then would be shocked to see what's happening today. Hosting them has led to coding classes and internships sponsored by AWS as well as new equipment and technology for our shop. Last year, we orchestrated our Kick-Off event in coordination with their ribbon cutting for the first ever AWS/Umatilla Robotics Think Big Space! Team members identified needs and helped write the grant proposal in 2022. Last season, a film crew from AWS followed some team members and created a docu-series about their experience in robotics. We are in harmony with our community and appreciate their support. From donations to visiting the shop to applaud our efforts and even passing a bond for a new shop space for us in 2022, they are always the smiling faces in our audience. To thank them, we traditionally volunteer at least one Saturday per month. We prioritize needs, divide our team members, recruit help as needed and head out to serve. In prior years, we have run STEAM Saturdays at the public library, put together food baskets at the fire station, wrapped presents for children in need, served meals, and done many hours of yard work. We love the opportunity to give back and believe that service is a great way to model our core values and introduce new people to FIRST. During COVID, the team joined the school district meal delivery buses and delivered food to students and senior citizens in the community. Arguably our high note was hit in January of 2021. Oregon Public Broadcasting featured a documentary, titled "Big Dreams in Umatilla," showcasing our team. The documentary's success led to its adoption by PBS, making it accessible to viewers nationwide. Our aspiration is that it serves as a source of inspiration, urging individuals confronting challenges to realize their potential in surmounting obstacles and reaching their dreams through FIRST. Engaging with fellow teams revealed that our actions, along with those of other veteran teams, may appear daunting. To address this, we introduced "Confidential: Declassified" on TikTok, producing a range of videos illustrating the ins and outs of managing our team. The goal is to spotlight the enjoyment and feasibility of running a team. We actively cross-promote these videos across all our social media platforms and are thrilled to witness their popularity. We are proud of the legacy that members before us created and we strive to maintain it. To help us fully understand the importance of upholding the team's values, we hold a hat ceremony each year where team members receive their fedoras. To add to the tradition, we hold this

event in our local museum, where the Confidential room highlights our history. Years ago, the museum board decided that Confidential was one of the most impactful changes in our town and gave us an entire room to feature our struggles and victories. When in this room, we feel the pressure, and support, of those who went before us. When we put on our fedoras, we know we are the new conductors of the team and the symphony is ours.;

