



Santa Maria Joint Union
HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT
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PRESS RELEASE

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Three teams from the Santa Maria Joint Union High School District (SMJUHSD) won awards during the 15th Annual Central Coast Vex Robotics Competition at Cal Poly on Saturday.

The event featured 50 teams from throughout California who met up and attempted to keep their robots alive for six entertaining qualifying matches and a single elimination bracket. For the first time, teams from Pioneer Valley, Santa Maria, Righetti, and Delta all competed together against teams from as far away as Fresno and as close as San Luis Obispo High School.

"We have had massive growth in robotics this year, and there are many students and parents in our community that are grateful to district leadership for making it possible for us to participate in Vex competitions, and for believing that we can compete with the best engineering feeder schools in our state in such a challenging format," said Adrian Lopez, AHC engineering major and Delta alumni. Lopez and twin, Alex, among other alums, have been supporting the development of robotics at all the school sites with over 400 volunteer hours this season so far. As a result, two teams from Pioneer Valley and one from Delta High School walked away with trophies!

One team from Delta and one from Pioneer Valley made it all the way to quarterfinals at the 50-team event, and both also earned engineering awards. "It was difficult to be eliminated by the number one seeded team after our winning score was posted, but on a referee call the decision was reversed and I guess that happens in tournaments," said Aubree McDonald, lead programmer and driver for Delta High School. "This is our first season, and we just showed the whole region how far we can go. I hope we get a chance to face them again at the state championship," said Bernadette Bolusan, lead programmer and driver for Pioneer Valley High School.

Both teams formed an alliance for the finals and won two of the four coveted engineering awards at the event.

The Delta team, consisting of McDonald, Destiny Gomez, and Taliia Padilla (not present) walked away with the Innovation Trophy awarded to the team that has the most creative, well-documented, and efficient design process for a unique robot element. "I spent a lot of time building and thinking about ways to best present our designs and then record the details in our notebook and I am happy the judges recognized our skills," said Delta team member, Destiny Gomez.

The Pioneer Valley Team consisting of Bolusan, Ivy Muhasay, and Akeyla Calizo - won the trophy "Think" for having "exceptional programming strategies, and well-documented code for solving the games challenges." Another team from Pioneer Valley High School consisting of Jasmine Torralba, Sara Lopez, Wendy Ramos, and Andrea Gutierrez won special recognition from members of Society of Women Engineers (SWE) for their efforts including the construction of their robot, programming, engineering notebook, and team interview.

"Essentially, our teams may have not won the championship today involving video game controllers and robots engaged in battle, but they still walked away with recognition from Cal Poly engineering students that their skills for practicing engineering are among the best and that is what the district-wide program is all about," said Jeff Cooper, Delta Coach and the district's robotics support person.

"This was our first tournament with all eight Pioneer Valley teams, and each team has spent countless hours working on their robots. I am incredibly proud they were all able to see their work in action and really compete at Cal Poly in our first year," said Luarie Geronimo, Pioneer Valley High School Head Coach.

"I am proud of all of our teams. If we can get a robot to the tournament, compete all day and not breakdown, we will always consider it a success. The yearly challenges set up by Vex and the RECF Foundation are never easy, and we got a four month late start this season, but we will be ready for the next now," said Lupe Baltazar, Santa Maria High School Coach.

The SMJUHSD had 16 teams at the event.

The next state qualifying tournament is scheduled at SMJUHSD's very own Mark Richardson CTE Center on February 7th in Santa Maria.

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