



# Post-Forum Introduction

These slides were the basis for much of the discussion held during the June 2014 Western & Central Pennsylvania Region's Team Forum. Getting an update on the state of the Region is a good thing, but the whole point of a Forum is to also be able to ask questions. Therefore, the questions and the discussions that they generated will be recapped in these slides. Patricia's slides use blue letters, and so the way these added question and discussion recap slides will be identified is that their title will start with "Question:" and the font will use black letters.

Some of the original slides also require some additional information to convey the thought, and this will be provided on the following slide. When this occurs, the title of the slide being "noted" will end with an asterisk.



# ***FIRST***<sup>®</sup> Team Forum

## **Western & Central PA**

**June 24, 2014**

*U.S. Foundation For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology*



# Mission of *FIRST*\*

*U.S. Foundation For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology*

To inspire young people to become science & technology leaders, by engaging them in exciting mentor-based programs that build science, engineering and technology skills, that inspire innovation, and that foster well-rounded life capabilities including self-confidence, communication, and leadership.

This is what we do.

How have we done?

How can we be better?



The previous slide's "How have we done?" and "How can we be better?" is what this whole Team Forum is about. The Region has made significant progress in many areas that is worth looking back on. The Forum is not just about that, however. We are taking this as an opportunity to let the teams know our thoughts on how we are approaching making the Region stronger and reach more students. The "How can we be better?" is intended to go both directions, of course. We really do want to hear from the teams their suggestions concerning how we can be better.



# ***FIRST* Robotics Competition (FRC) in Western & Central PA**

- **How have we done?**
  - Progress: Teams, Events, *FIRST* Programs
- **How can we be better?**
  - Enhance the Team Experience: Events
  - Help teams be stronger and more sustainable
    - Resources needed: Materials, Training, Funding
    - Fundraising Toolkit
  - Reach more young people:
    - Increase Team membership
    - Increase the number of FRC Teams



# ***FIRST* Team Forum**

## **Western & Central PA**

### **Goals and Progress:**

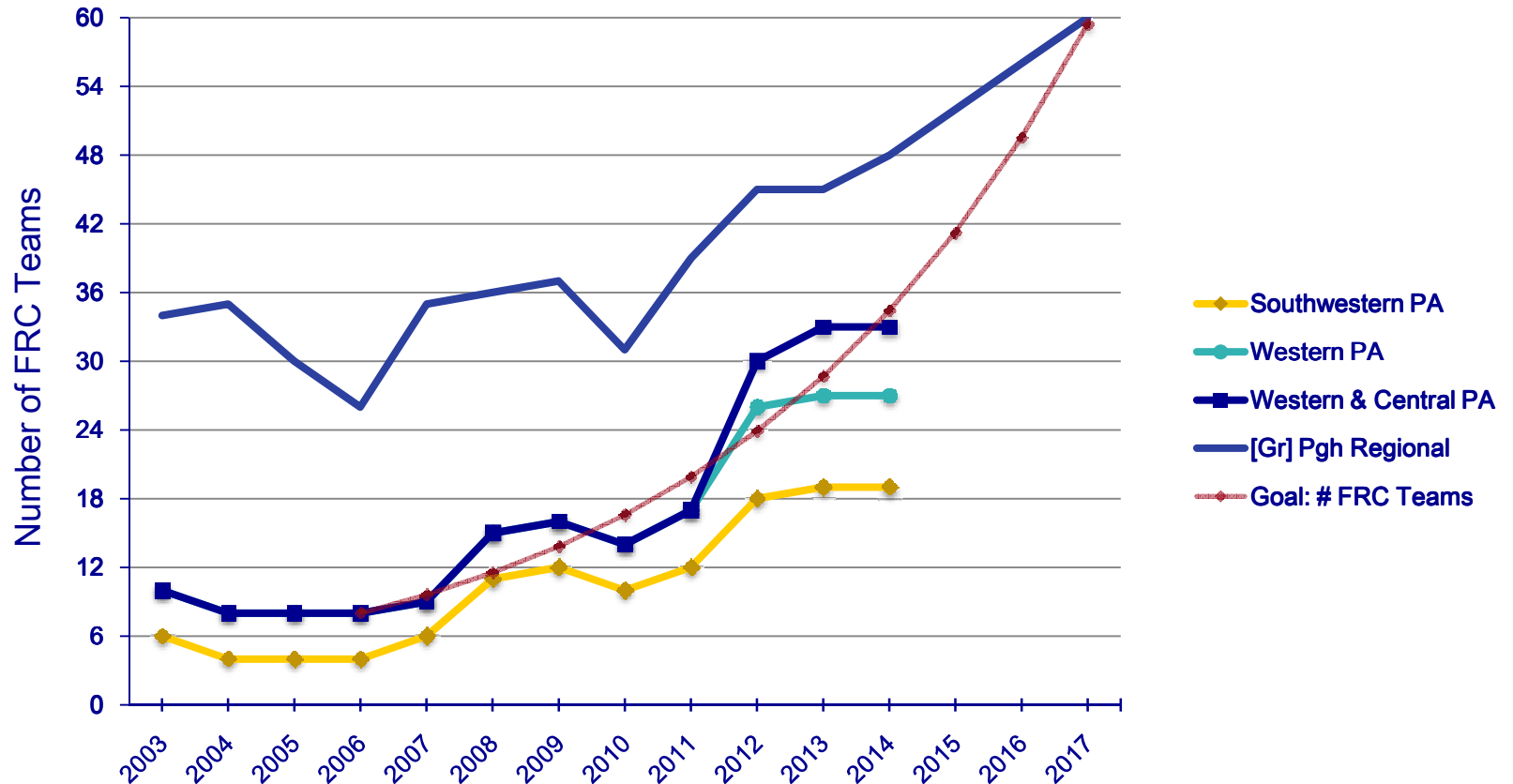
- FRC Teams
  - Growth: Number of Teams, Membership
- FRC Regional Events
- Other *FIRST* programs:
  - Jr.FLL
  - FLL
  - FTC



# Progress: FRC Team Growth\*

Goal: Increase Number of FRC Teams by 20% per year

**FIRST Robotics Competition Teams in Central and Western Pennsylvania:  
Growth by Region Since 2003**





Two important notes on the team growth goals on the previous slide:

- 1) The majority of the Region's teams are in the Pittsburgh section of the Commonwealth. (Considering that roughly to be Allegheny County along with its immediate neighboring counties.) While we won't turn down an opportunity to help a new team start anywhere in the Region, we are especially looking to add more teams in the areas in the arc going roughly from Erie to State College to Altoona. We hope that by getting more teams "out there" we can start to have local functions or SCRA-like groups start up to support those teams.
- 2) To help reach, and hopefully exceed, these goals we are embarking on an exciting new approach to team recruiting this year. There will be more on this later in the Forum.





# Progress: FRC Growth – Number & Diversity of Participants\*

## Goals:

- Increase Total Number of FRC Participants by  $\geq$  20% per year
- Increase #, % of participants: underserved, female, racially diverse, rural, other under-represented; to approach community levels

## Challenge:

- Evaluation and Data-Gathering
- Encouraging / Recruiting Teams & Participants: Underserved; Under-represented; Diversity



Patricia listed “Evaluation and Data Gathering” as a challenge. We understand that running or mentoring a team is a lot of work and the last thing that teams want to see is another request for data. To briefly explain what this data is for: Providing it to us helps you. To elaborate on that, our Region’s costs for the Kickoff, Workshop(s), and the Regional itself are paid for by grants or corporate sponsors. As you can imagine, they get many requests for donations and so the key things they look for in deciding who to fund are *“How many people, and who, are involved?”* and *“How does this program change lives?”* The data that Patricia asks for, whether demographics or stories, supports these funding requests. While these can appear to be just more work for the teams, please view them as opportunities to help the Region provide better events for your team.



# ***FIRST* Robotics Competition (FRC) in Western & Central PA**

- **How have we done?**
  - Progress: Teams, Events, *FIRST* Programs
- **How can we be better?**
  - Enhance the Team Experience: Events
  - Help teams be stronger and more sustainable
    - Resources needed: Materials, Training, Funding
    - Fundraising Toolkit
  - Reach more young people:
    - Increase Team membership
    - Increase the number of FRC Teams



# Progress: FRC Regional Events

- Regional Planning Committee
- FRC Kickoffs
- FRC Regionals: 2003 – 2014
- Scrimmages & Workshops – Thanks to Volunteers and Teams

## *Looking forward:*

- *More training/workshops/events?*
- *Kickoff 2015*
- *FRC Regional: 2015*
- *...and Beyond – Districts?*



# Question: Is the 2015 Regional going to be at Cal U?

Yes. As described in the preliminary Q&A sent to the teams prior to the Forum, our Region's 2015 Regional will be held again at Cal U. The reason is mostly financial. Besides outgrowing the Peterson Event Center, the Region has been operating at a significant financial deficit for so long that we were at risk of losing the backing of *FIRST's* headquarters. (Another region has lost its Regional starting in 2015 due to running in the red for too long.) Cal U offered a very attractive financial package and while not as convenient as the Pete, this year the Region is on better financial footing and can look forward again to a future.

One of the drawbacks of Cal U was that hotels were not generally close by. A large hotel is being built within a few miles of the Convocation Center and we will keep the teams up-to-date on when it opens.



# Question: Will *FIRST* HQ force us to go to the district model?

We have not heard anything that suggests that HQ will force regions to go to the District Model. (This model was described in the preliminary Q&A sent to the teams before the Team Forum.) That said, however, over time it could become more disadvantageous to our teams for us to be using the Regional Model as the areas around us move to the District Model. The problem is that teams in regions using the Regional Model cannot attend district events and so the more that regions move to the District Model, the fewer opportunities there are for our teams to travel to other areas of the country.

As is, New England, Michigan and MAR are using the District Model and Washington and Oregon and merging in the District Model starting in 2015. Other regions are discussing it for switching in later years. The District Model has many advantages for teams (not saying that every team will like it, of course) and so those regions staying in the Regional Model will likely become a minority in the not-too-distant future.



# ***FIRST* Robotics Competition (FRC) in Western & Central PA**

- **How have we done?**
  - Progress: Teams, Events, *FIRST* Programs
- **How can we be better?**
  - Enhance the Team Experience: Events
  - Help teams be stronger and more sustainable
    - Resources needed: Materials, Training, Funding
    - Fundraising Toolkit
  - Reach more young people:
    - Increase Team membership
    - Increase the number of FRC Teams



## Progress: Other *FIRST* Programs in Southwestern PA

- ***FIRST* Tech Challenge (FTC)**
  - SW PA FTC Qualifying Tournament since 2012
- ***FIRST* LEGO® League (FLL)**
  - Qualifying Tournaments since 2013
- **Junior *FIRST* LEGO® League (Jr.FLL)**
  - Growing Interest; Need an official Partner

### Thanks to *FIRST* Partners:

- FLL Operations Partner: Robin Shoop
- FTC Affiliate Partner: Tom Zawislak





# ***FIRST* Robotics Competition (FRC) in Western & Central PA\***

- How have we done?
  - Progress: Teams, Events, *FIRST* Programs
- **How can we be better?**
  - **Help teams be stronger and more sustainable**
    - Resources needed: Materials, Training, Funding
    - Fundraising Toolkit
  - **Enhance the Team Experience: Events**
  - **Reach more young people:**
    - Increase Team membership
    - Increase the number of FRC Teams



# Comment from a Team: Sustaining

An interesting comment was made about teams being sustainable. There is a lot of financial help offered to rookie teams, but there is little to prepare them for the difficulty of being a 2<sup>nd</sup> year team “on their own” for the first time. Because of this, two of our Region’s 2013 Rookie teams merged in 2014 so that together they would have the financial resources needed to be sustaining.

At the Team Forum, Craig said that he would consider how the new recruiting structure could help address this problem. As an after-the-fact comment showing how team input is valued and can change things, subsequent to the Team Forum the new Team Recruiting Task Force was changed to helping the new teams for their first two years, not just their rookie year, to help them prepare for, and survive, the financial hurdle of moving from the rookie year to their 2<sup>nd</sup> year. The goal has been moved from starting new teams to starting new sustainable teams.



# Towards Stronger Teams: Fundraising, Grants: Events & Teams\*

- Foundations
  - The Heinz Endowments
  - The Grable Foundation
  - Others
- Timing – Reports, Proposals
- Cross-Program Grants?
- Team Grants?
- Fundraising Toolkit ([www.usfirst.org](http://www.usfirst.org))
- **Could Teams working *together* raise more *total* funding?**



The last bullet is an intriguing fundraising thought: Are there fundraising activities too large to be done by a single team yet could be done if several teams in the area joined forces? We encourage teams not to think of fundraising as an “us versus them” between teams but rather to think of ways of increasing the overall fundraising across all the teams. Organizing a fundraiser worked by, with the proceeds split across, multiple teams is an excellent example of Gracious Professionalism.



# Towards Stronger Teams: Fundraising/Grants -Events & Teams\*

What I need to be able to help you:

- **Team Data / Numbers:**
  - Team: # total, male/female, racial demographics
  - Budget info (will remain confidential)
    - Broad categories ok; separate out travel
    - Realistic needs
    - Matching amount &/or other plans
  - Outreach – estimate # people interactions
    - This category multiplies team impact
  - Underserved / Under-represented
- **Impact of *FIRST* Robotics Competition in our region**
  - Where seniors are going;
  - Personal stories/anecdotes
  - Photos – Videos – Links
  - What else can we include here?
- **Specific Needs: What does your team need?**



As mentioned earlier, many potential sponsors want to know who and how their dollars will impact lives and so the demographic information along with “how it impacted me” stories are vital.

Additionally, some potential sponsors like to target their dollars to particular things. For example, one company might be interesting in giving money for certain types of equipment while another potential sponsor might be interested in funding the teams’ outreach programs. In these cases, it helps if we know the teams’ budgets and needs so that we can take advantage of these focused funding opportunities. If you tell us what you need money for, we might be able to find a sponsor for it. However, if we don’t know the details then we might miss funding opportunities that can help your team.



# Towards Stronger Teams: Team Needs

- We have some info, but would like updates. Please communicate your team's needs – the more specific the better –
- **The Basics:**
  - Leadership / Mentors
  - Support / Funding
  - A Place to Build
  - A Place to Play/Compete
- **Survey of FRC Team Needs** *(from Fall 2013)*
  - Mentors
  - Funding
  - Training
  - Materials



# ***FIRST* Robotics Competition (FRC) in Western & Central PA**

- How have we done?
  - Progress: Teams, Events, *FIRST* Programs
- **How can we be better?**
  - Help teams be stronger and more sustainable
    - Resources needed: Materials, Training, Funding
    - Fundraising Toolkit
  - **Enhance the Team Experience: Events**
  - Reach more young people:
    - Increase Team membership
    - Increase the number of FRC Teams





# Enhance the Team Experience: Events

Looking forward:

- More training/workshops/events?
- Kickoff 2015
- FRC Regional: 2015
- More multi-team outreach events?
- ...and Beyond – Districts?



# Towards Stronger Teams: Training – Workshops\*

- **Opportunities: Team-Driven**
  - SCRA – November Saturday – needs an organizer
  - Kickoff
    - Robot Quick Build
    - Other?
  - Summer? Fall (*pre-November*)? Build Season?
  - Other *FIRST* Programs (FTC rookies – outreach opportunity)



What would you like to see in a workshop? If we know what topics the teams are interested in learning more about we will try to have a workshop session (or all-day special event if needed) to cover the topic. Let us know!

We are also looking for volunteers who can help with workshop sessions or items like the Robot Quick Build during Kickoff. This year, in particular, we see a possible need for extra sessions covering the new Control System. We're thinking that in addition to having a session on this during Kickoff, perhaps having one a week or two into Build Season might be useful as it would give teams some time to work with it and get questions. Does this sound useful?



# Towards Stronger Teams: Training - Workshops

- **Needs?**
  - Fundraising
  - New Control System (*Kit of Parts*)
  - Programming
  - Other? (*we have lists from past surveys*)



# Kickoff Committee – Interested?

- **Saturday, January 3, 2015**
- **Required:**
  - Location – Streaming Video
  - Kit of Parts Storage, Transport, Distribution
  - Volunteers
- **Optional:**
  - Workshops
  - Field Elements
  - Food (?)



# Enhance the Team Experience: Events

## Looking forward:

- More training/workshops/events?
- Kickoff 2015
- FRC Regional: 2015
- **More multi-team outreach events?**
- **...and Beyond – Districts?**
  - we will revisit this in the Q & A



# ***FIRST* Robotics Competition (FRC) in Western & Central PA**

- How have we done?
  - Progress: Teams, Events, *FIRST* Programs
- **How can we be better?**
  - Help teams be stronger and more sustainable
    - Resources needed: Materials, Training, Funding
    - Fundraising Toolkit
  - Enhance the Team Experience: Events
  - **Reach more young people:**
    - Increase Team membership
    - Increase the number of FRC Teams



# Inspiring more young people by Increasing Team Membership

- Some teams struggle
- How many is too many?
- What has worked for your team?





**Inspiring more young people by increasing the number of teams\***

## **FRC Team Recruiting**

- Concerns, Risks & Benefits:
  - “Grow the Pie”
- How? When? Who?
- Interested in joining an FRC Team Recruiting Task Force?



We are switching to a new team recruiting method this year. Instead of asking for one or two people to be experts at the entire range of team recruiting from cold calling to team formation to budgeting to what to do before going to a Regional, we're now splitting up the pieces of team recruiting so that people can help when they are available and for the topics they understand. In summary, each new team will have one person assigned to keeping in touch with that team and learning what they need but then other experts can be called in to help with particular aspects such as budgeting, prepping for the Regional, etc.

A separate email will be going out to the teams describing this approach in more detail. We hope that many people will be willing to offer up a small amount of their time to help the new teams.



# ***FIRST* Robotics Competition (FRC) in Western & Central PA**

## **RECAP**

- **How have we done?**
  - Progress: Teams, Events, *FIRST* Programs
- **How can we be better?**
  - Enhance the Team Experience: Events
  - Help teams be stronger and more sustainable
    - Resources needed: Materials, Training, Funding
    - Fundraising Toolkit
  - Reach more young people:
    - Increase Team membership
    - Increase the number of FRC Teams



# What we need at the Regional Level: Volunteers & Organizers

- **Regional Planning Committee Members**
- Webmaster
- Publicity
- **Recruiting New Teams – FRC, FTC**
- Multi-team *FIRST* Outreach Events
- Senior Mentor - *status*
- In-Kind Donation of Services:
  - Marketing, Printing
  - Event locations / possible fundraising event?
  - Other?



# ***FIRST* Team Forum**

## **Western & Central PA\***

*Thank you!*

Contact us with ideas, questions, etc.

**Patricia DePra**

*FIRST* Regional Director

[PDePra@USFIRST.org](mailto:PDePra@USFIRST.org)

(412) 512-4302

**Craig Yankes**

Chair, Regional Planning Committee

[FIRSTPittsburghChair@gmail.com](mailto:FIRSTPittsburghChair@gmail.com)



And a “Thank you!” also goes out to Cal U for offering the use of their Southpointe facility, and its electronic meeting capability, for this Team Forum. Christopher Allen, the Director at Southpointe, was a wonderful host.



# ***FIRST* Team Forum**

## **Western & Central PA**

# **Q & A**

Contact us with ideas, questions, etc.

**Patricia DePra**

*FIRST* Regional Director

[PDePra@USFIRST.org](mailto:PDePra@USFIRST.org)

(412) 512-4302

**Craig Yankes**

Chair, Regional Planning Committee

[FIRSTPittsburghChair@gmail.com](mailto:FIRSTPittsburghChair@gmail.com)