

Columbus Space Program FRC 4188

Equity Plan

Introduction

What is equity in *FIRST*, and why is it so important?

Equity in *FIRST* is giving all students, no matter gender, race, religion, nationality, or sexual orientation the opportunity to participate and excel in *FIRST* and to receive the wealth of opportunities that come with being a *FIRST* student. It is important to address equity and demographic inequalities that persist in *FIRST* because *FIRST* students are society's future leaders and visionaries. If inequalities are left unaddressed, we are withholding a wealth of different viewpoints and perspectives that can go on and change the world as adults. Current inequalities in society and the workforce mirror inequalities in *FIRST*. Columbus Space Program strives to tear down these inequalities and make *FIRST* and STEM accessible for everyone no matter who they are.

Columbus Space Program has identified three focus areas on equity:

- Recruitment and Training
- Within the team
- Within our community and other *FIRST* teams

Equity in recruitment and training focuses on how Columbus Space Program ensures that students from every demographic are made aware that *FIRST* and Columbus Space Program exist. In addition, equity in Columbus Space Program's recruitment and training process ensures that all new recruits are on an equal playing field.

Sustaining equity within Columbus Space Program itself focuses on ensuring that every student on the team is in an equal environment and that everyone gets a fair chance to participate in competing in *FIRST*.

Equity within Columbus Space Program's community and other *FIRST* teams focuses on providing everyone within our community an equal opportunity at seeing the opportunities that *FIRST* and STEM present. Also, equity in this area focuses on providing our fellow *FIRST* teams with the resources they might need to compete and perform well at competition.

Equity in Recruitment and Training

- The Use of Interpersonal Connections as a Means of Recruitment

Oftentimes, recruitment for extra curriculars is associated with simply handing out flyers and waiting for new recruits to come in, however, that is not how it is done at Columbus Space Program. Much of Columbus Space Program's recruitment involves its members going out into their respective schools and spreading the word about *FIRST* and Columbus Space Program, or speaking directly with students that have expressed interest in STEM and/or robotics. Using interpersonal connections as a means of recruitment allows for students who typically are not introduced to *FIRST* to get the opportunity to be in *FIRST*.

- Fairness in the Training Process

Columbus Space Program welcomes students of all STEM backgrounds, from those with little to no background, to students that have participated and shown an interest in STEM all their lives. Regardless of STEM background, all new recruits start with the same base-level training. After base-level training, new recruits are divided into *FIRST*Tech Challenge teams to compete during the fall season before the winter *FIRST*Robotics Competition season. This model of training closely resembles that of a junior varsity and varsity team sports model. The training process allows for all new recruits to be on a level playing field and learn and grow at the same pace.

Sustainability of Equity with Columbus Space Program

While Columbus Space Program has established an equitable environment for those starting off on the team, it is of great importance that equity is maintained for current members. Through student-led organizations and team policy, Columbus Space Program offers its

members an equal environment to learn, grow, and participate in *FIRST* Robotics Competition.

- Student-led Organizations
 - Build Brave Girls

Boys are raised to be Brave, and Girls are raised to be Perfect. Build Brave Girls is determined to change this mindset and inspire girls to be brave and take bold risks. Build Brave Girls influences this mindset by providing an extensive, varied network of resources that give girls the opportunity to explore STEM-based careers. It inspires and encourages girls to join robotics by providing them with outstanding role models of girls who have already found their place in robotics. Ultimately, Build Brave Girls believes that, through support and recognition, the unrealistic standard of perfection can be replaced by a supportive standard of curiosity that allows girls to explore their interests and challenge their minds. Additionally, Build Brave Girls leaders started new social media focused on celebrating our girls and girls who are role models, and in the summer of 2020, we will hold the first #BuildBraveGirls camp for girls ages 10 – 12, when girls really start pulling away from STEM. The camp was designed by 2017 Dean’s List finalist Hallie R and is built on a “Master Class” concept. We will hold this camp with two tracks. Every girl will participate in both tracks, however the girls will be allowed to choose the track she wants as her “major”. The girls will learn mechanical and engineering skills in one major and design and communication skills in the other. One third of her day will be spent on her “minor” and the other two thirds on her “major.” We want the girls to walk away learning something she might otherwise not have ever pursued and understanding the breadth of opportunities available in FIRST.

- Team Ethics
 - Both Columbus Space Program’s mission statement and team core values ensure that all team members are treated fairly on the team.
 - Core Values

- We are a team.
- We do the work to find solutions with guidance from our coaches and mentors.
- We know our coaches and mentors don't have all the answers; we learn together.
- We honor the spirit of friendly competition.
- What we discover is more important than what we win.
- We share our experiences with others.
- We display with Gracious Professionalism and Coopertition in everything we do.
- We have FUN!
- Mission Statement
 - "The Columbus Space Program is a co-curricular STEM education organization within the Muscogee County School District that provides experiences and opportunities to its student team members that will give them the confidence to reach their full potential in the professional world and to give back by sharing their experiences within the community."

Community Outreach; Offering Equal Exposure to *FIRST* Within Our Community

As a *FIRST* team, Columbus Space Program strives to expose *FIRST* and STEM to people of all kinds throughout the community. Everyone deserves an equal opportunity to both see and enjoy the power of *FIRST* and robotics. Through various student-led organizations, Columbus Space Program is bringing *FIRST* into the local community and empowering all to be a part of *FIRST*.

- Student-led Organizations
 - Tech-It-Out
 - Tech-It-Out is a yearly event hosted by Columbus Space Program in partnership with the Muscogee County School District. Falling on the first day of the Columbus PCH qualifier event, Tech-It-Out is a field trip

offered to all elementary and middle schoolers in the Muscogee County School District. Students are able to come to the Columbus qualifier event, take part in a variety of STEM activities and watch the *FIRST* Robotics Competition that is occurring simultaneously. In addition, high school and middle school students get the opportunity to go to the pits and speak directly to Columbus Space Program members as well as members of other teams competing. Some of Columbus Space Program's current members as well as veterans have participated in Tech-It-Out in the past, which garnered their interest in *FIRST*.

- *FIRST*Class School District
 - In addition to partnering with the Muscogee County School District in Tech-It-Out, Columbus Space Program has worked with MCSD's superintendent David Lewis to make MCSD a *FIRST*Class School District. Since this has occurred, every elementary school and elementary school in MCSD have started *FIRST*Lego League teams. Middle schools across MCSD have started FLL teams as well as FTC teams, and high schools are beginning to start FTC teams as well. The establishment of MCSD as a *FIRST*Class School District has allowed for all students to have an equal opportunity and exposure to *FIRST*.
- Robotics in the Classroom
 - Robotics in the Classroom is an initiative created to integrate robotics into AP Physics and Computer Science classes. Each year, problems are made that correspond with the AP Physics curriculum, these problems are given to AP Physics students at Columbus High School and they are also available at CSP's pit at competition and to FRC teams across the country. This initiative brings robotics to students who might not have had the previous exposure to robotics, and can garner interest in robotics.
- DE Field/FTC Hub
 - Columbus Space Program is one of only four teams in Georgia with a full functioning DE field. In addition, Columbus Space Program has

recently become a *FIRST*Tech Challenge hub. Both fields are available for other teams to practice on. This makes practice space more accessible to teams who may not have the means to always practice on a full functioning field.

- Two-year Shadow Program
 - Columbus Space Program's two-year shadow program strives to help rural FRC and FTC teams get on their feet. For two years, rural FRC teams are able to come to Columbus Space Program's headquarters and shadow CSP members and learn skills to grow their team. This ensures equity for rural teams, which is important given Columbus Space Program's southern location.
- Compass Alliance
 - Columbus Space Program is proud to be a member of the Compass Alliance. At Columbus Space Program's headquarters are all of the tools and knowledge needed to assist any team. Often, in addition to making our own parts, parts are also being made for other teams in need. Being a part of the Compass Alliance ensures that all teams have access to a wealth of resources so that they can perform well as a team.
- #SeeltBelt
 - SeeltBelt is a newer initiative that highlights minorities in STEM. SeeltBelt includes social media posts that inform the public about minorities that have excelled in STEM. With SeeltBelt, Columbus Space Program strives to give minority students people to look up to as well as encouragement to join STEM activities as well as *FIRST*.