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Young Innovators: Robotics Competition Kicks Off

POSTED JANUARY 14TH, 2011

NYSTAR NEWS January 13th, 2011
Source: http://www.nystar.state.ny.us/nl/110113.pdf

More than 400 Brooklyn middle schoolers packed the halls and gym of NYU-Poly for the 11th annual Brooklyn qualifying round of the FIRST (For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology) LEGO League (FLL) robotics challenge. Twenty-two teams bested the competition to advance to the Citywide FLL Robotics final in March.

Meanwhile, in NYU-Poly's Pfizer Auditorium, 38 high school teams from throughout the NY metro area linked to a NASA video downlink to discover that their challenge will be to create and program their large robots to hang geometric shapes on a grid during the citywide FIRST Robotics Competition (FRC). Fitted with kits and instructions on Saturday, the high school students will spend the next eight weeks preparing for the intense competition.

Amid thunderous applause and spirited shouts from their teachers, parents and team mascots, 37 teams faced off in this year's FLL Brooklyn Qualifier, which challenged middle school students to design and program small LEGO robots to complete bio-medical tasks such as stenting blocked arteries or mending broken bones. Mentored by their teachers—as well as NYUPoly graduate fellows who conducted in-classroom lessons to complement the robotics challenge at 16 of the schools—the teams spent several months creating the robots they debuted at Saturday's competition.

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