



Sparking Interest in Math, Science: One Robot at a Time

By Brooklyn Eagle

Program Is Now in 18 Brooklyn Schools

DOWNTOWN BROOKLYN -- The Black Male Donor Collaborative (BMDC) announced a pledge of \$100,000 to Polytechnic Institute of New York University (NYU-Poly) to expand the university's Central Brooklyn Robotics Initiative (CBRI).



Founded in 2007, CBRI pairs teachers in economically disadvantaged Brooklyn schools with doctoral fellows from NYU-Poly's engineering programs to design dynamic, hands-on classroom lessons that engage students' fascination with robotics to boost their interest in science, technology, engineering and mathematics.

The BMDC aims to improve school performance and educational opportunities for young African-American men, who have dramatically lower high school graduation rates than other student groups.

Beginning with the fall 2010 semester, CBRI is expanding from 12 to 18 Brooklyn elementary, middle and high schools, with the effort slated to expand to 36 schools over the next three years. More than 80 percent of students served are minorities, who are often under-represented in the STEM disciplines and careers.

CBRI has a profound and measurable impact on students. For example, after participating in the program in spring 2010, 74 percent of students saw their overall grades jump one-half or one full letter grade. Eighty percent saw their science and math grades improve one-half or one full letter grade.

Students reported both educational and emotional benefits from participating, ranging from increased interest in science and technology to improved listening skills and finding a role model in the NYU-Poly fellows.

The CBRI program is also helping to reduce isolation of minority students through robot design contests. Jerry M. Hultin, president of NYU-Poly, said “By introducing young students to the joys and challenges of STEM [science, technology, engineering, mathematics] subjects, we encourage them to pursue higher education and rewarding technical careers. Through the BMDC grant, we will expand our efforts to improve student achievement in local schools, further their teachers’ knowledge and widen our students’ educational experience.”