

World champions at the MATE International Remotely Operated Vehicle Competition announced

Excitement ran high as more than 800 students representing 70 teams from 18 countries gathered in Kingsport, Tennessee, June 20 to 22, for the Marine Advanced Technology Education (MATE) International Remotely Operated Vehicle (ROV) Competition World Championship. Top honors in the EXPLORER (advanced) class went to Hong Kong University of Science and Technology's "Epoxysea," while Aptos High School - Seal Team Scalyr - from Aptos, California, captured first place in the RANGER (intermediate) class.

This is not just any robotics competition, it is underwater. Student teams competed using their own designed and created underwater robots - ROVs - in the Kingsport Aquatic Center. The teams also delivered presentations to "business panels" of judges who represent science, technology and engineering fields.

Hong Kong University of Science and Technology has a history of excellence in the MATE competition. The team took first place in 2017 and finished fourth in 2018 and 2016. These students also give back as volunteers at the Hong Kong regional event and help mentor younger teams.

Aptos High School also has a history of success and giving back. The team won the Monterey Bay regional event the last three years and took home first place at the 2017 world championship in Long Beach, California. One former team member now works for Blue Robotics, a competition sponsor, and volunteers his time and talents as technical support for the event's livestream.

"While the students' technical and engineering knowledge is impressive, each year I am amazed and encouraged by their collaboration and problem-solving," said Jill Zande, president of MATE Inspiration for Innovation (MATE II) and associate director and competition coordinator of MATE Center. "Teams from different corners of the country and across the globe work together to support each other and solve problems that impact us all – from ensuring public safety to maintaining healthy waterways and a clean environment."

This year's competition highlighted the role ROVs play in monitoring freshwater rivers and lakes and ensuring the safety of dams in Eastern Tennessee as well as the importance of preserving the Civil War historical artifacts in that area.

Teams competed in either the EXPLORER or RANGER class. Judges evaluated teams on the design, construction and performance of the ROVs; the members' ability to communicate; and how they developed the ROVs.

This is not just about the robots. The competition is about transforming students into leaders, entrepreneurs and innovators. The international event stretches young minds to tackle real-world problems, igniting their passion in science, technology, engineering and mathematics while enhancing their critical thinking and business acumen.

Organized by MATE II, the MATE Center is supported by the Marine Technology Society's ROV Committee. This competition also was sponsored by the Eastman Foundation, Visit Kingsport, Ballad Health, the Tennessee Valley Authority, BAE Systems, Motorola Solutions Foundation, Microsoft, Bulgin, Teledyne Marine, Blue Robotics, as well as other technology and education-related organizations. For more information, visit www.marinetech.org.

##