



PHOTO BY MORGAN FORD/THE GAMECOCK

Michigan high school students wait with their robot for a turn in the FIRST Robotics Competition practice round.

Robots come to Columbia

Students, engineering teams compete at the Colonial Center

BY JON TURNER
THE GAMECOCK

Team 818 was pretty self-assured. In fact, a couple of them, Megan McCarthy and Charles Johnson, teammates from Michigan, were wearing signs that read, "Need help? See team 818."

McCarthy and Charles, both high school students, are competing this weekend in the Palmetto FIRST Robotics Competition at the Colonial Center. And while McCarthy said their robot had been showing fairly well during its practice rounds, the real action starts to-

day. The organization is called FIRST, For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology. High schools around the country collaborate with teachers and parents to design a robot to fulfill a certain task.

Team 818 is the result of a partnership between a Michigan school district and General Motors. The robot's name is Van Guard.

Robotics competitions are expensive. The Palmetto Regional competition held at USC cost

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RHA money purchases lifesaving equipment

BY ADAM BEAM
THE GAMECOCK

The Residence Hall Association voted unanimously this week to give \$2,500 to USC's Medical First Responder program to purchase new equipment.

The money, from RHA's general programming fund, will purchase a jump bag full of lifesaving equipment and an automated external defibrillator that jumpstarts the heart if someone is in cardiac arrest.

Paul Gerrard, a third-year business economics student, requested the money during Tuesday night's RHA meeting.

"Until we get that second jump bag, if one person is tied up at a call, no one can respond to a second call, because there is not enough equipment," Gerrard said.

Director Ken Corbin said they needed the new equipment be-

cause they are starting to cover student-sponsored special events on campus. When Corbin started looking for extra money, Gerrard suggested RHA.

"I didn't think we would get anything, let alone the amount of money that we did," Corbin said. "It's quite a pleasant surprise."

USC's Medical First Responder started in 1969 and operates out of the Thompson Student Health Center. It runs off of student activity fees and until now has never received any outside funding.

Corbin called RHA's allocation "groundbreaking" and praised the organization for its generosity.

"The bottom line is, we're in the business to save people's lives," Corbin said. "You can't really put a dollar value on that."

First Responder serves USC students on campus and has someone on duty 24 hours a day. The pro-

"The bottom line is, we're in the business to save people's lives."

KEN CORBIN
FIRST RESPONDER DIRECTOR



PHOTO BY JASON STEELMAN/THE GAMECOCK

USC First Responders will be getting a new jump bag.

gram is dispatched through the campus 911 system, and Corbin said the program gets between 40 and 60 calls a month.

RHA President Adam Hark said while the RHA Senate doesn't usually give out money like this, he isn't surprised at the unanimous vote.

"That's a pretty clear-cut example of something proactive we

can do to benefit the lives of our residents here on campus," he said.

First Responder has about nine employees, most of whom are students. Corbin said the students are required to have at least a basic EMT state EMT license.

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Recess



PHOTO BY MORGAN FORD/THE GAMECOCK

Brandon Betchmann, a first-year business student, plays with children at Greek Day.

USC law students argue Pledge constitutionality

BY GABRIELLE SINCLAIR
THE GAMECOCK

Two USC law students will face off Tuesday at the S.C. Supreme Court over the constitutionality of the Pledge of Allegiance being recited in public schools.

The finals of the J. Woodrow Lewis Competition will begin at 4:30 p.m. at the S.C. Supreme

Court and are open to the public. The justices will announce the winner afterward.

Second-year law student Thomas Sinclair will present the government's case and third-year law student Ashley Anderson will argue for the plaintiff in a fictional case based on one now in the U.S. Supreme Court.

In the first round of the competition, six second- and third-year law students prepared 15-page briefs and gave oral arguments to local attorneys who served as judges.

Second-year law student Fred Marcinak, who is organizing the competition, said the S.C. justices would not rule on whether the Pledge is constitutional, but would instead pick the winner based on who gives the best argument.

"But it'll still be interesting to see their reaction to it," he said.

USC's law school sponsors the annual competition. The winner receives \$750 and the runner-up receives \$250.

In June 2002, the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals ruled in favor of Michael Newdow, an atheist who challenged the constitutionality of San Francisco elementary schools requiring teachers to lead their students in the Pledge each morning.

Five months later, Congress passed a resolution supporting the Pledge and opposing the lower court ruling, and thus "reaffirmed the role of religion in national life," Marcinak said.

The U.S. Supreme Court heard arguments March 24 regarding the Pledge for the first time in history. A decision on that case is expected by June.

◆ LAW, SEE PAGE 3

Southern University discovers 541 cases of grade tampering

BY ADAM NOSSITER
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

BATON ROUGE, LA. —Southern University will likely revoke degrees given to some of the 541 current and former students implicated in a grades-for-money scandal that has been traced to a worker in the registrar's office.

Chancellor Edward Jackson Jackson said Thursday that the scandal at the nation's largest historically black university dates to 1995, and involves both undergraduate and graduate students paying an assistant registrar to have their grades changed.

Some students paid to have as many as 20 grades changed, said Jackson, who declined to give the assistant registrar's name.

On campus Thursday, a number of students said the practice was widely known, though none said they had ever paid for a grade.

"Sophomore year, it (cost) like \$75 a grade," said Eddie Green, a senior.

East Baton Rouge Parish District Attorney Doug Moreau said he received a summary of the yearlong Southern investigation and was waiting for a complete file of the university's evidence and conclusions to determine how to proceed with criminal charges.

"I think they have concluded all of the interviews and investigation they were going to do," he said.

Moreau said the most obvious law violations could involve filing false public records, forgery and bribery if money changed hands. He said the university's investigation involved more than 500 students and more than 2,000 possible grade changes.

The scandal came to light in March 2003, when a student who had enrolled in a Southern graduate program presented credentials

showing she had earned a bachelor's degree from that department.

The department had no record that the woman had ever graduated and alerted the university's auditors, who discovered that unauthorized entries had been made in a number of academic records.

To prevent similar abuses in the future, the 17,000-student university has new internal controls in place and has assigned an internal auditor to monitor the registrar's office, Jackson said.

Jackson said each of the 541 people will have a chance for a hearing before a panel of administrators and faculty members.

A number of students interviewed said they were upset to know that their fellow students had bought grades rather than studying for them.

"To me, it shouldn't be going on. You've got to earn your grade," said Leonard Pete, a senior.

Academic team sweeps tournament

BY ALEXIS STRATTON
THE GAMECOCK

USC's Academic Team defeated nationally ranked Maryland as it took first place at the Duke March Madness Academic Tournament.

Team members Erick Bousman, Joe Stanton, J.R. Fennell and Eric Douglass beat out Duke, North Carolina State, North Carolina, Wake Forest and Virginia Commonwealth.

Stanton, the team's vice president, said this was the first time the team had gone undefeated at a tournament.

"I'm very pleased with the results," said Stanton, a second-year English student. "Any time we come out with a win it's a big deal, especially since we're kind of an up-and-coming program."

While some members expected a positive outcome, coming out undefeated was especially sweet.

Douglass, a second-year law student, said defeating Virginia Commonwealth and Maryland, both top-15 teams, was "a big step for our team."

"Just going undefeated was good," he said. "It's a hard thing to do in one of these types of tournaments."

Treasurer and fourth-year history student Fennell said he was surprised they beat everyone. "I think it's kind of a confidence booster for us," he said, attributing their success to a "good group effort."

Stanton agreed that everyone on the team made great contributions to their victory. "I think we had some very strong perfor-

mances from everyone," he said.

Two USC teams competed at the tournament, which was held last Saturday at Duke University. It was USC's first visit to the tournament, and team members hope that they made a lasting impression upon their competitors.

"I think now we've proven we can compete with some nationally ranked teams, and I think now we want to take it up another notch," Douglass said. "Our goal for next year is to break into the top 10 and win the regional championships."

Douglass said he thinks other teams will take notice of them after this showing.

"Beating teams like Maryland and Virginia Commonwealth are accomplishments because those

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