

CYBORG from Page 8B

Most of the students are new or only in their second year of doing robotics. Also, the team is functioning with a greater emphasis on student leadership, with the youth themselves carrying out more tasks.

The team is structured by three sub-groups, each with a different focus: programming, business and engineering. Ideally, a fourth sub-group for marketing will be created once the team acquires students interested in that area.

At the helm is senior Tad Stapleton, team captain. Fellow seniors Adam Flaigg-Fairless and Cheyenne Lyon serve as the programming captain and business captain, respectively, and sophomore Mason Reynolds is engineering captain.

About 15 other students join the team in various specialty areas. However, they're encouraged to dabble in each field to

acquire basic knowledge and experience.

"We want everyone to have a general understanding of how the other departments work," Flaigg-Fairless said.

During competitions, judges may ask students questions pertaining to any field, and they are expected to answer competently, he added.

A welcome for all

The different sub-groups offer students with various proclivities relating to the sciences, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics to participate. For instance, Lyon said she is "very not technologically inclined." Yet she thrives in her role as business captain and carrying out the tasks it requires, such as budgeting, managing documentation and overseeing fundraising events, activities and sponsorships.

"It's interesting to be in a leadership position where if you

don't do something, the team can't function," she said.

She believes the "real sense" of administrative work she's gleaned from this experience will be useful "in whatever future career I pursue." She views participating on the robotics team as a valuable opportunity "to work in a field whose careers are increasing."

For Flaigg-Fairless, programming comes naturally, as does guiding other students in how to apply computer software. Being on the robotics team lets him try out ideas he's generated, but previously didn't have the time and resources for.

"I can experiment and teach myself a lot of new things," he said.

Reynolds also has a natural inclination for engineering. During the preseason, he is working with the other engineering students on designing a torsion bar suspension system modeled after those used on combat vehicles during World War II.

One benefit of having numerous fresh faces is the influx of new ideas, Flaigg-Fairless said.

"It brings more innovation to the team to have new members," he said, citing that as one reason for last year's success.

Continuing in that fashion this seasons, he said, "We're trying to mix it up with a lot of new ideas and see what sticks."

Tournaments ahead

The Seagulls' first tournament will be March 9 through 11 in Wilsonville. The second is March 23 to 25 in Oregon City. The team can take as many as 17 students to each competition. At Seaside, students who want to attend must put in at least 60 hours during the build season.

"It's encouraged to be active and participating," Flaigg-Fairless said.

The students currently meet for three to five hours two days per week. During build season, they will meet every Monday

through Saturday.

Each year requires a budget of about \$30,000 to \$40,000 to pay for competition entry fees, transportation, housing and parts for the robot. Team members and mentors raise the money by finding sponsors.

"When we have more, it allows us to try new things and redesign our robot to fit unforeseen conditions," Flaigg-Fairless said.

The robotics team will be holding a banquet dinner at 6 p.m. Dec. 17. The event is an invitational for former or potential sponsors to learn more about the program and the importance of science, technology and math education, Lyon said. The team plans to partner with the high school's culinary arts program to make a spaghetti dinner. Those interested in attending can contact the school at 503-738-5586.

To stay up to date on the team, visit their website at team3673.org.



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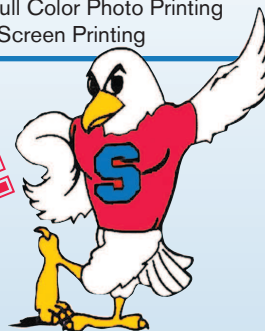
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