

ICAN article for winter 2013

The University of Northern Iowa (UNI) Classic Upward Bound (CUB) scholars continue to keep busy throughout the academic year. Between juggling jobs, school and extra-curricular activities our scholars are learning the importance of time management and good study habits in order to succeed in both personal and academic endeavors.

One of the major updates going on with the UNI Classic Upward Bound program is the success of our robotics team. In our last letter we described how our robotics team came to be last year and we were preparing for our first competition in October 2012. The competition was held at Holmes Junior High in Cedar Falls. First, our participants were questioned by judges on how they developed the design for the robot, how the team handled setbacks, and concerning the robot, the team, and how the robot and the team came into being. After passing technology and robotics inspections, and after a few test runs, "Bruce Wayne", the name of the robot, and the team were ready for competition.

Following seven rounds of competition, each round lasting two minutes and thirty seconds, our robotics team made it into the semi-final rounds. In order to proceed, alliances between two teams had to be formed and team 4156 from Central City, Iowa selected team 5445, UNI Classic Upward Bound's team, as an alliance partner. The goal of the competition was to move rings, either weighted or not weighted, from one PVC piping on the outside of a square arena to the middle. The robots then needed to place the weighted or non-weighted rings on various levels of PVC piping to score various amounts of points for the different levels and weight of the rings. The teams could also score points by being able to lift other robots off the ground.

The two teams cooperated well together, focusing on each other's strengths, and playing defense. Team 4156 could grab rings and place them on different levels of PVC pipe hooks to score points and the Classic Upward Bound team was able to lift team 4156's robot off the ground to score points per inch they were lifted. After two victories, one loss, and one tie in the finals, the alliance between 5445 and 4156 were the winning alliance. Team 5445's record for the day was eight wins, three losses and one tie and their efforts wielded positive results.

For their efforts, the team was nominated for and received many awards. Team 5445 won a trophy for being a member of the winning alliance and the Rockwell Collins Innovate Award trophy for design, ingenuity, and for doing well on their engineering notebook. Team 5445 was second runner up for the highest honor, the Inspire Award, placed second for the Motivate Award, and nominated for the PTC Design Award.

Because we were in the winning alliance, our team was able to move onto state. We are moving into the next phases of competition with another qualifying match in Ottumwa on January 26, the state competition on February 23 in Iowa City, and plan on competing in the FIRST Tech Challenge World Championship in St. Louis in April. Our robot also acquired some international attention as two engineers from the People's Republic of China came in to view our progress. These engineers were affiliated with the John Deere Corporation and were inspired to begin their own FIRST Robotics program. Hopefully we will see them at the World Championship in St. Louis.

With robotics underway the UNI Classic Upward Bound program is also planning some big events for the summer program. We are kicking off our summer program planning and we are very excited about this summer and the opportunities we are going to offer our students. Our residential program occurs on the University of Northern Iowa campus for six-weeks. During this time, our students engage in core, computer skills, and career oriented classes that they will be taking the following academic year. Scholars also live on campus, eat food at the college dining facility, and participate in evening recreational activities. These activities include, but are not limited to, basketball, rock climbing, and swimming. Thursdays are our scholars' day to venture off campus and engage in large group activities with their fellow scholars such as go-karting and mini-golfing.

We are beginning the process of hiring tutor-mentors. Their major responsibility is to live-in-residence with our scholars and provide tutoring and mentoring throughout the day and the evening. They also assist our teachers in taking attendance and providing individual help to scholars during work time. They are the rule enforcers, safety officers, and are key components to implementing a successful summer program. This is great training for those college level students who desire to become residential assistants or future leaders in the education field.

The Classic Upward Bound program is also continuing its recruitment efforts at the Waterloo Community School District target schools. Due to federal regulations we are required to serve 85 students who attend or will attend Waterloo East, West, and Expo High Schools. We are also seeking rising eighth graders who attend any of the middle schools in the Waterloo Community School District. Program participants must be either low-income, first-generation potential college students (both parents do not have Baccalaureate degrees), or both low-income and first-generation potential college students.

Through our partnerships John Deere we are able to offer our scholars the opportunity to participate in robotics and a bridge program for graduating seniors. These seniors will be able to take six college credit hours, live on campus, and have a vehicle on campus to go to their

places of employment. This program offers our graduating seniors flexibility to maintain a job while taking college classes and is the perfect preview for their upcoming college experience.

We continue to offer our tutorial program which began on October 23 and will resume on January 18 after school and at the UNI-CUE for program participants. We went on several college visits including Kirkwood Community College, the University of Iowa, and the University of Northern Iowa just to name a few and are in the process of organizing more campus visits at many of Iowa's great state universities, private schools, and community colleges. Grade level classification meetings and parent organization meetings continue to be a vital part of our program's success and to change the minds of many young students and parents in Waterloo from an "I can't go to college" attitude to one of "I can, will, and am on my way to college." We constantly encourage our students to pursue excellence in the classroom and in every endeavor they find themselves charged with.

As the program moves into the different seasons of the year we continuously seek new and improved opportunities for our program to be one of the best in the country. With an energetic scholar population we will continue to see dreams achieved, goals exceeded, and lives changed. Through support of TRiO programs by people being in contact with representatives, state officials, and Iowa national representatives in Washington, our program will continue to be a beacon of hope for Waterloo students. As my director always says: "We will continue to show the nation that our students are not detriments but are possibilities and that TRiO works!" Thank you for your continued support.

Matthew Moore
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University of Northern Iowa Classic Upward Bound TRiO Program