IN-MaC

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Purdue IN-MaC Invests in K-12 Robotics Programming
Investments plus partnerships make Indiana a national leader in robotics participation

WEST LAFAYETTE, IND., – Indiana Next Generation Manufacturing Competitiveness Center (IN-MaC) invests in Indiana's future workforce by targeting key STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) initiatives like K-12 robotics programs across the state. Since 2018, IN-MaC has granted $236,000 to 118 robotics teams through its micro-grant program.

According to a recent article from the Indiana Chamber of Commerce, Indiana is leading the nation with more than 21,000 students participating in robotics competitions, representing every county and grade level.

Milan Robotics team students stated "I am an engineer," and "Robotics is my favorite part of school."

"Robotics prepares young people for the future of work as well as the needed 21st century skills of problem solving, critical thinking and collaboration," said Lisa Deck, program manager for education and workforce with IN-MaC. "We focus on the skills gap issues facing STEM-related fields, including manufacturing, and these robotics programs are creating positive awareness and access."

The IN-MaC micro-grant program supports robotics teams at all levels of maturity, from inception to world competition. The Milan Community Schools robotics program started in 2018 and has six teams with 100 students in grades 3 to 8. Four robots competed at the state level this year, with two advancing to the world championship.

"IN-MaC has been with us every step of the way," said Milan coach and technology teacher Brandy Hicks. "This program allowed our community to build a strong pathway beginning with our 4th-grade students. This allowed the students to understand how manufacturing is part of the engineering process through robotics."

Hicks also commented on how these rural students couldn't believe they had made it to the world-level competitions and how excited they were to continue competing at the high school level.

Ten miles away from Milan, the St. Nicholas team in Sunman spent the 2022-2023 school year getting their team started. An IN-MaC micro-grant was integral to starting their robotics program.

"We were able to receive a micro-grant through IN-MaC and start a robotics program," said St. Nicholas principal Eric Feller. "We wouldn't have been able to do it if it were not for IN-MaC. Students learn life skills like following directions, working with moving parts, and team building."

Feller expects big things for the team next year and is excited about how many younger students in grades 1 to 3 are passionate about robotics and joining grades 1 to 8.

Milan Robotics students work on their robot during a recent competition.

The IN-MaC micro-grant program awards $2,000 grants to educators (including K-12 and college) and industry and community-based organizations to implement local STEM programming. The current IN-MaC micro-grant program cycle accepts applications until June 1, 2023. Applications and information are available at https://www.purdue.edu/in-mac/ or by contacting Lisa Deck at adeck@purdue.edu.

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About Purdue IN-MaC: IN-MaC provides programs and services to enhance the talents and capabilities of Indiana's present and future workforce by facilitating connections between educators and industry to catalyze the formation of near-term and long-term skills in a highly accessible manner across Indiana. IN-MaC supports a variety of STEM-type, skilled trades, degree (associates and undergraduate) and certificate programs.

IN-MaC leverages its resources, networks and partnerships with industry, local communities, educators and interested stakeholders to provide a variety of formal courses and informal activities that embolden pathways to meet the talent needs of the present and future manufacturing workforce.