



Iowa City Robotics

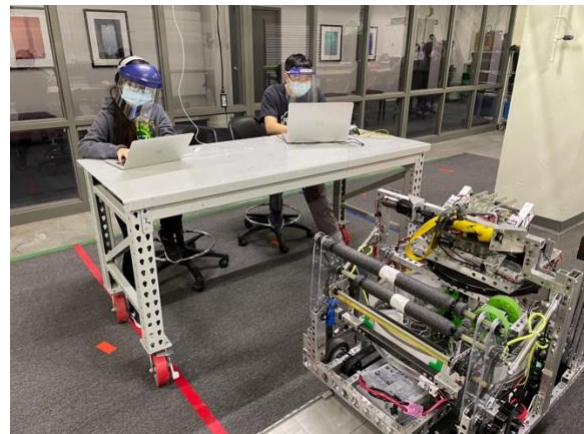
April 2021 Newsletter

The COVID-19 pandemic made it nearly impossible to hold a traditional robotics season this year. We focused on recruiting and training new members to ensure that our team remains strong in the coming seasons. We also took part in several at-home competitions FIRST offered, designed to provide a challenging engineering experience while keeping everyone safe.

Training

One of the many challenges created by the pandemic was attracting students interested in joining our team. In order to adapt our recruiting methods to comply with social distancing guidelines and to reach students in online school, we made a [video](#) for the virtual club fairs at our schools to find new members safely. In total, 15 new members joined our team, eager to learn about engineering and teamwork skills.

Over the fall months, we held virtual meetings to teach our recruits about technical skills such as computer-aided design, electronics, and computer programming. Meanwhile, in consultation with the Kirkwood Regional Center, we developed a comprehensive safety plan for in-person meetings, including mask and face shield mandates, tight capacity limits, and social distancing requirements. We began these meetings in February, allowing us to speed up our new-member training by providing hands-on experience.



Students learn to program robots in a socially distanced environment

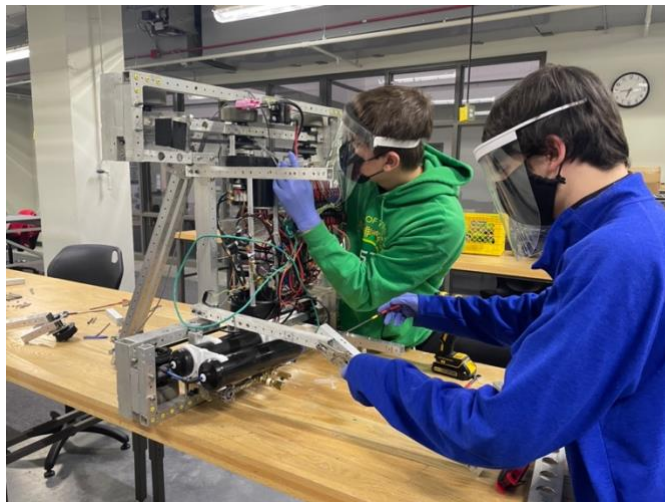
Build Season



iowacityrobotics.org



info@iowacityrobotics.org



Students work on building a drivetrain

The build season began in early January, but this year we participated in kickoff virtually. There, we learned about the challenges for the season, which included driving through multiple obstacle courses and shooting dodge balls into a target—both quickly and accurately. Afterwards, we held design and strategy meetings to decide our approach to the at-home challenges. Once our in-person meetings began, we started constructing and programming our robot.

We designed our robot to be small, quick, and accurate in shooting dodgeballs. We

improved upon our mechanisms from last year to more efficiently capture and fire the balls. Additionally, we developed a holonomic drivetrain to improve the mobility of our robot. In early April, we uploaded videos of our robot completing various competition challenges against teams worldwide. Among the 30 teams in our division, we placed 10th.



Our sponsors stuck with us this year in spite of all the challenges posed by COVID-19. We would like to thank all of them for their support of Iowa City Robotics!

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