This February, I competed in the Space City Design Competition, hosted by NASA, and was elected to be the leader of the Automatic Group during the Asian Region Finals. It has been both a challenging and transforming leadership experience for me.

Back then, our team was given 48 hours to design a spaceport located at the Third Lagrange Point. Everything went smoothly until we lost communication with the team leader in another city, Chongqing, due to technical issues. The whole team soon slid into chaos as most teammates lost faith.

At this critical moment, I took over the role of a team leader without hesitation. All of a sudden, there was an overwhelming amount of things to consider: the chaotic communication process, my teammates’ mental state, the clear team objectives, and so much more. It was 2 in the morning, and I immediately worked on reaching out to each remaining member with sincere and encouraging words to restore their confidence. I remember sitting in the empty meeting room, engulfed by a mixture of negative emotions and huge pressure. However, scenes of us brainstorming, sharing innovative ideas, and encouraging each other during setbacks kept rising before my eyes. I regained my strength by recalling my teammates’ initial enthusiasm and the sparkle of expectation in their eyes.

As the new leader, I calmly reorganized tasks at hand based on each member’s strengths and skills. We worked tirelessly for the next couple of hours, with each member bringing their unique skills and creative ideas to the table. The whole team worked incredibly efficiently after I emphasized our shared goals and kept the whole team on track.

Despite the great obstacles encountered, we ended up finishing a spaceport design that was not only functional but also innovative. When the time of submission was up, I hit the “submit” button with a mixture of exhaustion and pride. At this point, I believe my leadership potential was obviously shown, and I became more motivated to engage in similar leadership experiences to sharpen my skills in the future.