



The Pascack Pi-ioneers
FIRST Team 1676
Academic Varsity
Letter Application
GUIDE



Introduction to Making Your Own Varsity Letter Application

Use this document to provide a presentation for your application for a Varsity Letter.

Use your team name and information where applicable in this document.

Be the team to get a letter for all the academic varsity teams at your school!

DISCLAIMER: This is a *guide* meant to assist you in making your application for a varsity letter. Please adjust and make changes as needed.

Good luck! Please let us know:

- If you are successful.
- If we need to improve this guide.
- If you have any questions.





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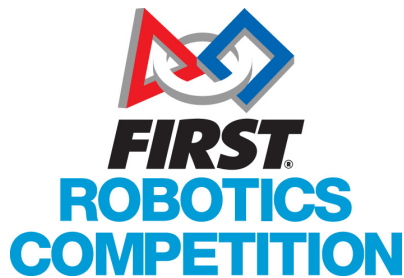
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The Pascack Pi-oneers: **FIRST® Robotics Competition Team 1676**

What is FIRST®?

FIRST® stands for “For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology.” Since it was founded in 1989 by Dean Kamen, FIRST® has challenged “high school students... to build industrial-size robots to play a difficult field game in alliance with other teams, while also fundraising to meet their goals, designing a team ‘brand,’ and advancing respect and appreciation for STEAM within the local community” (FIRST®). Their mission is “to provide life-changing robotics programs that give young people the skills, confidence, and resilience to build a better world” (FIRST®).



The Pascack Pi-oneers Mission Statement

The mission of FIRST® Team 1676, the Pascack Pi-oneers, is to combine the fundamental beliefs of FIRST® with the desires of our team members to pursue and promote future careers in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) and to provide STEAM education for our community. Our goal is to operate as a cohesive team, competing with Gracious Professionalism® under the guise of FIRST® and developing our students’ abilities to conspire, create and develop as individuals and collectively as a team. We strive not only to build a successful robot, but also to master and exhibit the many life-skills necessary to succeed beyond FIRST® Team 1676.



About the Pascack Pi-oneers

Within the Team

Pi-oneer students work alongside mentors to build a robot capable of meeting a specific challenge, write award submissions, design team logos, complete a business plan, and more, all within eight weeks. The robot competes in local and regional competitions in the spring with the goal of competing at the *FIRST*® World Championship.

The program encourages teamwork, creativity, and community service, instilling self-confidence, critical-thinking, and Gracious Professionalism® in students. It introduces participants to technical and non-technical disciplines such as programming, mechanical and electrical engineering, 3D Animation, CAD, photography and videography, award writing, and business applications. Pi-oneers gain valuable leadership experience and form strong bonds that last past high school.

Connecting with the Community

Beginning with the inception of the team, the goal of the members has been to work within their community. Pi-oneers constantly strive to educate others about STEAM subjects, specifically children - the future of STEAM and *FIRST*®. The team is passionate about what they do and apply the values they learn from *FIRST*® to everyday life.

The team has been publicly recognized by the mayors and councils of all four towns. Local businesses also donate meals and sponsors provide experienced mentors to support the team. Our coaches, mentors, teachers, and staff are committed to helping the team achieve its goals. Sponsors, including local engineers and business professionals, support the team whenever possible. The Pi-Parent Association organizes Build Season meals, carpools for students, helps sell team spirit wear, and so much more.



The Pascack Pi-oneers Team Philosophy

- The Pi-oneers endorse and expect a high standard of conduct according to the philosophy of Gracious Professionalism®.*
- The Pi-oneers encourage and promote each team member to reach their fullest potential through mentorship and hands-on experiences.
- The Pi-oneers promote leadership through the team structure and opportunities to manage projects and more.
- The Pi-oneers believe in doing their best during competition where winning is a goal, however it does not replace cooperation and helpfulness to others in the heat of a match: Coopertition®.*
- The Pi-oneers teach responsibility to each other, their subdivision, their team, their school and their district.
- The Pi-oneers base all points of their team philosophy to support the *FIRST*® Core Values* of Discovery, Innovation, Impact, Inclusion, Teamwork, and Fun.

Academic Varsity Letter Status: New Jersey Bill S. 2398

The Pascack Pi-oneers partnered with New Jersey State Assemblyman Ciattarelli to support the bill he sponsored pertaining to Academic Varsity Letter status for non-sport competitive academic teams. The bill, also sponsored by Assemblyman Troy Singleton and co-sponsored by Assemblyman Coughlin, provides school districts the opportunity to recognize competitive school-sponsored, interscholastic extracurricular activities and those team members for Academic Varsity Letter Status. Bill S. 2398 passed in May of 2017.



Justification For Granting The Awarding of Academic Varsity Letters, Specifically For Robotics

What is the purpose of an Academic Varsity Letter for competitive academic teams?

The purpose is to reward students for their accomplishments, level of skill, commitment to their team and their school, and being a public representative of their school and district in a positive and respectful manner. These are the same reasons used to support the awarding of athletic varsity letters.

Does robotics fit the Academic Varsity Letter description?

- Yes** – The events in which the Pascack Pi-oneers compete are open to the public where the robotics team’s actions reflect directly on their school. Their conduct is viewed by people from other schools, the general public spectators, and media who are present.
- Yes** – The Pascack Pi-oneers expect “Gracious Professionalism®” and sportsmanship in the heat of competition, which is also strongly enforced by *FIRST*®.
- Yes** - The Pascack Pi-oneers expect team members to dedicate themselves to practice and preparation in order to display competence in competition.
- Yes** – The Pascack Pi-oneers expect team members to uphold a positive impression of their team, and by extension their school.
- Yes** - The Pascack Pi-oneers expect team members to generate pride in their sport among their own school community and local community.
- Yes** - *FIRST*® Robotics develops many interpersonal skills that are beneficial to the future endeavors of its students. These include leadership, formal and informal presentation skills, and teamwork.



Awards Given by *FIRST*®

firstinspires.org/robotics/frc/awards

Winning awards takes months of preparation, hard work, and dedication. However, more than winning an award, team members form strong bonds, gain valuable skills, and improve the atmosphere of the team, all while becoming the best versions of themselves.

Team Attribute Awards

Engineering Inspiration Award

“Celebrates outstanding success in advancing respect and appreciation for engineering within a team’s school and community.”

Rookie All-Star Award

“Celebrates the rookie team exemplifying a young but strong partnership effort, as well as implementing the mission of *FIRST*® to inspire students to learn more about science and technology.”

Rising All-Star Award

“Celebrates the team that has persisted through challenges, despite the difficulties of being young. This could be the result of being a new team, or a team with recent turnover in membership. ”

Team Sustainability Award

“Celebrates and recognizes a team which has developed sustainable practices to have a positive environmental impact and achieve long-term continuity.”

Other Team Attribute Awards Include:

Gracious Professionalism®

Team Spirit Award

Imagery Award in honor of Jack Kamen

Judges Award

Submitted Awards

The *FIRST*® Impact Award

“is the most prestigious award given by *FIRST*®. It honors the team that best represents a model for other teams to emulate and best embodies the goals and values of *FIRST*®”.

**Previously known as the Chairman’s Award*

***FIRST*® Dean’s List Award**

“In an effort to recognize the leadership and dedication of the most outstanding secondary school students in *FIRST*®, the Kamen family sponsors awards for selected 10th or 11th grade* students known as the *FIRST*® Robotics Competition and the *FIRST*® Tech Challenge *FIRST*® Dean’s List Award.”

Animation Awards

Digital Animation Award

The Digital Animation Award is offered to help encourage students to cultivate skills in design and creation of animation including, but not limited to, storytelling, creativity, use of computer software, and an understanding of different techniques and forms of animation. This award is open to all *FIRST*® Robotics Competition teams and is optional.

Safety Animation Award

The Safety Animation Award focuses on safety and sustainability. “Sustainable practices help assure we’ll have the resources we need to problem-solve, innovate, and be productive year after year. Safety is key to sustainability, helping us avoid waste, conserve energy, and protect our most valuable human resources from accident and injury.”* This award is open to all *FIRST*® Robotics Competition teams and is optional.

**firstinspires.org/robotics/frc/safety*



Machine, Creativity, & Innovation Awards

Autonomous Award

Celebrates the team that has demonstrated consistent, reliable, high-performance robot operation during autonomously managed actions. Evaluation is based on the robot's ability to sense its surroundings, position itself or onboard mechanisms appropriately, and execute tasks.

Excellence in Engineering Award

Celebrates the team that demonstrates a professional approach to the design process.

Industrial Design Award

Celebrates the team that demonstrates industrial design principles, striking a balance between form, function, and aesthetics.

Quality Award

Celebrates machine robustness in concept and fabrication.

Creativity Award

Celebrates creativity that enhances strategy of play and was intentionally designed and not discovered.

Innovation in Control

Celebrates an innovative control system or application of control components – electrical, mechanical or software – to provide unique machine functions.



Pascack Pi-oneers Varsity Letter Requirements

The Pi-oneers feel that any competitive academic team that wishes to be approved for awarding varsity letters have clear criteria for earning the letter. These criteria should be subject to approval by the school administration to assure that varsity letters are truly earned and are not awarded capriciously. Our current draft of the Pi-oneer varsity letter requirements follows.

This checklist can be sent out as a Google Form or a paper application

1) Team Member Requirements

- A student must be a team member for a minimum of 2 years
- Meeting all team contract requirements
- Attaining satisfactory performance reviews

2) Attendance

- Two FRC tournaments per year or more
- One off-season competition or more
- Meet community outreach/team service hour requirements
- Must be present three days or more during Build Season
- Fulfill Pi-Tech Academy attendance requirements
- Work at FLL Qualifying tournament
- Attend Kick-Off event
- Must participate a minimum of 70% during Pre-Season, Build Season and Post-Season

3) Perform satisfactorily in one of the following roles during the most recent year:

- Team CEO or Sub-Division Leader
- Lead designer on a robot sub-assembly
- Lead designer on a significant robot code module
- Lead designer on a significant work product (website portion, scout code portion, animation portion, CAD portion, media portion, award/team sustainability portion)
- Lead scout or lead data collector at tournaments
- Drive team member
- Formal Pit Crew, including safety, batteries, check in-check out and elimination round backup crew

4) Alternatives to 3) for those without formal leadership roles: two years of successfully attaining one of the following accomplishments:

- Clear non-leadership contribution in designing a robot sub-assembly or significant work product
- Build Season notebook generation
- Full time tournament Super Scout or draft selection meeting participant
- Other meaningful, significant role that requires a continued effort (multiple days) to accomplish
- Submission of all required paperwork throughout the year on time
- Demonstration of positive attitude and good work ethic

5) File a team application for a varsity letter, which lists how each requirement was met, by May 15 of the year in which the varsity letter is sought to be awarded. The Mentor Board of Directors will evaluate all varsity letter applications and decide which members are given the varsity letter award.



Current Teams that Offer Varsity Letters (Surveyed)

11 Flanders, NJ	27 Clarkston, MI	48 Warren, OH	59 Miami, FL	97 Cambridge, MA
159 Fort Collins, CO	166 Merrimack, NH	180 Stuart, FL	191 Rochester, NY	230 Chelton, CT
247 Berkley, MI	250 Colonie, NY	280 Taylor, MI	302 Lake Orion, MI	303 Bridgewater, NJ
386 Melbourne, FL	503 Novi, MI	537 Sussex, WI	555 Montclair, NJ	578 Fairport, NY
578 Fairport, NY	589 La Crescenta,	668 San Jose, CA	811 Nashua, NH	862 Canton, MI
1002 Marietta, GA	1018 Indianapolis, IN	1023 Temperance, MI	1025 Ferndale, MI	1071 Wolcott, CT
1197 Torrance, CA	1318 Issaquah, WA	1339 Denver, CO	1458 Danville, CA	CA 1502 Chelsea,
1506 Flint, MI	1529 Indianapolis, IN	1622 Poway, CA	1672 Mahwah, NJ	1683 Johns Creek, GA
1718 Armada, MI	1730 Lee's Summit, MO	1732 Milwaukee, WI	1741 Greenwood, IN	1810 Shawnee, KS
1816 Edina, MN	1846 Sarnia, ON, Can	1868 Mtn. View, CA	1912 Slidell, LA	1939 Kansas City, MO
1972 El Centro, CA	2010 Warren, OH	MI 2025 Barstow, CA	2052 New Brighton, MN	2102 Encinitas, CA



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2169 Savage, MN	2177 Mendota Hts, MN	2377 Pasadena, MD	2425 Tampa, FL	2470 Bloomington MN
2485 San Diego, CA	2491 St. Paul, MN	2612 Waterford, MI	2656 Pittsburgh, PA	2720 Medford, NJ
2834 Bloomfield H., MI	2865 Post Falls, ID	2869 Bethpage, NY	2914 Washington, DC	2915 Portland, OR
3656 Dexter, MI	3729 Denver, CO	3928 Ames, IA	4130 Richmond, MI	4150 Murrysville, PA
4237 Stevensville, MI	4254 Saratoga Spr, NY	4322 Orange, CA	4539 Frazee, MN	4573 South River, NJ
4607 Becker, MN	4776 Howell, MI	4855 South Haven, MI	4908 Duxbury, MA	4909 Billerica, MA
5427 Katy, TX	5460 Lapeer, MI	8088 Liberty Hill, TX	9295, New York City, NY	23383 Chattaroy, WA



Sample Letter to Administration

This is a template for teams to follow:

- Make an outline for the number of paragraphs, with a summary of what should be included in each
- Our letter can be used as an example of what the final copy could look like
- Example:
 - Paragraph 1: Introduce yourself and team
 - Paragraph 2: Explain Robotics + *FIRST*® + the standards that students are held to
 - Paragraph 3: Outline dedication, time, and effort of team members
 - Paragraph 4: Explain why your team deserves varsity recognition (compare to a varsity sports team) + goals
 - Paragraph 5: Describe your team’s accomplishments
 - Paragraph 6: Describe how your team contributes to the community (for example how people can watch sports games, how does your team display itself?)
 - Paragraph 7: Sum up the benefits & rewards of being on a robotics team + conclude and thank administrators for their time

To Whom It May Concern:

My name is (First name, Last name) and I am a student leader on the District’s Pascack Pi-oneers *FIRST*® Robotics Team. I am respectfully requesting the administration’s approval of Academic Varsity Letters to be awarded to the exemplary members on our team. Athletes in the district show commitment, perseverance, and sportsmanship through their participation in a varsity sport. These skills, however, can be demonstrated through academic challenges. All of these qualities are just some that our team members demonstrate daily.

Students who participate in academically rigorous activities dedicate an enormous amount of time and effort to their “teams” as well. Just like athletes on Varsity sports teams, our students put weeks’ worth of hours and energy into the Robotics team. They deserve to receive a Varsity letter to recognize their dedication and achievements.

Similarly, robotics requires an incredible commitment. During “Build Season”, the eight weeks when our team works to create a new robot, we hold meetings six days a week that run approximately five hours each. Team members are required to attend a minimum of three days, with most members working an average of twenty-five to thirty hours per week at robotics on top of school! Despite this demanding requirement, our team members maintain excellent grades.



The team's goal is to promote Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Math (STEAM). The majority of our team's students graduate in pursuit of careers in the STEAM fields. Robotics changes lives; team members who enter high school not knowing what they want to do in life go on to engineering schools such as Stevens Institute of Technology, Carnegie Mellon, MIT, and more. Last year, 90% of our graduating seniors went to college for a STEAM-related major. Robotics not only teaches children to love science and math, but also trains life skills including leadership and discipline. Students graduate from the team with the ability to work diligently and work cohesively with others.

FIRST® Robotics follows a sports model and creates a competitive environment. Our robot's Drive Team must act as one unit and constantly make momentary strategic decisions, just like any other sports team. They play both defensively and offensively to maximize their team's points. It is very similar to a traditional sport.

Moreover, the Pi-oneers have proven their excellence on the field and in competition through winning engineering and non-engineering awards. In addition, they have distinguished themselves at an international level by qualifying for the *FIRST*® World Championship many times. In the past, our team has received the most prestigious awards that *FIRST*® offers: the *FIRST*® Impact Award, which explains the impact that our team has had on our local and global communities. Recognition of the team members in the form of an Academic Varsity Letter would show the students that they are supported and appreciated by the school district.

Sports teams offer a common cause that students can rally around and get excited about: they are a source of school spirit and represent our district in a positive way. The Pascack Pi-oneers unite not one, but two schools. They represent the Pascack Valley Regional High School District to people from every part of the world. But most of all, they bring out school spirit and provide a team activity that every student can get involved in.

Robotics draws out the best qualities in students and teaches them extraordinary life lessons. Students who have been recognized as "varsity" team members by their coaches for at least two years should be rewarded. Therefore, on behalf of my team, I am requesting the Pascack Valley High School administration and the Pascack Hills High School administration to endorse an Academic Varsity Letter.

Thank you for your consideration,

(First name, Last name)

(Position)

(Email address)



The Pascack Pi-oneers Academic Varsity Letter Application Guide

The Pascack Pi-oneers
FIRST Robotics Competition Team 1676
Pascack Valley Regional High School District
www.team1676.com

"Gracious Professionalism... Don't Leave High School Without It!"

