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Illinois Tech Robotics competes at RoboGames

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BUSINESS MANAGER

It isn't too often that IIT students get to compete on an international scale through an extracurricular organization. This past weekend, Illinois Tech Robotics (ITR) sent eight of their members to San Mateo, California to partake in RoboGames (formerly known as ROBOlympics), the largest open robotics competition and exposition in the world since 2004.

Through over 50 different competition events and several exhibition opportunities, RoboGames aims to open the world of robotics to everyone across all fields within robotics, including mechanical and electrical engineering, programming, sensor usage, and aesthetics. According to the RoboGames website, RoboGames founder David Calkins "realized the need for cross-pollination between events, as too many robot builders over-specialized within a single field."

Eventually, he realized that the best way to bring all of the disciplines within robotics together would be to create a large-scale event that included all of them—from the mechanical expertise necessary in a combat robotics event to the programming skill needed in small scale humanoid soccer. RoboGames's various competitions also include maze-traversing robots, robot hockey, and an overall best of show competition.

In addition to the wide variety of events available, RoboGames is also open to anyone who wishes to try their hand at the competition.

Regardless of education, age, or affiliation, everyone is welcome to bring a robot to show off at RoboGames. Children often enter RoboGames's "Junior League," which is only open to competitors under 18, or they compete on their own in the larger events with people from a variety of backgrounds.

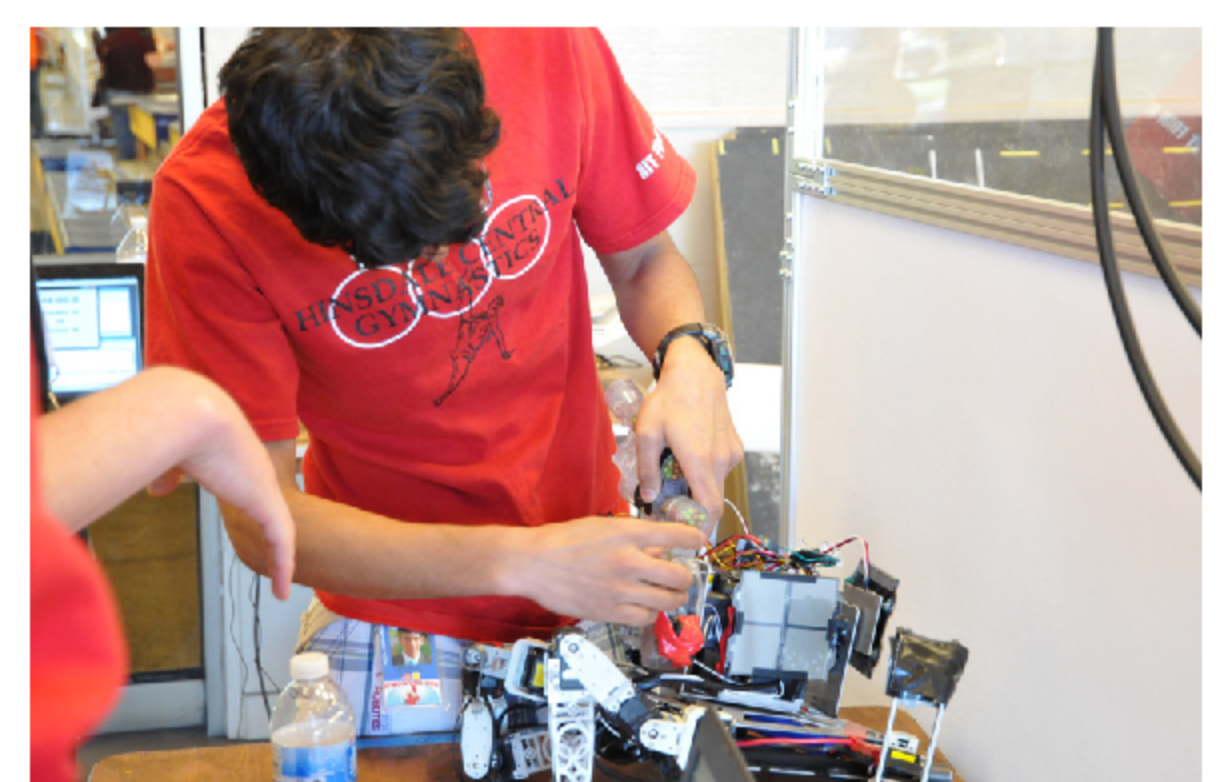
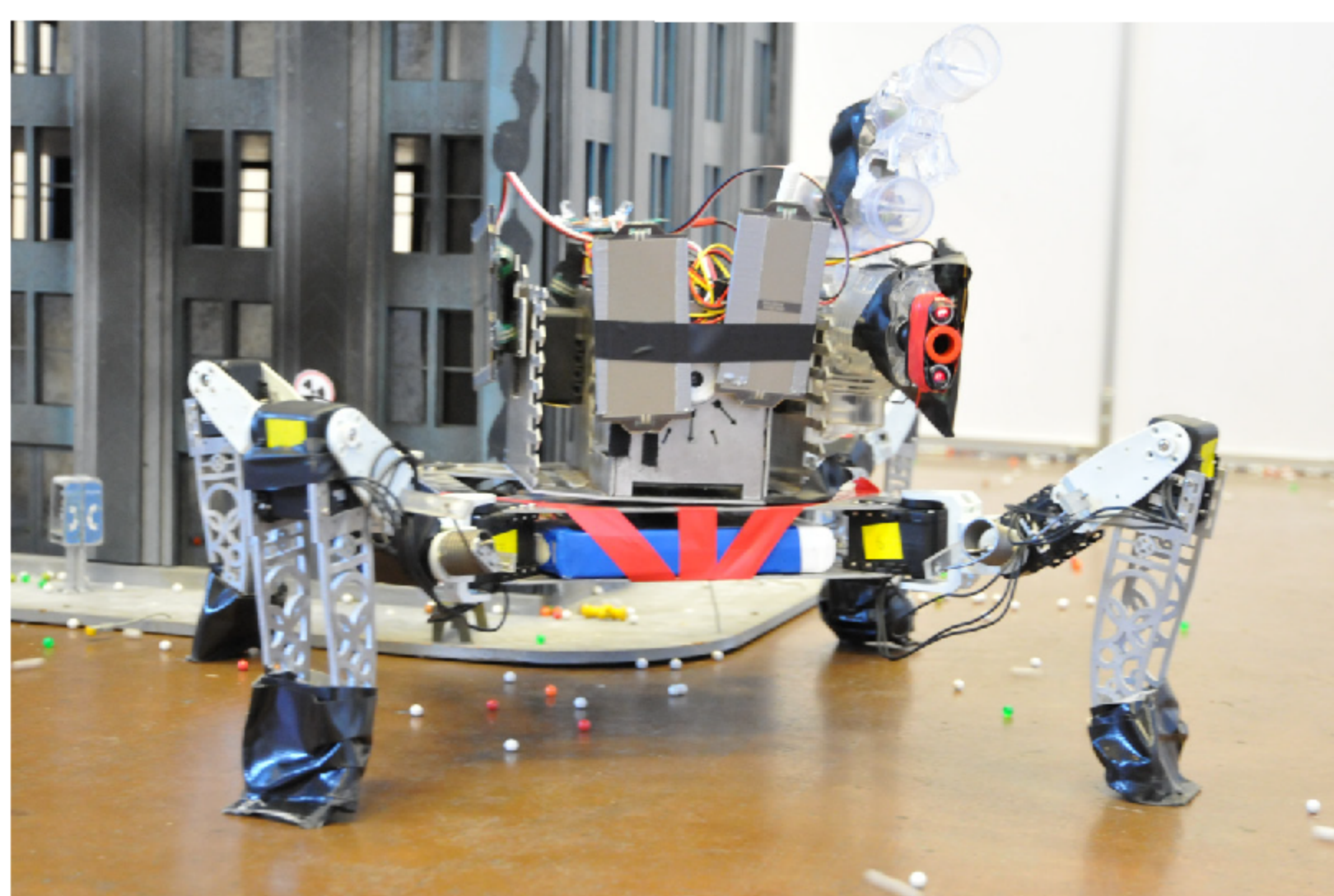
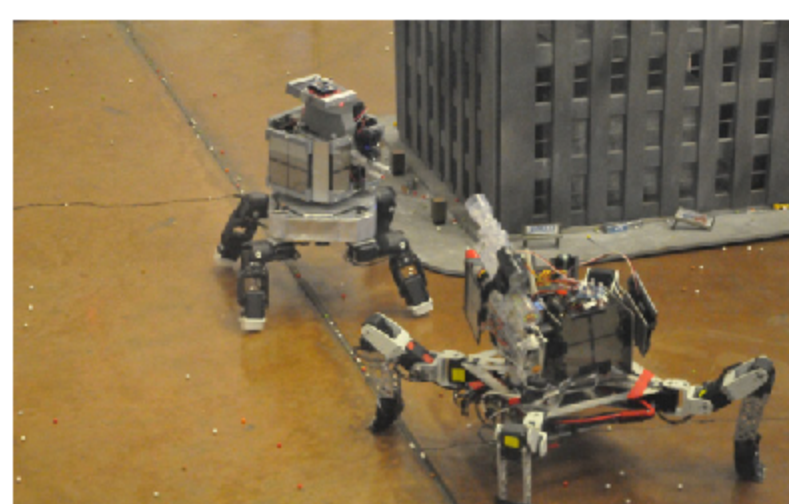
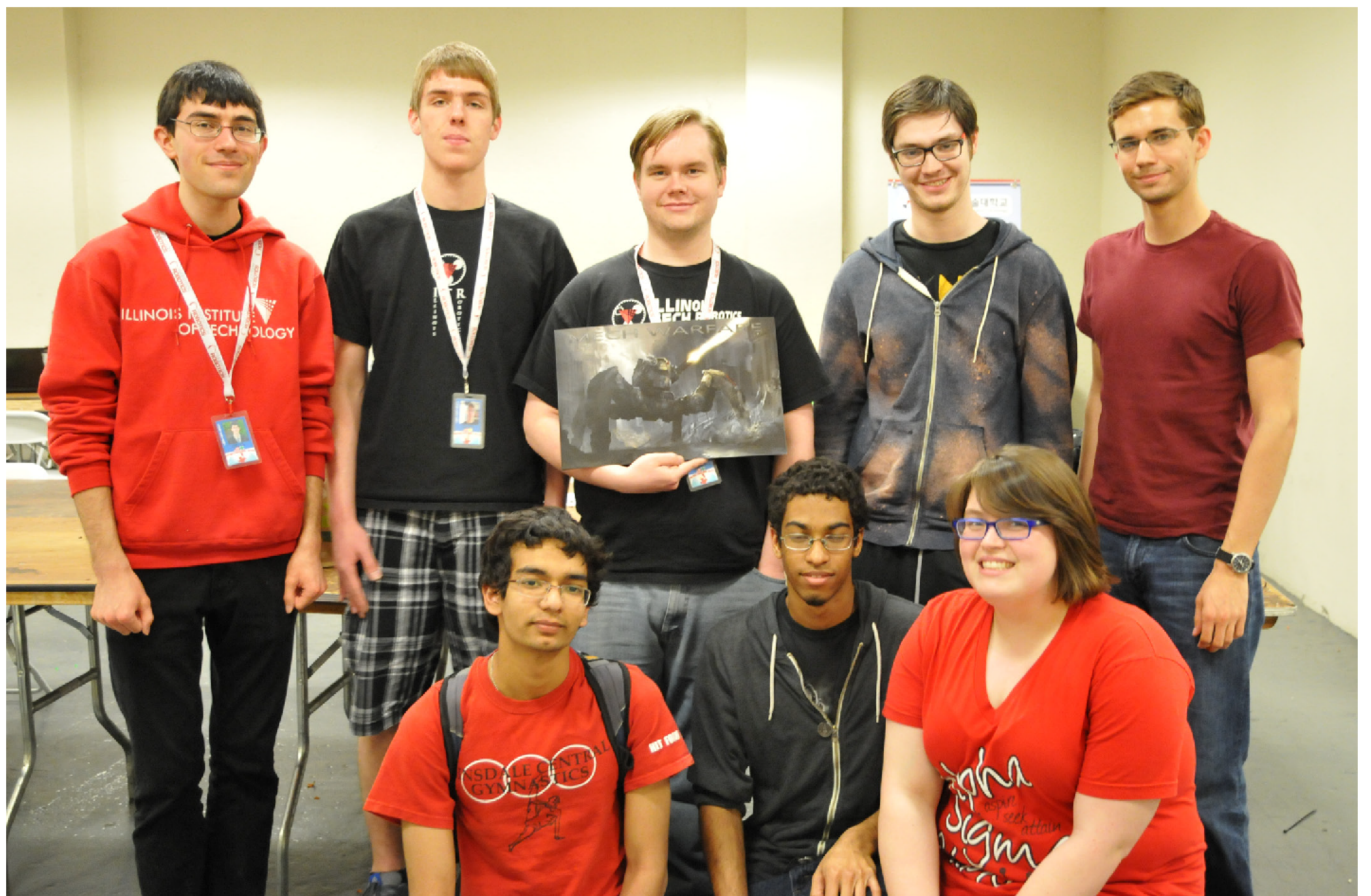
Some robots come as the product of a large team of engineering students, and some come from lone hobbyists who have picked up robotics in their spare time. Additionally, RoboGames draws competitors from all over the world—people from over 39 countries have competed and have shared their experience and ideas with representatives from all over the world.

ITR's choice of competition in the 2013 RoboGames was Mech-Warfare, where two small, servo-actuated walking robots compete head-to-head against in a scaled down cityscape by firing airsoft pellets at each other. Each robot has impact sensors to detect how often they've been shot, and the first robot to reduce his opponent's hit points to zero by shooting him is the winner. Operators are able to command their robots via remote control; however, they are unable to observe them directly and must rely on a wireless on-board camera on the robot.

ITR's entry, Mongol, was a four-legged entry, with each leg controlled by three servo motors. Mongol was also equipped with a firing airsoft cannon and a laser sight to assist with aiming.

In Mongol's first match, he faced difficulties moving on the low-friction floor and ended up falling on his side twice, resulting in losing the match by nine points. Mongol later was knocked out of the Mech-Warfare tournament after an intense one-point loss. On the bright side, Mongol remained a crowd favorite throughout the day, drawing much attention from spectators and wowing the crowd during exhibition matches.

Overall, Illinois Tech Robotics had a good trip, where students got to connect with other robotics enthusiasts of all ages from all over the world. RoboGames offered ITR the opportunity to show off their own skills while learning from others and growing as competitors.



Photos by Kori Bowns
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