

Robotics contest coming to BPCC

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More than 300 students from throughout the region are getting their robots ready to converge on the Bossier Parish Community College gymnasium Saturday as part of the first competition of the Regional Autonomous Robotics Circuit.

The competition is part of a collaborative academic initiative among BPCC, the Cyber Innovation Center, Louisiana Tech University, SciPort: Louisiana's Science Center and Bossier Parish Public Schools and will feature students in fourth to 12th grades in the first of four robotics competitions to be held this school year.

Teams are encouraged to participate in all four competitions as they build upon one another and provide the teams with an opportunity to increase their skills.

"We've been doing robotics competitions for a number of years, and we were looking for a way to continue to engage students and create a more cohesive series of competitions that build on the knowledge students gain throughout the school year and applies that to each competition," said G.B. Cazes, director of the Cyber Innovation Center's Academic and Workforce Development Program.

The competition will feature a one-on-one sumo contest that requires teams to

program an autonomous robot (no remote controls) to locate, attack and push its opponent out of the sumo ring. Teams will compete against one another based on their robot platform, LEGO NXT or boe-bot, rather than grade level.

Each year, Cazes said the competition continues to grow, and this year is no different with an estimated 65 teams scheduled to compete. He said the robotics competition is one of many programs the Cyber Innovation Center uses to reach area students.

"The Cyber Innovation Center is pleased to be part of a dynamic partnership that provides hands-on, educational experiences to schools in the region," he said. "It is imperative that students have access to programs that allow them to gain and practice STEM skills, as these skills are the foundation to academic and career opportunities in our technology-based world."

Cazes said it's such academic outreach that

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encourages businesses to take a hard look at the area when searching for a place to locate.

"Many of the corporations that have come to the CIC have said how impressed they are with the work we are doing to reach out to local schools to make sure students are getting the skill set they need to be prepared to enter these jobs," he said.

"The more we can make our students understand STEM programs like what is taught with the robotics competition, the more they are gaining a basic understanding of the world around them."

If you go

What: Regional Autonomous Robotics Circuit

When: 8:45 a.m.-1 p.m. Saturday at Bossier Parish

Community College gymnasium, 6220 E. Texas St., Bossier City

Admission: Free

Info: Call (318) 759-1600 or visit

www.cyberinnovationcenter.org

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