

PUBLIC RELEASE

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Finances

Overall Budget

According to the 2025 FIRST Chesapeake Impact Report, there are a total of 112 FRC teams in the Maryland, Virginia, and DC region. Of those teams, the overwhelming majority of them are school-based (83) vs community-based (29). The FIRST Tech Challenge (FTC), a smaller program with a much lower financial footprint, has double the number of teams at 266. While the majority of those are also school-based (148), a much larger number than FRC are community-based (118).

The likely reason behind this disparity is this simple fact. FRC is not a cheap program. Just the registration alone, assuming a team attends each competition, can run upwards of \$16K. Unlike those school-based programs, community-based programs do not have the benefit of space provided by a larger educational institution. For FRC, the physical footprint required to run a high-performing team is substantially higher than FTC.

We are incredibly lucky that we are able to continue to offer FRC. We are the only team based out of St. Mary's County and one of only two currently operating FRC teams in Southern Maryland. We believe that our dedicated and talented students and mentors provide an experience that is unmatched in the region. Unfortunately, this means that the budget of The RoboBees pushes \$66K. The 2025-2026 FRC budget can be found below.

Line Item	Cost
CHS District Registration	\$6,300.00
District Championship Registration	\$4,000.00
FIRST Championship Registration	\$5,750.00
Rent Share	\$36,000.00
FRC Robot Build	\$6,000.00
FRC Field Build	\$1,500.00
Awards / Media	\$1,000.00
Food and Decoration	\$350.00
Office Supplies	\$550.00
Shop Supplies	\$ 1,000.00
T-Shirts	\$ 2,000.00
Special Purchases	\$ 1,000.00
Total	\$65,450.00

We cover about a third of that cost with yearly dues to be on the FRC team. Currently, that cost covers approximately 35% of the FRC budget. The rest is made up of individual, corporate, and government sponsorship (e.g., DoDSTEM covers a portion of the District registration and all of the FIRST Championship registration cost).

Additional information about the finances of The RoboBees, or growingSTEMS as a whole, can be found on the website or on Slack. Any questions can be directed to the growingSTEMS Treasurer, Dr. Andrew Koch (ankoch@growingstems.org).

Student Dues

Dues for the year are \$800 per student. As mentioned in a prior section, this helps to cover the operating cost of the program. These dues can be paid on the website. An invitation coupon code will be required at checkout to complete the payment process. Invitation coupon codes are provided once a member application has been submitted and the student has been accepted to our roster.

Payments can be processed online or via check, in accordance with the growingSTEMS Payment Policy). Students have the option of paying in half or full increments. Payment is due on the following dates (or within 7 days of initial registration). If a student registers between dates, the latest amount that has not passed is due.

- September 9th: Minimum \$400 due
- November 1st: Full payment due

Financial Assistance

We're aware of the hardship that the cost presents to many families, and we strive to make the team affordable for all those who wish to participate. The RoboBees and growingSTEMS will not turn anyone away because they cannot pay, and we have means in place to award scholarships to students based on financial need.

To the best of the organization's ability, genuine financial burden will not prevent any student who is fully participating in this team from attending competitions or events with the team. However, students must be in good standing for hours and requirements to be eligible to receive assistance.

These requests are evaluated by the board of directors of growingSTEMS. To request assistance, please contact the Executive Director, Zach Stachelczyk.

Travel Cost

growingSTEMS will provide transportation to and from each location, but students will be responsible for hotel fees, meals, and incidentals. It is normally less than what you would have to pay out-of-pocket to go on your own. If a student is unable to pay for an event, please contact the Lead Mentor.

General estimates are provided at the beginning of each season. The cost may increase or decrease slightly as we have a better understanding of how many people are attending. Travel costs tend to solidify once the season competitions have been announced. Please note that some team members will arrive at the competition early, but no additional cost is associated with that.

Estimated travel costs are:

- Local Competition (2x) - \$185/each
- District Championship - \$300
- FIRST Championship - \$1200 (including flights to Houston TX)

Fundraising and Sponsorship

The RoboBees solicit sponsorships and funds throughout the St. Mary's County business community. In addition to our current sponsorships, we pursue new sponsors via local engineering and technical businesses.

Team sponsors are the most crucial part to having a functional team and are the reason ours still exist. Without funding from local companies, corporations, and community members, the team could not afford the yearly expenditures accumulated, such as robot development, software licenses, and robot construction and maintenance. In addition, our sponsors are responsible for supporting our building. We also have support from sponsors in non-pecuniary ways, like tools, computer, and software donations.

Our sponsors are the reason our program still exists, and the reason growingSTEMS has been able to expand the number of programs it hosts and the reason that The RoboBees are still able to continue being a world class team.

It is expected that all students, mentors, and parents do their best to ensure the short and long term sustainability of the team.

Payment Process

Dues and travel fees can be paid by check (made out to growingSTEMS), through Zelle, or via PayPal on our website. Cash is discouraged, as it tends to not have good traceability. With limited volunteers in place to ensure proper handling of funds.

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