

Edina Robotics *FIRST* Team 1816 – The Green Machine often receives queries regarding how our *FIRST* Robotics team successfully implemented a High School Varsity Lettering program. We hope this information helps other *FIRST* Teams achieve the same recognition.

There is nothing more emblematic of a valued High School Sport or Activity as the possibility that one can earn a Varsity Letter in that sport or activity. *FIRST* Robotics Competition teams can benefit from a Varsity Lettering program insofar as it raises the visibility, respect and recognition of students engaged in a ‘sport of the mind’ that really is the ‘hardest fun ever.’ FRC teams have standards and expectations that match, if not exceed, those of comparable high school activities, including Band, Theatre, Debate and Speech.

Earning a Varsity Letter in Robotics is not an acknowledgement of participation. It is acknowledgement that the student totally rocks *FIRST* Robotics and that there have been significant contributions over-and-above those expected of all participants. “Present and pleasant” does not earn a Varsity Letter on Edina Robotics *FIRST* Team 1816 – The Green Machine, Edina, MN.

During our team’s rookie year (2006 Season), The Green Machine learned that Edina High School activities that offered Varsity Letters attracted significant interest on the part of students seeking an extra-curricular activity. The adult mentors involved with the team its rookie year also recognized that the participation level of a *FIRST* Robotics Competition team equaled – if not greatly exceeded – that of comparable student sports and activities. It was decided that The Green Machine would seek Varsity Lettering Status during its second year, 2006-07.

At the same time, the team developed a Team Handbook to cover all aspects of membership on a *FIRST* Robotics Team. Team 1816 decided that the requirements for student eligibility and a Code of Conduct should be modeled on those promulgated by the Minnesota State High School League (www.mshsl.org).

A Varsity Letter is awarded to team members who do more than simply show up. Performance must be at a Varsity level. Letters are not awarded at the end of a student’s first year because the learning curve required of a *FIRST* Robotics team member is very steep. It is often not until completion of the first full year of competition that a student is ready to accept the responsibility and workload required to sustain a successful team. . Once a student has lettered, the student must again be on the team for 2 years and fulfill all of the same requirements in order to letter for a second time.

The Green Machine also includes a mandatory competition attendance requirement among its Lettering Requirements, and insists that students maintain a C- average. The FRC competitions are the culmination of nearly a year of team preparations and reveal the full meaning of many of the team activities. Edina High School requires that students participate in the games/competition/tournament/meet for comparable sports/activities. A competition attended in the current season ensures that a student has made a commitment to the team and is a valuable team player, worthy of lettering.

Edina High School requires that the team have a faculty advisor. We suggest that you check with your high school administration about this requirement. Our checklist includes:

1. Research your State’s High School League rules. Apply the same rules as Varsity Sports/Activities to your *FIRST* Team’s eligibility requirements and Code of Conduct.

2. Seek recognition and approval from your high school administration, faculty and staff.
3. Present your program to school PTAs, PTSOs, the School Board.
4. Determine whether your team will need a designated Faculty Advisor or staff member to be eligible for a Varsity Lettering program.

Team 1816's Student Code of Conduct, Student Eligibility, Lettering and School Recognition requirements are posted on our website, www.edinarobotics.com under Team Resources > Downloads >. Look for our Team Handbook.

Much to our delight, in 2011 the Minnesota State High School League itself welcomed *FIRST* Robotics as an endorsed high school activity. This led to the first-ever MSHSL State Championship in May 2012. A special Robotics lettering patch was developed by an FRC Team member, and is now available statewide to all Minnesota FRC teams who award Varsity Letters. The Green Machine will promote this endorsement as we help to greatly expand the availability of *FIRST* Robotics programs in Minnesota and nationally.