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MVCTC students compete in trebuchet competition at Wright State

Dayton, Ohio - Four classes of STEM and Applied Physics students, led by Eric Houston (MVCTC Physics Instructor) and Steve Yeagle (MVCTC Math Instructor), designed and built trebuchets. A trebuchet is like a catapult that uses a heavy weight (potential energy transferred to kinetic energy) to power its throw, rather than a spring or other type of elastic energy. The projects were built to the standards set forth by Wright State University for their annual trebuchet competition. After a lot of hard work researching, designing, and constructing the trebuchets, students tested their ability to throw small rubber squash balls, and made modifications and improvements through experimentation. Eventually, sixteen trebuchets were ready for competition. A group of 28 students, grouped into four teams, went to the competition on March 30, 2012.

The Wright State competition takes the form of a battlefield, with teams firing squash balls at each other in a live medieval style fight. If your target is hit, you are out. After about twenty minutes, the team with the most trebuchets still standing, out of the four they started with, is declared the winner. Alternatively, if a trebuchet is able to hit the opposing team's "castle", a target at the far end of the battlefield, they automatically win the match. Winners move on to the next round, losers are eliminated, in a tournament bracket style.

This year, the MVCTC had great success at the competition. Each of our four teams made it past the first round. In the second round, one of our teams lost a very close battle, while the other three continued. Next, two of our teams were pitted against each other, so one had to be eliminated, but the other two moved on to round four, giving MVCTC two of the final eight spots remaining. At that point, one MVCTC won, taking them to the final four. Just inches away from hitting the oppositions "castle", they barely got beat, but then went on to take third place!

MVCTC Academics Supervisor, Dr. Nick Weldy, said of the event, "the instructors and administration are very proud of how our students represented the MVCTC. They worked hard and it showed; posting the best results, we have ever had at the competition. One thing that stood out was how the MVCTC students' trebuchets were designed by the students themselves and represented a variety of styles. The uniqueness of our designs is attributed to our STEM model and the

philosophy of letting students' problem solve and engineer solutions on their own. Many teams from other schools seem to follow a common blueprint with all of the projects on a given team looking identical."

At the end of the day, a third place certificate was awarded to one of the MVCTC teams at the competition and the school will receive a plaque to display.

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