



KILLER BEES 33

To Whom it May Concern:

My name is Jessica Green, and I represent FIRST Robotics Team 33: The Killer Bees from Auburn Hills, Michigan. I'm writing to you to express the desire of many people like myself that wish to include their most invested extracurricular activities in their Common Application, principally addressing FIRST Robotics.

FIRST is an organization based on the principles of expanding interest of young people in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics through competitive robotics as the "varsity sport for the mind" and "the only sport in which every player can go pro." These taglines seem frivolous, but have cultivated a deep change in the culture of American high schools. To encourage the spread of this mission, teams involved in this competition have a commitment to community service unparalleled by any other extracurricular activity. In 2013 alone, I amassed over 250 service hours solely through my team's outreach events.

I recently completed applications to universities I hope to attend next fall. In the process, I found that some of the schools I have been interested in required the Common App. Despite the lengthy and rather thorough list of organizations and clubs I was given the choice of when entering my extracurricular activities, I was disappointed to find that one of the most significant organizations that took up the majority of time in my high school experience was not listed. Worse still, there was no option for the type of the activity. I may not be pursuing a degree in engineering, but FIRST Robotics has had an enormous impact on my life and that of my friends. So much so that it was a surprise - to say the least - that I had no options beyond generic technical extracurricular options. There was no "FIRST Robotics," "VEX Robotics," "FIRST LEGO League," or similar options, but there was also no simple "Robotics" option. By my estimation and experience, FIRST may have fallen within the following options, directly from the Common Application:

Career Oriented

Community Service

Academic

Computer/Technology

Science/Math

Journalism

Other Activity

This is a problem for high achieving students involved in FIRST Robotics who often apply to members of the Common Application. According to the Common Application's own website, one million students use the Common Application worldwide. Meanwhile, more than 71,000 high school students participate in FIRST Robotics Competition, and over 350,000 participate in FIRST programs worldwide, encompassing the FIRST LEGO League (FLL), Junior FLL (Jr. FLL), the FIRST Tech Challenge (FTC), and the FIRST Robotics Competition (FRC). With such widespread and growing participation in FIRST and similar programs, it is imperative for the students that the Common Application include FIRST Robotics Competition (FRC) as an extracurricular option in the Class of 2015 application process. For such a unique and inclusive program students must be able to indicate their involvement instead of the current generalizations of their experiences with an organization that is capable of filling many different roles. Having FIRST Robotics Competition (FRC) as an option will allow students to expand on their individual and often dynamic role on their team in the subsequent text boxes. Currently, the character limitations only allow applicants who wish for universities to account for their FIRST experiences to explain the organization and its goals.

Thank you for your consideration in this matter.

Sincerely,

Jessica Green

Outreach Lead

FIRST Robotics Team #33

Dear Ms. Green,

My name is Jessica Green, and I'm a member of FIRST Robotics Team 33: The Killer Bees from Auburn Hills, Michigan. I'm writing to you to express the frustration of students who would appreciate greater recognition of the activity in which much of their time and energy has been invested during their high school careers. I am writing specifically on behalf of students like myself who are involved in FIRST Robotics programs. FIRST is a multifaceted "sport for the mind," which cannot be adequately represented by any one of the current options in the Fourth Generation Common Application. As an applicant this year, I was not able to identify a single activity like I could for my other extracurriculars such as basketball or marching band; rather, I spent a good amount of time trying to explain FIRST as a program listed under "Other Activity" in order to justify its inclusion, rather than describing my unique and dynamic role within my team. This - in my estimation - detracted from my ability to express my experiences and skills to admissions counselors.

As one of over 101,000 students involved in the FIRST Robotics Competition and FIRST Tech Challenge, I would like to explore the possibility of adding FIRST to the list of extracurricular activities on the Common Application. Involvement in FIRST cannot be described if not holistically, and an applicant's FIRST experience must be evaluated - much like the applicants themselves - on the whole. Naturally, I want to notify the colleges I'm applying to of my experience which has encompassed everything from hands-on technical education to community service and journalism. After discussing my frustrations with other involved students, it is apparent to me that of those 101,000 students, a portion of those students are seniors, and of those seniors, many of us use the Common Application and share my opinion.

I first searched for a solution to my problem through the support ticket system within the application. I was not surprised to have a technical expert point me to the "Other Activity" option. However, we feel that our time investments throughout high school are not adequately represented in the current options; to us, "other activity" generalizes the unique experiences FIRST provides students almost to irrelevance. Building a robot, simply put, could fall under the current umbrellas of "Science/Math" and "Computer/Technology." FIRST, contrarily, provides a richer experience that is not solely about robots or technical excellence. My inquiry to you, now, is this: would it be possible to add FIRST to the assortment of extracurricular activities listed on the Common Application in the future? If this is not a possibility, I would request an explanation on behalf of myself and those similarly positioned.

Thank you for your time and consideration in this manner.

Sincerely,

Jessica Green
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