



Dear “Solar Car Challenge” Participant Candidates,

I would like to introduce myself, explain the two purposes of this program, and request your support. My name is Steven LaValle, and I am the mentor for the FIRST Robotics program at CMIT and also the challenge in which you may be considering taking part. The most obvious purpose of this activity is to increase our students’ exposure to Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) activities. While mastering this knowledge is very important, the activity has a second purpose I also want you to understand.

We have decided to build a solar-powered car and take part in a 1,200-mile road race in July of 2022. This is quite a challenging project, but it promises to be a rewarding experience for those who choose to participate. We are planning a virtual presentation session on June 9th at 6:00 PM to explain the whole idea.

Please fill out this [google form](#) to RSVP!

The possession of knowledge is necessary for success in both college and the workplace, but it is not as important as the set of skills, characteristics, and attitudes that help people to manage their time, work well with others, solve problems, and behave in an ethical manner. These essential abilities are the core of the Project Management discipline and can be developed in one environment (e.g., the high school classroom) and then transferred to future environments (e.g., college and the workplace) where their presence will be needed to produce success.

There is a perception among employers that our young people have not mastered the skills necessary in the modern marketplace. This failure is referred to as the “skills gap,” whose meaning is captured in the following quote from a report by Adecco Group, the world’s largest staffing firm. “Forty-four percent of the executives we surveyed think Americans are lacking

transferable skills such as communication, creativity, collaboration, and critical thinking. Thus, while candidates may look good ‘on paper,’ they don’t know how to effectively work within a team or in an office” (Adecco, 2018).

I and all of the teachers in CMIT want our students to succeed. This is very important to me, not only because I personally want them to succeed, but because the mission statement of our school clearly specifies that “... CMIT Academy will prepare students to become competent, responsible and successful individuals in our globalized and technology-based society through a strong academic program, a school-family-community partnership, and a strong teacher-student relationship. CMIT Academy will inspire and challenge sixth through twelfth-grade students in a creative and supportive learning environment with an academic program focusing on mathematics and information technologies to educate its students as responsible citizens.”

These skills are the same as those that will help them succeed on-the-job (e.g., time management, teamwork, honesty, dedication, and responsibility). That is why we are taking on the Solar Car Challenge. The students behind this activity have already decided to follow a management methodology that is in common use for development projects and are beginning to manage their time using the methodology. We will be working together to get the individual elements of the project completed on time, establish effective collaboration, give proper credit for the work product (full disclosure - this letter is modeled on a similar request published on the Internet,) and follow our backlog of issues on our project site rather than relying on me to provide them with constant reminders. The lessons they learn as they develop these transferable skills will not always be easy.

The consequences they experience on their way to mastering these skills may sometimes bring them into conflict with other members of the project. This is a normal part of the modern workplace environment and conflict resolution is one of the skills we will be working on.

The project will require a considerable investment in time and effort, but the rewards of a successful venture will far exceed these costs.

Thank you for reading this letter and thank you for the support I hope you will provide me this next year. We both want your child to succeed, not only in this project, but also in the future as a productive member of the workforce. We can make this happen if we work together.

Sincerely yours,
Steven LaValle
The Solar Car Team Coach

References

Solar Car Challenge (1933) Web Site at <https://www.solarcarchallenge.org/challenge/>

Adecco. (2016). *The American Skills Gap is Real*. Retrieved from <https://www.adecousa.com/employers/resources/skills-gap-in-the-american-workforce/>