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Cerritos College Finalist in NASA's Gateways to Blue Skies Competition

Only community college selected in the nation

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NORWALK, Calif. – April 22, 2024 – Cerritos College's student team has been selected as a finalist in NASA's 2024 Gateways to Blue Skies Competition. Of the eight teams chosen nationwide, Cerritos College stands out as the sole community college among competitors, such as Boston University and Columbia University.

Sponsored by NASA's Aeronautics Research Mission Directorate (ARMD), the Competition tasked student teams with researching and conceptualizing aviation-related systems to aid natural disaster management. Teams were required to submit a five- to seven-page proposal and a video summarizing their concept.

The Cerritos College team, known as Project F.I.R.E.

(Fire Intervention Retardant Expeller), is addressing the critical issue of wildfires in California. After studying the

problems and current conditions, the students proposed an innovative solution involving an advanced alert system and AI detection to locate fire outbreaks in their initial stages. Upon detection, recycled and repurposed drones would deploy from various locations to the alert site, equipped with thermal cameras to pinpoint the fire's origin. These drones would then drop pellets of expanding foam to smother the fire, slowing its spread until personnel arrive at the site.

Mentored by Astronomy Professor and Engineering Chair Janet McLarty-Schroeder, the team will participate in the 2024 Gateways to Blue Skies: Advancing Aviation for Natural Disasters Competition, where they will present their design concepts to a panel of industry experts at the 2024 Blue Skies Forum, May 30 and 31 at NASA's Ames Research Center in Mountain View, California.

"Our team has done an amazing job putting this proposal together, and I can't wait to see them give their presentation to a team of NASA and industry professionals next month," said McLarty-Schroeder. "Imagine having the chance to tackle real-world challenges and learn valuable problem-solving skills at the same time. That's exactly what this opportunity offers students - a chance to grow personally and professionally while making a real impact on the world."



Cerritos College Project F.I.R.E. team

About Cerritos College: Cerritos College serves as a comprehensive community college for southeastern Los Angeles County. Communities within the college's district include Artesia, Bellflower, Cerritos, Downey, Hawaiian Gardens, La Mirada, Norwalk, and portions of Bell Gardens, Lakewood, Long Beach, Santa Fe Springs, and South Gate. Cerritos College offers nearly 300 degree and certificate programs in nine divisions. Annually, more than 5,000 students successfully complete their course of studies. Enrollment currently averages 21,000 students. Visit Cerritos College online at <http://www.cerritos.edu/>.

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