

illuminator

volume 2, issue 5

When we hear the term, “unmanned systems,” we almost immediately think of drones or autonomous cars. However, for the Old Dominion University RobotX team, it’s all about the boat. Last month, while most students were finishing up the fall semester and preparing for their holiday break, six multidisciplinary engineering students were in Honolulu, Hawaii competing with 14 other teams from three continents, in the 2018 Maritime RobotX Challenge. The week-long biennial competition, designed to foster student interest in autonomous systems, is supported by the Office of Naval Research (ONR) and co-sponsored by the Association of Unmanned Vehicles International Foundation and NAVATEK, a Hawaii-based company that designs ships, small crafts and other amphibious vehicles.

“You learn a lot in your classes, but you don’t really get to apply it to the real world until you get out of school,” said Andrea Robey, co-captain and a junior majoring in modeling, simulation and visualization engineering. “By getting involved in opportunities like this, you’re able to test those new skills and try those new methods on something real and see it in action. So this has been really rewarding.”

RobotX teams use a common boat platform called the Wave Adaptive Modular Vessel (WAM-V). Each team must equip their vessel with hardware, software, sensors, propulsion and control systems. The vessel must be programmed to make independent

prizes were up for grabs. The ODU team came home with \$5,300 in winnings.

“Our presentation and our technical review both received a lot of positive feedback,” said Robey. “We won the ‘Carpe Diem’ award, which came with \$3,500 in prize money, for always going for the challenge and being willing to try anything. We also took second place for our website design, which was a \$1,500 prize.”





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The *illuminator* is a publication of the Batten College of Engineering & Technology

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