

Vivian Nguyen
Woodie Flowers Finalist Award Essay (2020)

Every team needs a leader that constantly pushes boundaries to enable the growth of themselves and their peers. This requires resilience, passion for the cause, and above all, the courage to do and say what was once feared. Since 2014, Vivian Nguyen has learned to amplify her voice and in turn, guide others in finding their place on the team and in *FIRST*.

As the scouting lead, Vivian aims to ensure everyone's voice is heard and closely manages the subteam, from app training to database organizing. She leads strategy and scouting discussions in build season and competitions, and also works with our programmers to develop our scouting app. Her drive led her to help run electrical workshops and act as electrical lead during build season for the past 2 years. Her patience and compassionate approach to teaching leave students confident in their abilities to take on leadership roles. Vivian has also volunteered as key roles, refereeing at FRC events and acting as volunteer coordinator for our FLL competitions.

High school can be an overwhelming experience, especially with the heavy workload of robotics. Vivian created the guardian initiative, a platform for students to reach out to mentors for support with any concerns. These mentors are equipped with the knowledge and resources to provide solutions for the problems students may face. Her efforts make 1241 a more safe and open environment where wellness and mental health are spoken about comfortably.

Seeing the challenges she faced as a woman in STEM persist on the team and in the industry, Vivian strives to make STEM a welcoming place for all. Her role as drive coach for 1241's all-girls offseason team encourages girls to pursue more technical roles on the team. The success of this initiative has led 66 girls to continue to pursue technical roles in regular competitions and inspired multiple teams in Ontario to start the tradition as well.

Vivian created the Girls in STEM Olympics, an annual event where girls participate in STEM-based challenges, network with industry professionals, and meet like-minded girls with a shared interest in STEM. This event grew out of a desire to create a safe space where girls can act on their interests and skills, and use the confidence they gain to pursue their passions in the field. Since 2017, this event has impacted over 145 girls across the GTA, even leading girls outside of the FRC program to join a team. As event director, she leads a student planning committee, empowering them to take charge of organizing and making major decisions for the event. She dedicates herself to making the STEM environment a more inclusive space for everyone on the team and beyond.

Vivian has been a trailblazer for equity across the team and community. Her empathetic teaching style encourages students to pursue their passions and grow confident in their abilities. Through the boundaries she has knocked down, she has elevated the voices of students on the team, in *FIRST*, and beyond.