

Gould Academy Engineering Club Selected to Compete in NASA Competition

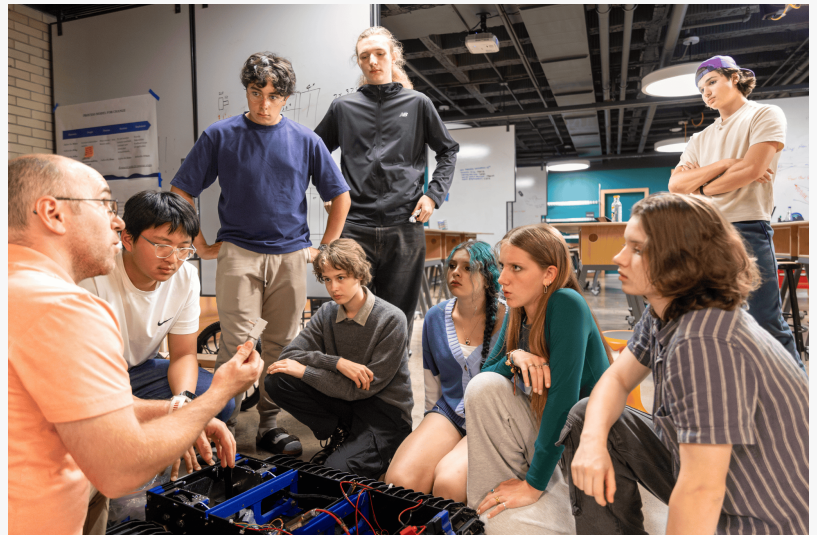
Gould's student-led Engineering Club has been selected to compete in the 2025 NASA Human Exploration Rover Challenge — an engineering & robotics competition.

BETHEL, ME, UNITED STATES, October 13, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Gould Academy is proud to announce that its Engineering Club has been selected to compete in the [2025 NASA Human Exploration Rover Challenge \(HERC\)](#) — a prestigious international engineering and robotics competition hosted by NASA's Marshall Space Flight Center in Huntsville, Alabama.

This achievement places Gould among a select group of high schools and universities from around the world invited to participate in this elite STEM program. But the story of how Gould got here begins not with a faculty member or administrator — but with the bold determination of a student, supported by her team.

One Student's Vision Sparks a Mission:

Over the summer, Maria M. '28, a 10th-grade student at Gould and passionate engineering enthusiast, was completing an internship with a computer-aided design (CAD) agency when she learned about the NASA competition. The more she read about HERC online,



Gould's Engineering Team: Mr. Ayotte, Sean, Mateo, Vanya, Zoe, Alessandra, Maeve, Maria, Ezra.



Gould's IDEAS Center Director, Mr. William Ayotte, works with the Gould Engineering Team in preparation for NASA Competition.

the more it fascinated her. At first, she dismissed the idea.

"I thought, 'No way. This is too big. It's NASA. This is for huge STEM schools, not for a private boarding school like ours,'" Maria recalled. "But I couldn't stop thinking about it. I kept going back to the website, reading every detail, until something in me shifted. It became increasingly obvious — we can do this!"

By the time she returned to campus for fall registration, Maria had made up her mind. Before her Engineering Club advisor, Mr. William Ayotte, could even ask about her summer, Maria blurted out, "We need to enter this NASA competition." Welcome back, Maria!

Empowering Student-Led Innovation:

Mr. Ayotte, longtime science teacher and Director of Gould's [Marlon Family IDEAS Center](#), didn't say yes immediately. Instead, he turned the challenge back to Maria: assemble a team of students just as passionate and committed as she was. "A great teacher doesn't just give students the answers," Ayotte said. "We help them find the tools, the people, and the courage to pursue their biggest ideas. That's what Maria did."

Maria quickly recruited a team of like-minded peers, including Maeve G., Mateo V., Zoe B., Vanya P., Alexandra P., Sean X., Ezra T., Aaliyah L., Solei L., and Sonya M., who believed not only in the project, but in each other. With limited time before the application deadline, they studied over competition rules, drafted technical concepts, and prepared their proposal.

When submission day came, they hit send — and then began the long wait. "I was glued to my inbox," Maria said. "I checked it every hour, hoping for an update. I kept thinking, maybe we're too small. Maybe they'll overlook us." Then, one afternoon outside the IDEAS Center, Sean came running down the stairs.

"Did you see the email? We're in!" he shouted. "NASA said yes!" The team erupted into cheers — jumping, hugging, and celebrating their acceptance into the challenge. "Maeve was screaming, we were all ecstatic...and then it hit me," said Maria. "We are in...and now we have to build this thing."

NASA's Challenge, Gould's Approach:

Gould's team will compete in the more technically challenging Remote Rover Division, where students design, fabricate, and operate a remotely controlled rover to navigate 10 obstacles across 3 missions, within a time limit of just 12 minutes. These rovers must perform technical tasks that simulate real planetary exploration, such as collecting and storing payloads, overcoming terrain obstacles, and interacting with mission-specific objects — while remaining lightweight (under 60 lbs.), maneuverable, and durable.

"This isn't just robotics for fun," Ayotte explained. "It's systems engineering under pressure. It's

materials science, mechanical design, programming, teamwork — and it's all real.”

Throughout the academic year, the team will meet in Gould’s state-of-the-art IDEAS Center (short for Innovation, Design, Engineering, and Applied Science), a 4,000-square-foot maker-space fully equipped with 3D printers, CNC machines, soldering stations, robotics tools, and collaborative workspace.

From Prototypes to Problem-Solvers:

“It’s pretty incredible that a school like ours is stepping into the same arena as major STEM programs from across the world,” said Maeve. “We’re not just participating, we’re competing. We’re designing, building, and problem-solving at a high level, and doing it with heart.” The experience reflects Gould’s deep commitment to project-based learning.

As a historic boarding school founded in 1836, Gould prepares students not just for college, but for a world that demands creativity, collaboration, and resilience. “This is what experiential education looks like at its best,” said Tao Smith, Head of School. “We’re not just preparing students for exams, we’re preparing them to solve the problems the world hasn’t even faced yet. NASA recognized what we already knew — Gould students are ready to lead.”

Follow the Mission:

Gould Academy will provide regular updates as the team progresses from concept to construction to competition. The final testing and presentation will take place in spring 2025 at the U.S. Space & Rocket Center in Alabama. To follow their progress, visit the Gould's official Instagram Account, <https://www.instagram.com/gouldacademy/>

About Gould Academy:

Founded in 1836, Gould Academy is a private, coeducational boarding school in Bethel, Maine. Rooted in the values of Curiosity, Kindness, Creativity, and Courage, Gould prepares students to lead meaningful lives through experiential learning, world-class academics, and strong community connection. The school’s STEM, arts, athletics, and outdoor leadership programs empower students to innovate boldly and live purposefully. Learn more at www.gouldacademy.org.

Michael Martufi
Gould Academy
+1 843-227-9063

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