

RAS Connecticut Chapter: On the Road to Connect, Collaborate, and Advance

The IEEE Robotics and Automation Society (RAS) Connecticut Chapter initiated its Robotics Education Program (REP) in 2015. The goal of REP is to motivate students, professionals, robotics hobbyists, and the local community to learn, apply, and advance state-of-the-art robotics technologies (Figure 1). Since 2009, the Chapter has been working on connecting members to local, national, and international robotics groups and facilitating their collaborations through organizing well-planned and well-attended activities.

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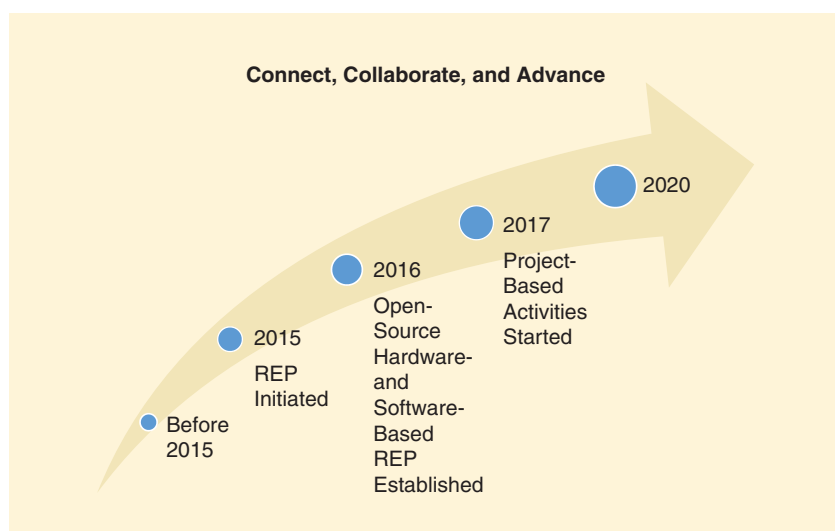


Figure 1. The road map of the Connecticut RAS REP program.

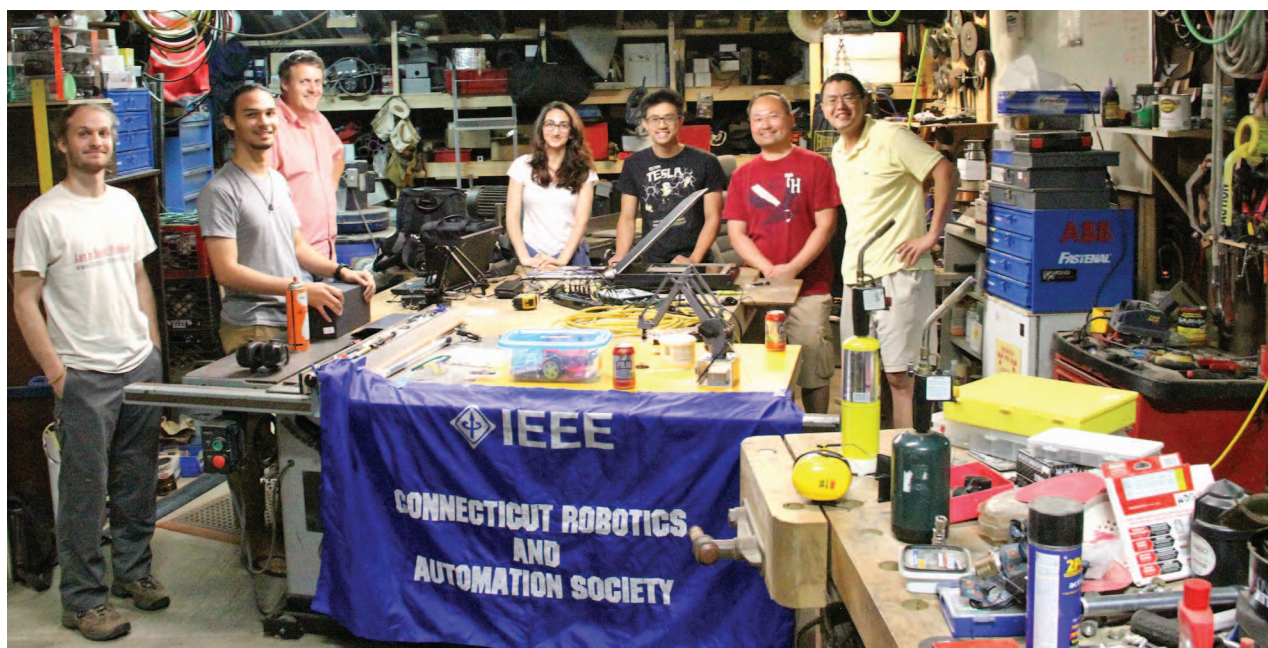


Figure 2. Students and RAS Connecticut Chapter members work on a project at a local library.



Figure 3. The Zero Robotics 2017 summer program field day at MIT.

RAS Connecticut Chapter REP Activities

In 2017, the Chapter organized the robotics speaker series and invited professionals and scholars in robotics and automation to give talks and workshops to industry and academia. The Chapter jointly led and hosted the 2016 IEEE Region 1 Student Conference at Central Connecticut State University, New Britain, and organized the conference's panel discussion on open software and hardware in robotics.

The Chapter believes in the crucial importance of educating and engaging the younger generation and our community through competitions, workshops, and projects. In 2017, the Chapter was actively involved—as organizer, ref-

eree, or participant—in robotics competitions such as Zero Robotics, VEX, the FIRST Championships, and the Fire-Fighting RoboGames competition. The Chapter has presented dozens of robotics workshops at numerous venues, including the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) Scratch Conference and local libraries, schools, universities, and maker fairs (Figure 2).

Collaborating with the MIT Space System's Laboratory, the Chapter hosted the Zero Robotics summer program in 2017 to teach middle schoolers how to program code; participants in the program eventually helped move a satellite based on control inside the International Space Station. Engaging REP volunteers, in the fall of 2017 the Chapter developed a scanning robot to help a local library automatically scan photos of immigrants. During the 2017 spring and fall semesters, the Chapter also helped a local school develop projects on an open-source robot platform (Figure 3).

2018 Chapter of the Year

Dr. Biao Zhang and Dr. Haoyu Wang, Chapter cochairs, received the RAS



Figure 4. Cochairs Haoyu Wang (left) and Biao Zhang (right) accepting the 2018 RAS Chapter of the Year award from RAS President Wolfram Burgard at the ICRA 2018 RAS awards luncheon in Brisbane, Australia.

Chapter of the Year Award at the 2018 International Conference on Robotics and Automation (ICRA) in May in Brisbane, Australia (Figure 4). The Chapter views the award as recognition of what we have accomplished and also as motivation to continue our efforts on the road to connect, collaborate, and advance.

