



Mr. Francis Woodie Flowers

A mentor is someone who elevates others through education and inspiration—who not just leads but fosters leaders—and Mr. Francis embodies not only that but much more. Since joining our team as a mentor in 2013, he has inspired students, pushed them to navigate through challenges with a sense of professionalism, and improved their understanding of the applications of their skills. His enthusiasm for STEM in and out of the workshop is contagious, inspiring students regardless of their experience.

Mr. Francis tirelessly shapes the future generation of STEM—he does not teach to completion but to comprehension. He teaches students that the approach to a problem is just as important as their solution. Within our programming team, he works alongside students to implement rigorous commenting, checklist, and documentation procedures as well as using collaborative tools such as GitHub, ensuring the sustainability of our team and familiarizing members with industry-standard skills. The development of subsystems also involves group review, encouraging the entire subteam to call upon a broad range of skills. First, it requires students to approach a problem—understanding how it can be addressed and what limitations their solution may hold. Second, it requires students to present their solutions for review—encouraging clear communication. Third, it requires students to work together to revise initial approaches and reach the best possible solution. Our alumni frequently remark on the impact his lessons have had on them, “Mr. Francis showed me the importance of being meticulous and organized. He taught me how to critically think about and test ideas before implementing them, and it’s saved me throughout college and my professional career.”

Beyond his work with the programmers, he consistently grows the whole team's understanding of STEM. For new members, he makes concepts approachable by explaining the programming syntax and functions of the robot. For the electrical team, he helps troubleshoot issues such as brown-outs and teaches new students about wiring. For our communications team, he reviews presentations and provides valuable feedback as to how the team can best convey their topic. Working for L3 Harris, Mr. Francis has experience in the real-world use of technology, which he integrates into lessons he shares with the team at whole-team meetings and lunches. Notably, he shares the importance of tools such as checklists from his experiences with night landings, which helps to make our team a soaring success. He also teaches the importance of the engineering and design process by teaching us about the development of black boxes at L3 Harris, showing students that these vital concepts reach far beyond our workshop and inspiring them as they look toward their future. For every WorBot, Mr. Francis connects us to real-world skills, inspires us, and shows us what it truly means to be a part of *FIRST*; he does not just emulate the Core Values—he teaches them.