Please read the following article and then answer the RACES question. Use two citations, please.

RACES Question: *What are the two most compelling reasons why going to VEX robotics tournaments would be good for you personally?*

***You must put your answer into your own words – no copying!!!!! You may use quotes around a citation and then explain how it applies to you.***

Participating in VEX tournaments offers a wide range of educational, professional, and personal benefits that extend far beyond simply winning a competition. It provides students with hands-on experience in STEM fields, develops critical soft skills, and prepares them for future careers.

* **Real-world engineering:** Students engage in the complete engineering design process, from brainstorming and prototyping to building and testing their robots.
* **Programming and coding:** The competition provides an early introduction to coding. They must program both autonomous routines and driver-controlled functions.
* **Mechanical and electronic principles:** Competitors learn about core engineering concepts such as gearing, torque, mechanical stability, and integrating electronic sensors to improve robot performance.
* **Problem-solving:** Each season brings a new game challenge, forcing students to analyze complex problems and design innovative solutions. The pressure of a tournament forces teams to troubleshoot mechanical and coding issues on the fly, building resilience and adaptability.

**Professional and life skills**

Beyond technical proficiency, VEX tournaments are a critical platform for developing skills that are highly valued by colleges and employers.

* **Teamwork and communication:** Success in VEX is a collaborative effort. Students must work closely with their teammates to divide tasks, brainstorm strategies, and manage the project's timeline. This experience fosters communication skills, mutual respect, and accountability.
* **Leadership and initiative:** By taking on defined roles such as lead designer, builder, or programmer, students gain practical experience in leadership, project management, and strategic thinking.
* **Strategic thinking:** Teams must analyze game manuals, observe opponents, and adapt their strategy during tournaments to maximize their score and win matches. This develops critical-thinking and tactical planning abilities.
* **Iterative design:** The competition's process of building, testing, failing, and improving mirrors a real-world engineering workflow. This experience teaches students the value of persistence and iteration in achieving a successful outcome.

**Future career and college opportunities**

A proven track record in VEX can significantly boost a student's prospects for college and future employment, especially in STEM fields.

* **College applications:** Participation in VEX robotics, especially with notable achievements, can enhance a student's application to competitive STEM-focused universities. It demonstrates passion, technical skills, and commitment.
* **Scholarship opportunities:** Many colleges and organizations offer scholarships specifically for students with experience in robotics programs like VEX.
* **Career readiness:** VEX prepares students for future careers by teaching them how to apply the engineering design process, work in a team, and innovate. The skills learned directly transfer to professions in engineering, computer science, and robotics, and can help close manufacturing skills gaps.
* **Networking:** Tournaments offer opportunities to meet other passionate students, mentors, and industry professionals, leading to lifelong friendships and professional connections.

**Personal growth**

For many students, the journey through VEX provides significant personal development.

* **Confidence and resilience:** Overcoming technical failures and competition pressure builds confidence and a sense of accomplishment. Students learn to handle challenges and adapt in real-time.
* **Community and identity:** Being part of a team and the wider VEX community creates a sense of belonging and helps students develop an identity as a STEM learner.
* **Motivation:** The competitive and collaborative atmosphere keeps students motivated to learn and push their own boundaries