

The Virgin Islands Consortium

World's Largest Rocket Contest Brings Nation's Top Student Rocketeers to D.C. Finals, Including V.I.'s Elena Christian Rocketry Club

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ST. CROIX -- One hundred teams of students across the country are advancing to the 2016 National Finals of the Team America Rocketry Challenge (T.A.R.C.), including the Virgin Islands very own Elena Christian Junior High School Rocketry Club. These teams beat nearly 700 others to succeed in one of the most competitive qualifying rounds of the program's 14-year history. They will now compete at the final fly-off on Saturday, May 14 outside of Washington, D.C.

The 2016 National Finals will draw a diverse array of participants from 24 states and the U.S. Virgin Islands. Among them are a team of soccer players with engineering aspirations, a squad of JROTC cadets and 12 first-time TARC teams. More than a third of finalists are girls and 37 percent identify as part of a minority ethnic group, both demographics that continue to increase year after year.

Structured to emulate the aerospace industry's design, engineering and testing processes, T.A.R.C. 2016 requires students to build a rocket that flies to exactly 850 feet and safely returns a payload of two raw eggs within 44-46 seconds. Participants are challenged with new design and flight requirements each year. This year, teams must place eggs perpendicular to each other in their rockets, requiring wider rocket bodies and innovative egg protection solutions.

At the National Finals, as many as 42 top scoring teams will advance to a second round with new height and time requirements (825 feet and 43-45 seconds). Teams must alter their rockets on the fly between rounds to meet the new scoring parameters.

Finalists will compete for scholarships and prizes totaling more than \$100,000 and the chance to travel to the Farnborough International Airshow near London, courtesy of the Raytheon Company. The winning team will represent the United States in the International Rocketry Challenge, facing off against teams from the United Kingdom, France and Japan.

Sponsored by the Aerospace Industries Association, the National Association of Rocketry and more than 20 industry partners, T.A.R.C. is the world's largest student rocketry contest. Since its inception in 2002, T.A.R.C. has inspired more than 60,000 middle and high school students to explore careers in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (S.T.E.M.) This year, nearly 5,000 students representing all 50 states, the District of Columbia and the U.S. Virgin Islands designed and built rockets in hopes of qualifying for the National Finals.

Feature Image: Elena Christian Junior High School Rocketry Club students departing St. Croix on Wednesday.

[Watch the original video](#)