

The UCF Report

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World leaguers

Back at UCF the student computer team that placed fourth against a field of 300 colleges in international competition celebrated and basked in recognition. Left to right, Amar Mukherjee, chairman of Computer Science; Larry Holt, representing Harris Corp.; the team, with captain Jim Geist, Nhan Tran, Steve DeVos and David Dillard, with their advisor, Charles Hughes.

Computer team makes the big time

You'll have to forgive Ron Dutton if he leans a little heavy on his recollections of this year's international computer programming contest in Cincinnati.

It's just that Dutton and the four UCF computer science students who journeyed to WKRP-land are understandably proud of the showing of the UCF team against some of the nation's leading lights in keyboard magic.

"I'd swear that there was more applause for the UCF team during the awards banquet than for any of the other top four finishers," said Dutton. He attributed the reaction to UCF's come-from behind spirit that brought fourth-place honors. They were in some tall company. CalTech won; followed by Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute and Rice.

At one point in the Feb. 5 contest — which featured eight mind-boggling problems — UCF was in the lead. That lofty perch was short-lived, when CalTech surged ahead with RPI and Rice in their wake.

The local quartet — team captain Jim Geist, Steve DeVos, David Dillard and Nhan Tran — reached Cincinnati by virtue of a second-place finish in the regionals held at UCF last November. The winner in that contest was Vanderbilt, which trailed UCF in fifth spot at the internationals.

Dutton said more than 300 teams from the U.S., Canada and Europe

started out. The 24 at Cincinnati represented the top two finishers in 12 regions.

While the UCF contingent are all undergraduates, most schools in the contest fielded grad students. At least one team, said Dutton, consisted entirely of PhD students.

He was not allowed to kibbitz, Dutton noted. Teams were not allowed to talk to anyone but officials during the grueling competition.

The grit displayed by the UCF team during the battle became a focal point, Dutton said. "People actually gathered around and watched our team." At the awards banquet, a member of the Rice team approached Dutton with, "who are these guys, and where's UCF?"

"Now they know," he grinned.

This year marked the second time UCF has competed on the international level. Last year they ended up 17th after winning the regional.

The trip back required extra space for the prizes acquired by the UCF gang. An Apple Macintosh computer and \$300 scholarship from the sponsoring Association for Computing Machinery went to the department. They also brought home a trophy, plaque and modular software package. At a campus luncheon saluting their fete, each received an umbrella from the UCF Foundation.

The icing on the cake, however, was \$1,000 contributed by the Harris Corporation before the trip north that was used to cover expenses.