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UCF REPORT

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Young academics shine

UCF computer students defeat world-class university teams

UCF's computer science programming team captured second place in international skills competition last week, vaulting ahead of teams from Johns Hopkins University, California Institute of Technology, Harvard and nearly a score of other institutions whose names are synonymous with academic excellence.

In solving all eight problems in the six-hour competition sponsored by the Association for Computing Machinery, the oldest and largest computer society, the UCF team of two undergraduates and two graduate students matched the performance of the winning Stanford University squad. The Stanford representatives earned the top berth by coming up with the correct answers in less time or with fewer attempts at arriving at the solutions. UCF defeated Stanford last year with a fourth place showing.

The team of David Van Brackle, Jim Geist, Jim Duke and Nhan Tran, plus Michele Spear, a graduate student and team coach, were greeted at Orlando International Airport on their return from the St. Louis competition last Thursday night by Computer Science Department Chair Dr. Amar Mukherjee, TV cameras and an enthusiastic crowd of UCF students, faculty and friends. The group included UCF football players and Athletic Director Gene McDowell, who said his athletes all wanted to be part of a welcoming committee "to pay tribute to the highest ranked team in UCF history."

Ira Smith, Student Government president, was on hand as well, declaring the SGA contribution towards the team's St. Louis trip, "the best investment Student Government has ever made."

UCF's placement in the contest remained in doubt right up to the awards luncheon. According to Spear, team members did not have high confidence in their answer to the final question, which was submitted shortly before time expired. Their uncertainty proved unfounded and their solution provided the margin of victory over third place Johns Hopkins.

Movin' on up

These students can keep on feeling proud and happy for their performance in the annual international ACM Scholastic Programming contest in St Louis Feb. 18. Their close second place finish jumped UCF two places over last year's and solidly placed their university among the world's best in computer science. Left to right, Jim Geist, David Van Brackle, Nhan Tran and Jim Duke.