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Nation's Top 10 Again: UCF Programming Team

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The University of Central Florida's Computer Programming Team moved up several spots to take third place in the nation after competing in an international super contest known as the "Battle of the Brains."

UCF came in third among U.S. teams, besting Stanford, University of California at Berkeley, Cal Tech and Cornell, among other institutions. The UCF team also placed 33rd in the world Association of Computing Machinery's International Collegiate Programming Contest. Last year's UCF team placed 8th in the United States and 28th in the world.

The 2016 world title went to St. Petersburg State University in Russia. The highest ranking U.S. team was Harvard University, which placed third.

UCF computer science students, all from Florida – Evan Dorundo of Boca Raton, Michael Kirsche of Weston, and Stephen Royal of Jacksonville – represented the university in the May 19 competition in Thailand. Dorundo and Royal have competed at the world level once before.

The team earned its spot in the world contest by winning the southeast regional contest in the fall, beating 108 teams from Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Mississippi and South Carolina.

That regional victory marked the 34th consecutive year that the team has achieved a top-three regional rank, a record unmatched by any team in the nation.

The contest begins with each team receiving problems that draw on competitors' skills in math, logic, graphs, charts, geometry and more. Each three-member team shares one computer to solve the most problems in the five hours allotted, writing a computer program for each solution. For example, a problem might ask competitors to route a fire truck across a city in the quickest time using a complex set of conditions, such as one-way streets and road closures. A penalty-point system is used to resolve ties.

The secret to UCF's success is devoted practice, including 35 to 40 Saturdays a year. UCF's seven-hour practice sessions simulate the five-hour contest, with the extra time spent on analysis and feedback.

"Not only are the students committed to practicing, but we owe so much of our team success to our coaching staff who devote countless hours to the team effort," said Ali Orooji, a professor and advisor in the UCF Department of Computer Science, and the team's faculty advisor.

The seven volunteer coaches are UCF faculty, former team members and industry professionals who prepare the teams with intense practice and instruction in algorithms, programming and teamwork strategy.

Click to learn more about the UCF Programming Team [1].

To see the official contest results, click here [2].

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[1] UCF Programming Team: **http://www.ucfprogrammingteam.org**
[2] here: **https://icpc.baylor.edu/scoreboard/**