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## UCF students competing in 'Battle of the Brains'

### UCF students head to China for prestigious computer-programming competition

Luis Zaragoza

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Three University of Central Florida students are in China this week to compete in the finals of the longest-running and most prestigious computer-programming competition in the world.

Many call it the Battle of the Brains.

It's not UCF's first time at this techno rodeo. The university has been fielding teams in the regional competitions that lead up to the finals for 28 years and regularly finishes among the top three, beating out schools such as Georgia Tech, University of Florida and Florida State University.

It's a record unmatched in the Southeast, according to faculty adviser Ali Orooji.

In the world finals of the contest, UCF has placed as high as second. Last year, the school got an honorable mention in a contest dominated by schools from Russia and China.

At the finals in Harbin, China, running through Saturday, UCF's team — David Callies of Kissimmee, Ryan Patterson of Palm Bay and Jonathan Calhoun of Bedford, Pa. — will be matching wits with students from more than 100 schools, including powerhouses such as Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Carnegie Mellon University and Columbia University.

So what does a computer-programming competition look like?

Think of it as a mental rugby match.

Here's the set-up: Teams of three work together using a single computer to tackle eight or more real-world problems, creating software systems to do things such as breaking password codes. The trick is to solve as many problems as possible within a five-hour period.

Some describe this as cramming a whole semester's work into one day.

The winners get prizes from IBM, scholarships and the notice of tech companies that might be potential



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employers.

To prepare for the preliminary competitions, the UCF teams — five of them chosen through tryouts last fall — practiced for hundreds of hours, dedicating most of their Saturdays to seven-hour sessions that included mock contests.

"I don't know what free time means anymore," said Patterson, whose computer-programmer father started teaching him how to write code at age 8.

In the regionals, all five UCF teams placed in the top 10. The top team was invited to go to the finals.

The only other Florida school in the IBM-sponsored competition — called the Association for Computing Machinery International Collegiate Programming Contest — comes from Florida Institute of Technology in Melbourne. The team: adviser Ryan Stansifer and students David King, Tim Mersch and Erdal Tuleu.

You can see contest standings at [cm.baylor.edu/welcome.icpc](http://cm.baylor.edu/welcome.icpc).

Orooji, who has been advising students involved in the competition for 20 years, is confident his team has prepared well enough and has the talent to do well.

"Now we just need to get it done," he said.

Luis Zaragoza can be reached at [lzaragoza@orlandosentinel.com](mailto:lzaragoza@orlandosentinel.com) or 407-420-5718.

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