

# UCF programmers make hard drive for first

□ The team finished 15th — tied with MIT — out of 2,400 from around the world that competed.

By David Pittman

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After competing five hours in an international computer-programming contest, the University of Central Florida's team brought home something more important than a gold medal: prestige.

The three-member team cap-

tured 15th place at the ACM International Collegiate Programming Contest, beating out schools with top engineering programs, such as Duke, Harvard and Cornell. UCF tied the prestigious Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

More than 2,400 teams of students from around the world were whittled down to the 60 that competed at the Radisson Hotel Universal in Orlando on Saturday. Just competing in the contest is a great achievement, said Ali Orooji, the adviser for the UCF team and director of this year's contest.

"Any team that makes it to the finals brings tremendous awareness

to the university," he said. "It shows that you are training and producing good students."

While winning first place would have been nice, Jonathan Kolb was excited just to be playing larger schools.

"It's like UCF playing Florida in football — except we have a better chance," said the senior computer science major.

Gabriel Silberman, program director of IBM's Centre for Advanced Studies, which sponsors the contest, has seen many lesser-known schools do well.

"Some schools come out of complete obscurity and hit the world

scene," he said.

That's what graduate student Sandra Powers is hoping.

"We have a great engineering department and a great computer science department. But we just aren't accepted," she said.

Silberman said IBM would be interested in recruiting UCF's team members.

"We certainly look at all the contestants that have made it this far," he said. "We see it as an opportunity to work with them in the future."

St. Petersburg State University in Russia won first place and a \$9,000 scholarship for its computer science program.