

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

UCF Programming Team Advances to North American Championships

Held at UCF for the first time, the next round of the International Collegiate Programming Contest will match 32 finalist teams and about 15 are expected to advance to the world competition.

BY GENE KRUCKEMYER '73 | APRIL 30, 2021



UCF's Programming Team has advanced to the North American championship round of the 2021 [International Collegiate Programming Contest](#) — and won't have to travel far to get there.

The ICPC, the oldest and most prestigious collegiate programming contest, will hold the planned in-person event for the first time at UCF on Aug. 8-14. UCF Board of Trustees Chair Beverly Seay, has long been involved with ICPC and was instrumental in bringing the competition to campus.

More than 60,000 teams from more than 100 countries started out in the international competition.

The university's team won its regional and divisional titles to advance to the North American competition of the final 32 teams that will converge at UCF. More than 1,000 teams from the United States and Canada entered the international competition.

Last year, the UCF team brought home third place at the event.

This year's winning team members who will compete, all from Orlando, are: senior Sharon Barak and sophomore Daniel West, both computer science majors, and junior Seba

Villalobos, who is majoring in mathematics and computer engineering.



Sharon Barak

Universities and colleges can enter two teams at the beginning of the competition, and UCF's other team took third place: Ahmad Barhamje, Atharva Nagarkar and Andy Phan.

"The best of each university compete so our team record and performance is an indication of the time and effort the group puts into preparing," says Ali Orooji, associate professor of computer science and the team's faculty advisor.

Others who have coached the team this year are: senior computer science instructor Arup Guha, lecturer Travis Meade, and volunteers **Glenn Martin '92 '95MS '12PhD, Tom Phan '12 and Jim Geist '87, and Chris Gouge.**

Daniel West

The competition at UCF will consist of teams having to solve 8 to 14

real-world problems in five hours.

Teams get only one computer, so sharing the computer is part of the strategy," says Orooji, adding that about 10 teams from the North American competition will advance to the world finals.



Seba Villalobos

More than 60,000 teams from more than 100 countries started out in the international competition, and fewer than 150 globally will advance to the finals. The date and location of the final event have not been determined.

In conjunction with the competition at UCF, the North American Programming Camp will be held on campus. This is the first time the national competition and training camp have been held together. Last year, UCF was scheduled to host the camp on the campus, but because of the pandemic the event was hosted virtually.

Eight trainers who have extensive experience in competitive programming and related activities will attend the camp. Two streams of training will be offered to students: one with a focus on national-level contests and one dedicated to preparation for the world finals. The trainers also will help prepare the advancing teams for the world finals.

In addition, the camp will provide companies and agencies opportunities to meet with students and recruit them for job or internship opportunities.

Alan Eustace '79 '81 MS '84PhD, computer science alumnus and former senior vice president of Google, has donated to the UCF Programming Team for more than a decade to help build an internationally significant computer science workforce.

"This gift is really about Ali [Orooji] and his team," Eustace says. "They have done a wonderful job leveraging the money into turning out great students, getting them placed at great companies, making them competitive on the national and world stage, and bringing up the visibility of UCF in the technical community."

Orooji says he hopes the teams can still attend the August event as scheduled.

“It’s being planned as in-person...the hotel has been reserved, various rooms have been reserved,” he says.
“Hopefully, COVID won’t change that.”

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4000 Central Florida Blvd. Orlando, Florida, 32816 | [407.823.2000](tel:407.823.2000)

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