

Computer Programming Teams Sweep Regional Contest

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As if winning wasn't enough, the University of Central Florida also won second and third place Saturday at a regional contest of computer programming known as the "Battle of the Brains."

The victory marks the 31st consecutive year that the UCF Programming Team has achieved a top-three regional win in the Association for Computing Machinery International Collegiate Programming Contest, a record unmatched in the competition.

UCF sent eight three-member teams to the 2012 southeast regional contest in Melbourne that featured 85 university teams from Florida, Alabama, Georgia, Mississippi and South Carolina.

As winners, UCF computer science students Michael Galletti of Orlando, Stephen Royal of Jacksonville, and Daniel Wasserman of Ocoee will travel to St. Petersburg, Russia, in June to compete in the world finals against the best of 8,000 regional teams from 80 countries.

The contest begins with each team receiving up to 12 problems that draw on competitors' skills in math, logic, graphs, charts, geometry and other categories. Each team shares one computer to solve the most problems in the five-hour contest, writing a computer program for each solution. An example problem might ask competitors to route a fire truck across a city to a fire in the quickest time, using a complex set of conditions such as one-way streets and streets under construction.

In Saturday's contest, Galletti, Royal and Wasserman successfully solved seven of 10 problems to win. In comparison, the second- and third-place teams from UCF, and the fourth-place team from the University of Florida each solved six problems.

The secret to UCF's success is devoted practice. "Our students practice 35 to 40 Saturdays a year. I don't know of any other schools in the country that practice like this," said Ali Orooji, a professor and the team's faculty advisor in the UCF Department of Electrical Engineering and Computer Science.

UCF's seven-hour practice sessions simulate the five-hour contest, with the extra time spent on analysis and feedback.

For the first time, UCF sent an all-female team to Saturday's contest. They tied for 36th place along with 23 other teams.

"Prior competition experience can impact how well a team does," Orooji said. "Our women's team was assembled this year. In comparison, two of our first-place team members have been competing for three years. So we view every competition experience as valuable preparation for future contests."

For more information about the southeast regional contest, visit the website <http://ser.cs.fit.edu/ser2012/> ^[1].

For more information on the UCF Programming Team, visit <http://www.ucfprogrammingteam.org>.

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