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Media Release



UBC Department of Computer Science

UBC Computer Science Dominates Prestigious ACM Programming Contest

The University of British Columbia has emerged as a powerhouse among university Computer Science departments at this year's ACM Programming Contest in the Pacific Northwest Region of North America.

Beating out more than 80 other teams from Canada and the United States including the traditionally favoured teams from Stanford and Berkeley, three teams of students from the UBC Department of Computer Science took first, third, and fourth places respectively in the prestigious 2003 Association for Computing Machinery (ACM) Programming Contest at the Portland State Campus, Portland, Oregon.

"I'm extremely pleased with the success of all three of our teams and I'm proud of the dedication shown by the student members and the coach. This accomplishment is testimony not only to the amazing calibre of students attracted to our Department but also to the level of instruction and mentorship they receive once they get here. It was a great team effort" said Department Head Bob Woodham.

"Although we've always been strong contenders for the top spots, this is the first year since UBC began competing in 1996 that a team has made it to the World finals," said Alan Hu, Faculty advisor to the teams.

The annual five-hour competition presents programming problems that teams must solve using C, C++ and Java. Restricted to one computer per team, each team is given nine programming problems to solve. UBC's first place team was the only team to complete eight of the nine problems, completing four questions within the first 67 minutes of the competition and eight question at the three and a half hour mark. "The key is to choose the easiest problems and solve those as quickly as possible" said the team's coach, Jonathan Backer, a Ph.D student within the Department. Backer is a veteran of the 2001 World competition where he represented the University of Alberta.

UBC's top team will join 72 other regional teams at the 28th ACM International Collegiate Programming Contest World Finals in Prague, The Czech Republic, in March 2004.

Winners of the International competition typically receive prizes and scholarships from IBM, the contest's sponsor. In addition, winning team members are often thrust into the advantageous position of being able to pick and choose from top graduate schools.

UBC competed in a region, which includes Alaska, Hawaii, British Columbia, Washington, Oregon, northern/central California and western Nevada.

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Members of the UBC Computer Science teams are:

First Place – UBC 0

Sebastian Kanthak, Markus Moll, Wolfgang Hess

Third Place – UBC 1

Peng Zhao, Mark Yen, (ECE), Tudor Costin, (Physics)

Fourth Place – UBC X

Igor Naverniouk

Frank Pok Man Chu (Math and Computer Science)

Andrew Rothbart

Alternate: Yury Kholondyrev

For more information about the contest and the final standings visit:

<http://www.acmcontest-pacnw.org/>

The UBC Department of Computer Science is a dynamic, youthful, and growing community renowned internationally for its excellence and depth of research. Recognized for teaching innovation, the Department places a conscious focus on interdisciplinary programs. There are approximately 900 undergraduates, 185 graduate students and 41 full time faculty members.

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