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Competition tests computing knowledge of UMM students

Summary:

(November 20, 2003)-The computing knowledge of 11 University of Minnesota Morris computer science students was tested recently in two competitions against computer science students from other college campuses.

UMM sent two teams of four students each and their coach, computer science Associate Professor Nic McPhee, to the fourth annual Digi-Key Collegiate Computing Competition on October 24 in Thief River Falls. The Discalceate Boondogglers, comprised of Rory Johnson, Mike Maurer, Aaron Price, and Aaron Stricker, finished third out of 11 competing teams from six universities. Ellery Crane, Alex Jarvis, Dan Harms, and Wayne Manselle made up the other UMM team, Cheap Rip Off, and came in fifth.

Competitors in the Digi-Key competition were given three identical sets of problems to solve, with a designated time limit on each problem. Correct answers to each problem within the set were worth a determined number of points depending on the difficulty and length of the problem. The three teams with the most points at the end of the competition won individual as well as cash awards for their department. For their third-place finish, members of the Discalceate Boondogglers were each rewarded \$50 Best Buy gift cards and the UMM computer science department was awarded a \$600 cash prize. The students weren't done yet, however.

UMM volunteered to host a satellite site for the North Central North America ACM Intercollegiate Programming Contest on November 8. The ICPC is a competition sponsored by IBM that divides the six inhabitable continents into regions, with winners from each region advancing to the world finals to compete for scholarships.

UMM was one of many satellite sites in the North Central North America Region. UMM hosted six teams from three different colleges and supplied three teams of its own. The nine teams that competed at UMM were of the 182 total teams in the region that includes seven U.S. states and two Canadian provinces. Each team of three had to be comprised entirely of all undergraduate students or two undergraduate students and one graduate student.

Each team was given the same nine problems, one computer, and a five-hour time limit. The team that solved the most problems in the least amount of time got the best score. A time penalty was also assessed for incorrect answers that were submitted. The UMM team that did the best in this competition was Four Digit Integer – the team of Alex Jarvis, Dan Harms, and Ellery Crane. They solved three of the problems correctly to finish second at the local site, and 75th out of the 182 highly competitive regional teams. UMM team Diesel, including Adam Rowe, Eugene Michtchenko, and Matt Fair, solved two problems correctly ranking them at 92nd in the region. The Discalceate Boondogglers solved one problem to place 141st in the region.

The competitions were described as a good experience by the UMM students who participated in them many plan on competing again next year. Crane did not seem too disappointed with the results, and said he would compete again. "It was definitely worthwhile," Crane said. Though Jarvis said he competed for fun, he also saw the competitions as a good

challenge to the participants. Getting ready for, and participating in, the competitions was, "a good way to push ourselves," according to Jarvis.

McPhee, who helped prepare and coach the teams remarked, "I've got some good students."

(Contributed by Matt Gilmore '05, UMM News Service)

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