

friday, december 1, 2006

Competition

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we have to know algorithms, learn to use time wisely, and try to solve problems as quickly as we can."

Echols said practices also include mock competitions to narrow down the teams for the regionals and to address topics related to the problems they would have to solve.

Keyser said the students have coordinated most of the practices themselves.

Brown, a graduate student studying computer science, said he joined the team simply because it seemed like an interesting way to use his time.

"It takes a lot of practice, but it is fun," he said.

The team members who placed third are either graduate students or seniors, so the team is working to find replacements, Echols said.

"This was the last time I was able to go," Echols said. "We are bringing in new people and teaching them the tricks of the trade."

He said the future isn't looking bleak, though, because one of the newer teams, even with little experience under their belt, managed to place sixth in the competition, and they are attracting members because of attention received from previous successes.

"It's pretty easy to get into — all you need is some familiarity with the tools involved," Echols said.

Now, as he heads into the workforce, Echols said the work he put into the competition was helpful in preparing him.

"Creating the programs and solving problems are things I will need for a career in computer engineering," he said. "Though, I probably won't have to do it all at such a fast pace."

Brown, who plans on becoming a software designer, said he will not only be prepared for his career, but that he has an advantage in the hiring process because of the programming skills he picked up while training.

"I have become very well-practiced in writing simple programs," he said. "When I go to a job interview, they will probably ask me to write a program, and it will be like second nature."