Computers

Continued from page 1

world against one another with the goal of writing computer programs to solve eight problems in five hours, said assistant professor of computer science and team coach John Keyser.

Margaret Ashida, director of corporate university relations for IBM, said this is the world's most prestigious computer competition, designed so that it is unusual for teams to be able to solve all eight problems within the time constraint. IBM supports ACM and the worldwide contest to help develop the talent and skills of emerging leaders, she said.

Reading said the team, who won the south central regional competition, is not nervous and attributes its success in the regional competition to its members' relaxed attitudes.

Professor of computer science Bjarne Stroustrup taught Reading and said this trip will be a great experience for the students. Stroustrup added that he was proud that A&M's team beat students from the University of Texas, Rice University and Baylor University at the regional competition.

Stroustrup wrote the computer programming language, C++, used by A&M students in the competition. C++ is the most widely used programming language in the world, Stroustrup said, and can be found in everything from Internet browsers, Google and computer games to the latest F-16 fighter jets and the Mars Rover.

The Texas A&M Maroon Team meets twice a week to practice, Reading said. However, to prepare for the competition, it has been practicing every day for five hours.

Keyser said the students' success is reflective of their hard work.

"In some ways, their success is more a statement about the students than the department," Keyser said. "They're the ones who did the work and spent the time practicing. It also says good things about the department who taught them the skills needed to compete."

Ashida encouraged students to pursue careers in computer sciences. She said there is a misconception in the United States that there aren't many jobs in computer programming. However, IBM hires thousands of people from the University every year, she said.

"If we don't have students in the U.S. going after that blend of science, mathematics and engineering degrees, our country will lose the ability to drive innovation in the world," she said.

The job ecosystem in computer sciences extends beyond IBM to the 90,000 business partners of IBM (smaller businesses that focus on specific solutions to computer problems) Ashida said, and to IBM's clients in automotive, health care and other industries. She said there is always a need for educated individuals with skills in technology, and this competition helps to develop those skills.

"The students are going to work hard in the competition," she said. "But we're going to make sure they have fun too."