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Brooke Zimny  
*Ouachita Baptist University*

Ouachita News Bureau  
*Ouachita Baptist University*

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## Ouachita students earn third place in Acxiom Collegiate Programming Contest



*By Brooke Zimny, Assistant Director of Communications*

March 21, 2014

For more information, contact OBU's news bureau at [newsbureau@obu.edu](mailto:newsbureau@obu.edu) or (870) 245-5208.

ARKADELPHIA, Ark. -- A team of Ouachita Baptist University computer science students earned third place in the Acxiom Collegiate Programming Contest, held at Hendrix College March 10.

"I was extremely honored to have the opportunity to work with my teammates," said Jake Kausler, a member of the team. Kausler is a junior computer science and Biblical languages double-major from Marion, Ark. "Even if we had not placed, I would have still loved the experience. It taught me a lot about teamwork and working under stress and has given me a better friendship with the people I work with."

Other members of the third place team were Drew Ervin, a junior computer science and music double-major from Springdale, Ark., and Ben Schleiff, a senior computer science and mathematics double-major from Beijing, China.

"One of my goals is to give students opportunities to do things outside the classroom," said Dr. Jeff Matocha, associate professor of computer science. "They find it fun, but it also lets them compare themselves to students at other schools."

The statewide competition included 18 teams from eight Arkansas universities and one high school. The contest presents each team with nine problems to solve in five hours. Problems include tasks such as

decrypting a message from an input file, validating a password and calculating the  $n$ th digit of pi from a formula.

Each of the top seven teams at the Axiom competition solved five problems. Their rankings were then determined by time, with any incorrect submission resulting in 20 minutes added to the team's total.

"It does validate that we have good computer science students at OBU," Matocha said. "Some of the teams have practices throughout the year and even have to have tryouts to get to come to the contest. For me, it is mostly about the experience and, to a lesser extent, letting them see that they do (or do not) stack up against other schools."

"Our team, though we knew each other and were friends beforehand, had not really done much work together specifically on these types of problems," noted Kausler. "We decided to do the competition just to have fun and hopefully increase our skills of working hard in a stressful environment."

"We simply took the knowledge we learned in our classes and applied it to the questions," Kausler continued. "I think that says a lot about the computer science department of OBU; it teaches us to directly apply our knowledge and not have to practice the application."

Two other Ouachita teams also participated in the competition, including: Josh Esgar, a senior computer science major from Webb City, Mo.; Taylor Heinsohn, a senior computer science major from Hallsville, Texas; Nathan Hill, a sophomore computer science major from Bryant, Ark.; Justin Kelly, a sophomore computer science and physics double-major from Arkadelphia, Ark.; Nathan Malone, a junior computer science and applied mathematics double-major from Mayflower, Ark.; and Wesley Packard, a senior computer science major from Siloam Springs, Ark.

A team from Hendrix University placed first in the competition, and teams from the University of Arkansas at Little Rock placed second, fourth and fifth. A team from the University of Arkansas at Fort Smith tied for fifth, as well, and a team from the University of Arkansas at Fayetteville placed sixth. These teams, in addition to Ouachita's third place team, all solved five problems. Other institutions that competed include the Arkansas School for Mathematics, Sciences and the Arts; Henderson State University; Southern Arkansas University; and the University of Central Arkansas.

For more information about the competition or Ouachita's computer science program, contact Dr. Jeff Matocha at [matochaj@obu.edu](mailto:matochaj@obu.edu) or (870) 245-5329.