Tech students win at Microsoft Imagine Cup

By Joshua Cureo
Online Editor

If you’re a Computer Science major at Tech, one of the first things I’m sure you’ve heard is that Microsoft is bad and open-source distribution software is good. But two graduate students from the College of Computing would beg to differ: not only are they passionate about Microsoft technology, they demonstrated their passion by taking first place for their region at the Microsoft Imagine Cup Software Design Invitational last month.

Peter Pesti and John Gibby, first and second-year master’s students in Computer Science respectively, developed and submitted a mobile location-based application called mGraffiti. This program allows users to send text messages at any point on a global map covered by Microsoft’s Terra Server, creating virtual “hot spots” that can be accessed and read by other users.

“Originally, the purpose was just to use the product is actually a framework for a lot of information sharing applications that are geographically based.”

By John Gibby
Master’s Student, College of Computing

Peter Pesti (left) and John Gibby (Right) explain their application of Microsoft technology, Pesti and Gibby won first place at the Rocky Mountain regional of the Microsoft Imagine Cup.

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New degree option promotes undergraduate research

By Saunya Dave
Graham Webb

As part of the Quality Improvement Plan (QEP), the Undergraduate Research Committee approved a proposal on March 10 to enable undergraduate students to earn a special degree with a research emphasis, similar to a co-op degree.

The Research Plan contained two parts, the Undergraduate Research Opportunities Program (UROP) and the Research Option, both currently awaiting approval from the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools. UROP was developed to provide support for undergraduate research at Georgia Tech. The Undergraduate Research Advisory Group (URAG) is responsible for overseeing all of the processes of the UROP and the Research Option.

Dr. Lohmann, member of the URAG, said that the UROP will require a qualified individual to occupy the position of the Undergraduate Research Director for the summer. The UROP is in charge of informing incoming students about the Research Option, which is mandatory.

“The UROP is attempting to include a Spring Research Symposium, an outlet in which students can showcase their research...”

By Dr. Bruckman
Chair, UROP

The entire project took three months, with the team working right up to the last day of the competition. Although they were proud of their final project, Gibby and Pesti wish that they had time to implement additional features.

“People could do a search or locate different kinds of graffiti through a database for key words, categorizing the hot spots in terms of restaurants or places to go hiking or whatever,” Gibby said.

And for their accomplishments, they took first place in the Rocky Mountain regional (the team was grouped into another region to even out the distribution of teams in each region) and won a $1000 prize as well as qualifying for the national Imagine Cup Software Design Invitational.

“Very few students are provided with the in-depth opportunity to work with a professor and have it appear on their transcript.”

By Dr. McMath
Vice Provost, QEP

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Cup

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finals round that afternoon.
Furthermore, with graduation
looming, the two have considered
marketing their product to Micro-
soft.
“There are a couple of things to
try. One is to try to sort of promote
it with the Terra Server guys,” Pesti
said. “With Microsoft and Google
in heated competition over internet
searching and satellite mapping, Pesti
said that they might be able to offer
Microsoft an edge. “[Microsoft] has
Terra Server, but the web interface is
pretty cumbersome, so that might be
a point of entry for us to say, ‘Okay,
we have something similar to what
Google has. Do you want to take it?
Do you want to improve it?’”

Pesti also said that the judges
recommended that the two talk
with the MapPoint web service
administrators. MapPoint is a pro-
grammable Microsoft web service
that allows businesses to integrate
location-based services into software
applications.

For more information about the
Imagine Cup and the Software Design
Invitational go to imagine.thespokenet
or www.microsoft.com/press-
pass/events/imaginecup.

Research

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research.”
The Research Option transcends
the current opportunities for stu-
dents who are pursuing undergradu-
ate research.
Dr. McMath, Vice Provost of the
Quality Enhancement Plan, said that
the “very few students are provided
with the in-depth opportunity to
work with a professor and have it
appear on their transcript.”

Having an accomplishment
directly on a students’ transcript is
beneficial for students who are going
straight into the workforce or who are
seeking to attend graduate school.
Several students had encouraging
responses when asked to consider the
Research Option.
Shivani Patel, a second-year
Biology major, says that she would
pursue the program. “It sounds
pretty interesting because it would
help someone stand out in applying
to medical or dental school.”

On the flip side, Brian Lockwood,
a fourth-year Mechanical Engineer-
ing major who currently helps with
research for his department, had
some reservations. He said, “[A
research option] seems cool, but I
don’t think a thesis from undergrad
work would be that valuable, just
not in-depth…. The really good stuff
involves really high level…special
classes.” He went on to say that the
idea for a research option was “still
cool. It will cement our research
reputation.”

Hopefully, Tech’s Research
Option will encourage emphasis
in undergraduate research as an
important hands-on learning tool.
It is expected that each academic
department will approve the plan
and implement its own requirements by
next December.

**Focus**

CAN YOU FIGURE OUT WHERE ON CAMPUS
THIS PICTURE WAS TAKEN?

Tech Up Close

This Week’s Photo:

Email focus@technique.gatech.edu if you think you know the
answer; check to see if you won in the next issue.

Answer to previous Tech Up Close:

Student Center Commons stained glass window

Correct submissions:

None