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## Computer science majors win twice with project

The phrase “Twice as Nice” has been dubbed to describe it. Two conferences, one presentation and two first-place finishes.

Computer science majors Darien Lewis, Carl White, Courtney White and Jamaz Hall traveled to Atlanta for the 2008 Historically Black Colleges and Universities Undergraduate Program National Research Conference (Oct. 23-26) and to Miami, Fla. for the Florida-Georgia Louis Stokes Alliance for Minority Participation (FGLSAMP) Expo 2009 conference (Feb. 26-March 1) and placed first both times with an oral presentation in computer science.

“Being here is one thing, but to go somewhere and represent your school and be on top is amazing,” Hall said. “It makes you feel like you can do anything.”

Courtney White added, “It is a great feeling...going places to compete and winning against the top universities.”

Their project “Building Lego Mindstorms NXT-G Robots to Enhance Problem-Solving Skills of Programmers” is a result of the HBCU-UP Summer Research program at Albany State University.

The Lego robots were designed using Lego blocks and can be used for programming purposes. For their project the group created two robots using the Lego Mindstorms NXT Development kit to demonstrate how programming Lego robots can enhance programming skills by following the steps of the programming development cycle. That cycle includes analyzing the problem, writing the pseudo code, drawing flow charts, programming in high level language and inputting/debugging.

The students said a significant amount of work and effort went in to making the project a reality.

“You really had to research because it wasn’t so much that someone was teaching you; you had to read the books yourself,” Hall said.

In discussing what the students learned from the project, White mentioned how their professor taught them how to be independent.

Gwendolyn Campbell, assistant professor in the Math and Computer Science Department, served as the group’s mentor for the project.

“Computer scientists are problem solvers, and the building of the robots was one of the aspects of being a problem solver,” Campbell said. “They were given a task, and they performed that task by following the programming development cycle. I am so proud because I have seen these students prosper and grow, not only in learning but, as individuals, too.

“Their winning says that we are educators, and that we are doing our job. We have so much talent at this university, and the students have so much to offer. We have to provide them with the opportunities to grow in a technological world.”



Photo caption: Darien Lewis, Carl White, Courtney White and Jamaz Hall presented their collaboration in two competitions, taking home first place in both.