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A meeting of the minds

University of Waterloo to host 2010 Olympiad in Informatics

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WATERLOO

Four hundred of the best young computer scientists in the world will converge on University of Waterloo next year when it hosts the prestigious International Olympiad in Informatics.

It's the first time the 20-year-old contest will be held in Canada.

UW math professor Troy Vasiga, who coaches the Canadian team and will chair the event in 2010, said it's a great opportunity for the university to promote itself as a world-class institution.

The adults who coach these high school teams from as far away as India, China and Brazil are "people who are going to be seeing students for years to come," he said at a news conference yesterday. "If they have a positive experience here, they're going to say, 'I've got a good student here (who) should apply to University of Waterloo.' "

"Informatics" means information science, or the study of systems that store, process, access and communicate information.

The Olympiad in Informatics will bring together teams from 80 countries for a week in August 2010. This year's contest is being held in Bulgaria.

The contestants will be asked questions that require them to show skills in problem analysis, algorithm design and data structures, as well as programming and testing their solutions.

A typical question, Vasiga said, might be to ask the students to assume they have a flow of wind at a certain rate, and a certain number of windmills. They would be asked how to place the windmills so they would generate the maximum amount of energy.

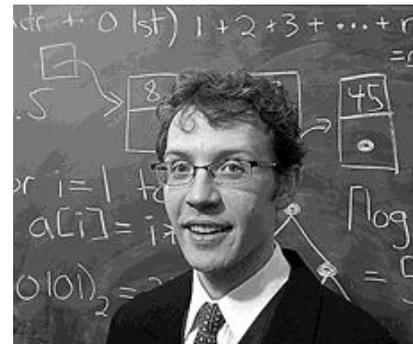
Vasiga, who made the pitch for UW to host the event, said the university has plenty of computer power and a lot of room. There are also lots of nearby attractions for the students to visit when they're not competing.

The 2010 contest will be sponsored by Research In Motion, among others.

UW president David Johnston said he's excited about hosting "the best young minds in the world."

"It's all part of branding our community as a smart community."

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Philip Walker, record staff

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