

YSU math students earn international honors

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The Jambar

The small study lounge on the first floor of Cushwa Hall may look just like any of the other study lounges found on campus - however, this lounge is quite different.

The small room is reserved for math majors to study and prepare for the day's classes. Recently, the prepara-

tion done inside the room has produced some remarkable results.

In February, seven teams of YSU students participated in the Consortium for Mathematics and its Applications International Mathematical competition. In March the team comprised of seniors Chris Jones, Sarah Grove and Joel Lepak, learned that they had won sixth place in the competition, and the highest ranking of "outstanding". This put the team in the top one percent of the world.

The team's ranking placed them above universities such as Harvard and California Institute of Technology.

Nathan Ritchey, chairman of the Mathematics and Statistics department, explained that the team competed against over 600 international teams from 300 schools.

"This is great...we always do pretty well by making it into the top 20 teams, we've never been in the top 10 before," Ritchey said.

The annual competition is made up of three mathematical modeling problems. Each team works on one problem. The problems were sent to the team members via email at 8 p.m on Thursday, Feb. 6. Team members were given until 8 p.m on Monday, Feb. 10 to work on the problems.

Solutions to the problems are first presented in the abstract. The abstract summarizes the solution to the problem given. Composing a good abstract was the focus in practice, said Angela Spalsbury, the teams' coach.

"We started preparation a month ahead of time working on problem solving sessions," Spalsbury said. "We also spent a lot of time writing abstract solutions...that's really the big issue."

Spalsbury explained that the judges focus mostly on the abstract, it is what they see first, and helps them make the judgement in looking further into the problem.

Grove and Jones showed off a sam-

ple abstract, explaining that theirs was 18 pages long.

"We put about 80 hours into this," Jones said, speaking of the four days of constant competition.

However, the team is used to this level of competition. The three members have taken part in the competition for four years. Last year the team made it into the top 20 percent.

This year, Spalsbury said, she is not surprised at the outcome.

"It was a wonderful experience...I am so proud of them. I knew they could do it," she said.

The students were equally happy with the outcome.

"It's great...we beat Harvard," Jones said.

Grove agreed.

"This is definitely the highlight of my career at YSU."