



Congressional Affairs Director Melissa Medina (left); Ayala High students Jeffrey Hsu, Justin Harsono, Noah Allen, Ramakrishna “Rom” Senthil; and Rep. Ed Royce (CA-39) at a ceremony in early November honoring winners of the 2016 Congressional App Challenge.

Ayala High students take second place in Congressional App Challenge

A team of four students from Ayala High in Chino Hills have won second place overall in the 39th Congressional District for the 2016 Congressional App Challenge, a software applications competition.

The Ayala High winners are senior Jeffrey Hsu, juniors Noah Allen and Justin Harsono, and sophomore Ramakrishna “Rom” Senthil.

All four are members of Anthony Pittman’s Advanced Placement Computer Science Principles class at Ayala. The course is one of Ayala’s two college-level programming courses offered through the school’s ACES computer science and engineering pathway program.

The team’s project was TuteeMe, an educational software application (app) that connects students on campus willing to be tutors with students needing specialized help in classes. The students programmed the app in Java, a widely used professional programming language and one of two high-level programming languages taught at Ayala High.

To see a video explaining TuteeMe, visit <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gXUyvMNNJnM>.

For their efforts, the Ayala students will receive an Amazon gift package and their app will be displayed in the U.S. Capitol and on the App Challenge website: <http://www.congressionalappchallenge.us/>

“Although it would be perfectly plausible to develop programming skills by ourselves, the engineering courses at school coupled with the desire to win the competition galvanized us to earn our keep in the computer software field,” Jeffrey said.

“The end result of what we have created is phenomenal and truly reflects the amount of passion each of us had for the project.” Rom said. “Our application, TuteeMe, is beyond what we ever thought we could have accomplished.”

“Initially, the Congressional App Challenge piqued our interest because we felt it would provide us with an opportunity to advance our skills in coding and design” Justin said. “Through this competition, I got to experience many new things; for example, we gained exposure to new coding platforms such as Android Studio and networked with a CEO.”

“The Congressional App Challenge was a very valuable experience because it allowed me to expand on my teamwork and coding abilities,” Noah said. “As we progressed on the app, the problems we faced piled up and the deadline continued to draw closer. However, we managed to pull through, overcome these problems, and submit our app.”

“The Congressional App Challenge (CAC) is aimed at encouraging U.S. high school students to learn how to code by creating their own applications,” according to the Challenge’s website. “The Challenge is intended to highlight the value of computer science and STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) education and encourage students to engage in these fields. By encouraging and recognizing our nation’s young programming talent, Congress hopes to shine a light on the growing importance of these skills.”

Representatives Ed Royce (CA-39) and Seth Moulton (MA-06) served as congressional co-chairs of the 2016 Challenge.

The Challenge took place July 18 through November 2, 2016, and was open to all U.S. high school students in participating districts. Challenge participants were invited, either as individuals or as teams of up to four, to create and submit their own software app for mobile, tablet, or other computing devices on a platform of their choice.

A panel of local computer science professionals and congressional representatives judged the apps, and the winners in each district were recognized by their Congressional representative.

The Challenge is coordinated by the Congressional Internet Caucus and the non-governmental sponsor of the project, the Internet Education Foundation.

“The AP CSP class and the Ayala ACES computer science and engineering program are extremely proud of these exemplary students and their achievement,” teacher Pittman said. He thanked Ayala High Principal Diana Yarboi, teacher Dr. Bei Collins and counselor Ryan Bell for supporting the program.

The 39th Congressional District includes all or part of the cities of Chino Hills, Chino, Anaheim, Brea, Buena Park, City of Industry, Diamond Bar, Fullerton, Hacienda Heights, La Habra, La Habra Heights, Placentia, Rowland Heights, Walnut, and Yorba Linda.



Ayala High teacher Anthony Pittman (center) with students Jeffrey Hsu, Noah Allen, Ramakrishna “Rom” Senthil, and Justin Harsono.