

December 05, 2016

## Free Coding Faire for Kids at UC San Diego Computer Science Department



*Young students stand in line to participate in the 2014 Coding Faire.*

A heads-up for alumni, staff and faculty of the University of California San Diego and other San Diegans with young kids: the university's Computer Science and Engineering (CSE) department will be the venue for a free Coding Faire that will introduce students from ages 7 to 12 to the joys of software programming through hands-on activities.

The Coding Faire will take place on Sunday, December 11 from 10am to noon in the CSE building between Warren Mall and the landmark granite Bear statue in the Engineering Courtyard. The free

event is being organized by ThoughtSTEM, a local computer-science education startup company co-founded by three UC San Diego students prior to completing their Ph.D. degrees: Sarah Guthals (Ph.D. '14) and Steven Foster (Ph.D. '15) in Computer Science, and Lindsey Handley (Ph.D. '15) in Biochemistry.

The Coding Faire is planned for the final day of Computer Science Education Week, an annual program dedicated to inspiring K-12 students worldwide to take an interest in computer science. This year's theme for the fair is "Coding, Beyond the Computer."

"Our goal this year is to show kids that computer science isn't just something to explore inside their computer," said CSE alumnus and ThoughtSTEM CEO Foster. "Nowadays, computer science is everywhere!"

"We'll be featuring computing projects that help kids understand computer science by physicalizing code in the real world," added Jason Le, ThoughtSTEM Lead Teacher and Curriculum Developer. "Kids will be programming servos, creating their own video game controllers, and diving into virtual reality!"

In 2014, ThoughtSTEM hosted a day-long Coding Faire at UC San Diego which was attended by over 500 students and their parents. For this year's event, the organizers distilled down the best hands-on activities of the previous Coding Faire into a single Hour of Code event, which students and parents can drop in on anytime between 10am and 12pm. The morning's activities will focus on drag-and-drop programming languages (e.g., Blockly) so that students as young as 7 years old can participate.



*ThoughtSTEM mentor works with young student attending the 2014 Coding Faire at UC San Diego.*

ThoughtSTEM's founders created the company in 2012 while they were still finishing graduate school at UC San Diego. They started as mentors to five students. To date, the team's 33 teachers and software developers – many of them UC San Diego students or alumni – have taught more than 50,000 students in over 40 after-school programs, camps, and workshops in the greater San Diego County area. ThoughtSTEM focuses on teaching kids ages 8-18 the fundamentals of computer science through topics like Minecraft Modding, Website Design, and Video Game Development.

The company recently received a \$750,000 grant from the National Science Foundation (NSF), building on an earlier \$150,000 small-business grant to further develop its LearnToMod educational software that lets students make modifications ('mods') to Minecraft (creating new players, new prizes and much more). The new grant is allowing the company to "dig in and make LearnToMod really cool," said ThoughtSTEM co-founder Lindsey Handley. "We can build out the features that kids are really engaged with."



*ThoughtSTEM co-founder Lindsey Handley with winner of Coding Faire gold medal in 2014.*

ThoughtSTEM's mission is to inspire San Diego students to become creators of technology, not just consumers. The company also develops educational, game-based software programs including [LearnToMod](#) and [CodeSpells](#) to help teach computer science to students around the world who may not have access to coding teachers but who want to learn on their own.

Directions to the CSE Building at UC San Diego and the nearby parking in Lot 502 can be found here: <http://bit.ly/2gkynjy>. Parking is free on Sundays. Advance registration is not required to attend the event.

For questions related to the event, email [contact@thoughtstem.com](mailto:contact@thoughtstem.com) or call (858) 869-9430.

---

#### MEDIA CONTACT

**Doug Ramsey**, , [dramsey@ucsd.edu](mailto:dramsey@ucsd.edu)

UC San Diego's [Studio Ten 300](#) offers radio and television connections for media interviews with our faculty, which can be coordinated via [studio@ucsd.edu](mailto:studio@ucsd.edu). To connect with a UC San Diego faculty expert on relevant issues and trending news stories, visit <https://ucsdnews.ucsd.edu/media-resources/faculty-experts>.