UIS online student wins Distinctive Excellence award

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Staff Writer

Jeffrey Scott Bosch is not your average college student. He writes the content and creates the structure for the online help and user guides. He does a bit of programming and is responsible for writing and maintaining the code for a few small utility programs. Bosch also has two college degrees, one in optronics and one in computer science/embedded systems, and he's earned two design awards. He is a senior in the computer science program at the University of Illinois at Springfield, but he lives near Sacramento, Calif.

That's not all. Bosch has won a Distinctive Excellence award in the 2006 Atmel AVR Design Contest, sponsored by Circuit Cellar magazine. It is his second award in the design contest. This award is for his design of the ScoreTime system, a digital wall clock that doubles as a scorekeeper for two-player games. A wireless remote control allows game players to keep score, set the time and configure various options through a menu.

Why would a guy with two associate degrees, who is working as a technical writer for ProStores (an eBay company), who describes himself as a “microcontroller experimenter,” even care about getting another degree, and why choose UIS?

"In the olden days, employment pre-screening for engineering candidates was done by technical staff," Bosch says. "Over the past decade, pre-screening has been turned over to HR people. I started finding myself unable to get past the resume submission stage when applying for jobs that I otherwise qualified for. So, I decided to return to school and remove that barrier."

"I spent a long time, about two years, researching online degree programs. After hearing horror stories of people who earned worthless degrees from private universities, I ruled out such schools. Luckily, I searched the Internet for 'accredited online computer science degree,' and UIS was one of the hits."

His favorite UIS online class was, "Distributed Computing." Why?

"Because we experimented with several different ways of having computers communicate with each other," he says. "So, we not only read the theory, but we also had to make a working version of each communication type."

There is a difference in online programs, computer science chair Ted Mims says.

"The Midwest is known for good schools, but with our online program, we have people from all over the United States involved in our program," Mims says. "We have people from Northrop Grumman and IBM in our classes. When they get involved in the online discussion groups, it's a boost to our local people and our education process."

Bosch says he had a pretty good idea how computers worked before enrolling online, and he went in just expecting to earn the degree.

"But now I find myself thinking differently about my designs, about how I approach the problem at hand and build a solution," he says. "The changes have been subtle, but very significant in the increased quality of my design work over the past three years ... I'll emerge having learned a lot more than I'd expected. I'm very happy about that."