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Computer science professor wins education award



Matthias Felleisen has received the Karl V. Karlstrom Outstanding Educator Award for 2009.

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Matthias Felleisen, a trustee professor in the **College of Computer and Information Science** at Northeastern University, has been named the recipient of the Association for Computing Machinery's (ACM) Karl V. Karlstrom Outstanding Educator Award for 2009.

The award recognizes educators who have advanced new methodologies in teaching, brought about new curriculum development in computer science and engineering, or otherwise contributed to ACM's educational mission. Felleisen was recognized in particular for "his visionary and long-standing contributions to K-12 outreach programs," particularly the innovative TeachScheme! project that he founded in 1995.

"It's a confirmation for all the work that my team and I have put into this outreach project, which is great," Felleisen said of winning the award. He added it's been thrilling over the years to hear from teachers about the positive results they get in the classroom as a

result of the TeachScheme! curriculum.

The novel program grew out of Felleisen's realization that many high-school students weren't properly prepared for college computer science courses. He said many students often learn by looking at examples, making a few modifications and hoping their programs work.

Felleisen sought to develop a solution to this problem, and he ultimately created a "design recipe" that guides students step-by-step to go from a blank sheet of paper to a completed program. Through this process, teachers can check students' work at each step and, if there is a problem, pinpoint exactly where a student gets stuck.

The program works, said Felleisen, because it creates a systematic approach to solving problems. He also said that by making mathematics the programming language, students bolster their math and science skills along the way.

Hundreds of educators have studied this process through intense weeklong summer workshops and translated that knowledge to thousands of students. The TeachScheme! curriculum is now used by colleges and high schools across the globe.

The ACM also recognized Felleisen for his role in establishing the "Bootstrap" after-school program — based on the TeachScheme! curriculum — that began with Northeastern students introducing middle school students in the region to beginner programming. The program has since expanded by partnering with Boston-based Citizen Schools, which connects students with adult volunteers through a national network of after-school programs.

Felleisen will receive the honor at the ACM Awards Banquet on June 26 in San Francisco. ACM has previously recognized Felleisen, selecting him as a Fellow in 2006 for his "contributions to programming languages and

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