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# DreamSpark your career



Team Capricorn members (from left) Lim Kian Long, Marilyn Lim and Steven Lim showcasing their solution

By **CHANDRA DEVI**

If you have a dream to develop technology solutions but don't have the tools, don't fret.

Microsoft has now made available its DreamSpark programme to local students.

The DreamSpark initiative is part of a joint effort between Microsoft and the Higher Education Ministry.

The programme provides students from institutions of higher learning with access to professional-grade developer and designer tools at no cost.

If you are a student at one of the local tertiary centres, you can gain access to products such as Visual Studio Pro, Expression Studio, XNA Game Studio 2.0 and SQL Server.

These software development and design tools are useful in the working world today and those with hands-on knowledge are much sought after in the job market. By providing opportunities to use the latest professional-grade software development tools, Microsoft intends to equip students with the skills that

will jump-start their careers.

The project, which was first introduced last year by Microsoft founder Bill Gates, is also aimed at addressing the shortage of skilled IT professionals.

For details on DreamSpark, visit [www.dreamspark.com](http://www.dreamspark.com)

Besides the DreamSpark initiative, Microsoft has long provided undergraduates with opportunities to showcase new ways of using technology via the Imagine Cup Competition.

In its seventh consecutive year, the global contest challenges students to design technological solutions that can be applied to real-world issues. Imagine Cup is well known globally as the World Cup of software.

The challenge, which spans a year, is open to all undergraduates. It is run based on different themes every year and students are required to use Microsoft tools and technology to build their ideas into applications.

While local students were given the opportunity to show off their

skills under several categories in previous competitions, the software design category was the only challenge run in Malaysia for the Imagine Cup Competition 2009.

In the final round of the Cup, 26 teams from 13 universities presented their winning solutions.

The finalists were challenged to create solutions based on the theme "Imagine A World

Where Technology Helps Solve the Toughest Problems Facing Us Today".

Their task was to create solutions to curb the world's most challenging social issues as outlined by the United Nations' Millennium Development Goals, ranging from extreme poverty and halting the spread of HIV/AIDS to providing universal primary education.

Team Capricorn from Universiti Sains Malaysia emerged as the winner with its entry GreenEve2Peace, a solution that helps farmers consider multiple elements affecting crop production, with the end goal of increasing yields.

The team will represent Malaysia in the Worldwide Finals in Cairo, Egypt from July 3-7.