

PRESS RELEASE 03/2020

GCS Supports University Team deFAUlt in SC20 Student Cluster Competition

Berlin/Germany, October 14, 2020 – The Gauss Centre for Supercomputing (GCS) is repeating its role as sponsor of undergraduate students participating in the Student Cluster Competition at the Supercomputing Conference 2020 (SC20). In an effort to get young and enthusiastic talent interested in the world of high-performance computing (HPC), GCS continues to support German student teams regardless of the fact that the competition will be held as an online-only event. Team deFAUlt, which represents the Friedrich-Alexander University Erlangen-Nuremberg (FAU), is the only German participant in the group of 19 international teams that qualified for this year's contest. Competitors come from China, Poland, Singapore, Switzerland, and the USA.

Held as part of the Students@SC program, the SCC is designed to introduce the next generation of students to the world of HPC. Now in its 14th year, the SCC is held in conjunction with the annual Supercomputing Conference (SC), the world's premier supercomputing conference, which was scheduled to take place in Atlanta, GA. However, due to the COVID-19 crisis, this year's SC will be held in digital form November 9–19. The SCC followed suit, and has also been converted into a virtual event, running November 8–11. Now called the Virtual Student Cluster Competition (VSCC), the competition has moved to the cloud to accommodate remote participation. The student teams from around the world will have to design and build virtual clusters in the cloud, learn scientific applications, apply optimization techniques for their chosen cloud configurations, and compete in a 72-hour challenge to complete a set of benchmarks and real-world scientific workloads.

"It is undeniable that the competition not taking place in its usual form is a great disappointment," explains Dr. Johannes Hofmann, mentor of team deFAUlt. "For students, the prospect of attending a high-performance conference in person and meeting HPC experts from around the world is always a great incentive, even more so if this prestigious event is accompanied with international travel." Regardless of the given scenario, Hofmann is eager to point out that his students have persevered and have worked intensively over the past months in getting prepared to show off their HPC knowledge for the VSCC judges. "All team members only joined in April, and none of them had previous experience in HPC," he said. "We all are looking forward to getting the chance to push state-of-the-art technology to its limits while competing in an international context."

As Germany's national supercomputing institution, GCS is committed to encourage a wide variety of activities that help promote aspiring experts in the field of HPC. "We feel for this year's student competitors, as they have been denied a unique chance of getting a taste of the real world of high-performance computing," explained Dr. Claus Axel Müller, Managing Director of GCS. "These are extraordinary times for all of us, and we are particularly proud of the FAU students for keeping up their enthusiasm and commitment to show off their HPC knowledge in the new format of the competition." GCS is supporting team deFAUlt by providing financial assistance in

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preparation of the VSCC event. The donation will be used to help equip the students with necessary technical equipment and to finance cloud sessions in preparation of the event. “Even within the context of this current format, we are confident the competition will provide invaluable experience for the students,” adds Dr. Müller. “We wish them success in the competition, and hope all the students have fun, regardless of the outcome.”

Additional Information about the Virtual Student Cluster Competition at SC20 is available at <https://sc20.supercomputing.org/program/studentssc/student-cluster-competition/> and <https://studentclustercompetition.us/>



The members of team deFAUlt, representing the Friedrich-Alexander University Erlangen-Nuremberg in this year's Virtual Student Cluster Competition at SC20. Top, left to right: Gabriel Dengler, Pierre Lindenberg, Marius Fleischer. Front left to right: Ruben Baecker, Timur Perst, Ricardo Lang. Photo courtesy of FAU

About GCS: The Gauss Centre for Supercomputing (GCS) combines the three national supercomputing centres HLRS (High-Performance Computing Center Stuttgart), JSC (Jülich Supercomputing Centre), and LRZ (Leibniz Supercomputing Centre, Garching near Munich) into Germany's Tier-0/1 supercomputing institution. Together the three centres provide the largest and most powerful supercomputing infrastructure in all of Europe and serve a wide range of industrial and research activities across various disciplines. They also provide top-tier training and education for the national as well as the European High Performance Computing (HPC) community. GCS is the German member of PRACE (Partnership for Advanced Computing in Europe), an international non-profit association consisting of 26 member countries, whose representative organizations create a pan-European supercomputing infrastructure, providing access to computing and data management resources and services for large-scale scientific and engineering applications at the highest performance level.

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