

The Frank M. Thompson, Jr. Award for Excellence in Forensics

Award Rationale

With this award, the Department of Communication Studies honors Dr. Frank M. Thompson, Jr., described by Larry Schnoor (Professor Emeritus, Minnesota State University, Mankato) as “one of the most successful forensic coaches in the nation.” Dr. Thompson’s career-long dedication to forensics is well known and respected by his peers in the forensics community. The Chair of the American Forensic Association-National Individual Events Tournament (AFA-NIET) Committee, Cynthia R. Carver, has reported that “the quality and vitality of collegiate forensics have truly been the beneficiaries” of his work, and she describes him as “an effective advocate for the importance of college forensics and a respected ambassador” for The University of Alabama nationally. He has received countless awards in recognition of his leadership and service in forensics, including the *DSR-TKA National Forensic Honorary Distinguished Service Award*, the *AFA-NIET Distinguished Service Award* and the *Alabama Forensic Educators Association Hall of Fame*.

Perhaps even more important than his impact on the national community of college forensics, though, has been Dr. Thompson’s dedication to building a successful forensics program and to fostering excellence in his students throughout his career as a faculty member at The University of Alabama. From the time he first began directing the Alabama Forensic Council, in 1980, the program has achieved remarkable success, including over 6,500 regional awards, 800 national awards, and 100 national championships in individual events. In addition, Dr. Thompson has brought visibility to the UA program by coordinating and hosting forensic tournaments on campus, including annually the *Crimson Classic College Forensic Tournament* and the *Hall of Fame High School Forensic Tournament*, as well as *DSR-TKA* and *AFA-NIET* district and national tournaments. These tournaments have provided learning opportunities for both undergraduate and graduate students, recruitment opportunities for the department and the College, and promotional opportunities for the University as a whole.

The UA forensics program has achieved and maintained a consistently high, nationally competitive standard due directly to Dr. Thompson’s commitment to his students and his insistence that they strive for excellence. As one of his students reported, “I can honestly say I have yet to meet another coach or professor who has given more fully of himself, with his time, energy, love and effort, to a single group of students. I am honored each day to be a member of his team and to learn from him as I mature as a student as well as an individual” (Tasha May Bryant). Forensics colleague, Larry Schnoor, explains, “he has a clear interest in what is best for his students. He is indeed a mentor for them as well as for others around the nation.” Of the lasting impact of that mentorship on his own life, a former student wrote the following:

As an undergraduate and graduate student, I watched Dr. Thompson take chances on numerous students from various backgrounds. What is amazing about Dr. Thompson is his selfless dedication to the idea of education. He extends education beyond the boundaries of a classroom. Others will write of his teaching ability, which as a former student [I can attest] is unparalleled; however, after competing for him and coaching with him, I know now what it takes to be a great educator and a great person. . . . Frank cares, and you can see the impact of his caring in the lives of his students. (Jonathan Birdnow, Director of Individual Events, Clemson University)

The Award

Winners will be recognized at a special awards ceremony and will have their name listed on a public plaque in the Department of Communication Studies.

Eligibility and Criteria

The *Frank M. Thompson, Jr. Award for Excellence in Forensics* is given to an undergraduate or graduate student who has demonstrated excellence and dedication to forensics and academics. The award recipient is honored for reflecting the goals and missions of The Alabama Forensics Council, especially the pursuit of success.

To be considered for this award, students must:

- be currently enrolled at The University of Alabama and be a member of The Alabama Forensics Council
- have a minimum 3.00 GPA
- have shown a commitment to continual improvement
- have demonstrated a commitment to forensics through time, dedication, and consistency

Application Process

No application process is required. The award recipient is selected independently by the Director and Assistant Director of Forensics.