

Winning the Dean's List Award

Hannah

Operation T.A.C.



Hello!

My name is Hannah, and I am a 2024 Dean's List Winner. I am here to share with you my journey, strategy, and advice for winning this award.



Winning the Dean's List Award



Workshop Agenda





What is the Dean's List Award?

What the Dean's List Award Is

“The Students who earn FIRST Dean's List status as a Semi-finalist, Finalist or Winner, are great examples of current Student leaders who have led their Teams and communities to increased awareness for FIRST and its mission. It is the goal of FIRST that these individuals will continue, post-award, as great leaders, student alumni, and advocates of FIRST.”

– Dean's List Nomination Guide North America

In other words, this is the only award FIRST gives that celebrates individual students who demonstrate Gracious Professionalism, leadership, mentorship, and advocacy for FIRST.



The Foundation for the Dean's List

Being an Ambassador for FIRST

Winning the Dean's List Award



FIRST's Dean's List Award Criteria

Criteria for selection of the FIRST Dean's List Award includes, but is not limited to a student's:

- Demonstrated leadership and commitment to the FIRST Core Values
- Effectiveness at increasing awareness of FIRST in their school and community
- Demonstrates passion for a long-term commitment to FIRST
- The student's individual contributions to their team contribute to the overall success of the team
- Proven experience in areas of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM)
- The student is a role model and can motivate and lead fellow team members



Who the Award is For

- FIRST students who are activity a student on either a FTC or FRC team
- Students who are currently in 10th or 11th grade (2 or 3 years away from college)
 - Students who are in 10th and 11th grade that mentor the team (and do not actively participate as members of the team) are NOT eligible
 - Students who are enrolled full-time in a community college or university are NOT eligible
- One of two students nominated by your team



How to be Nominated

- Team Votes: team votes for top two candidates
- Coach/Mentor Selects: coach/mentor selects top two candidates based on following items (my team):
 1. Gracious Professionalism – Do you value and act with the FIRST core values in mind?
 2. FIRST ambassador – Are you an active ambassador for FIRST?
 3. Leadership – Do you lead your team to be the best it can be?
 4. Team commitment – Do you spend constructive time helping the team succeed?

Note: The nominating coach or mentor must not be a relative of either Dean's List nominee.



Award Tiers



Team/School Level
2 per team


Nominees
immediately
semi-finalists

Region/State Level
2-4 per region


Selected by regional
judges based on
essays and interviews

National/Intl. Level
10 per program

Selected by world
judges using original
essays and interviews


A decorative graphic consisting of four hexagons of varying sizes and colors. A large orange hexagon is the central focus. To its top right is a smaller light blue hexagon. To its bottom right is a very small orange hexagon. To its left is a white outline of a hexagon that overlaps the large orange one.

True or False: You can be nominated for both years and for both FTC and FRC programs.




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True! I was nominated in 2023 as a semi-finalist, and I became a winner in 2024. Several 2024 winners were nominated for both FTC and FRC.

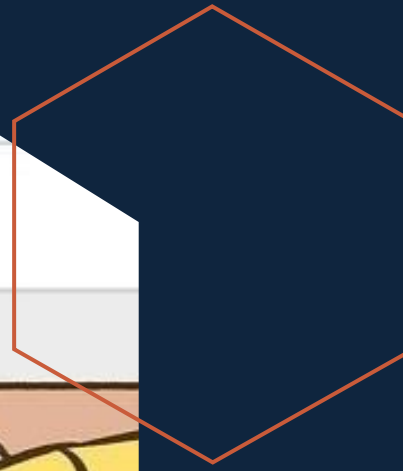
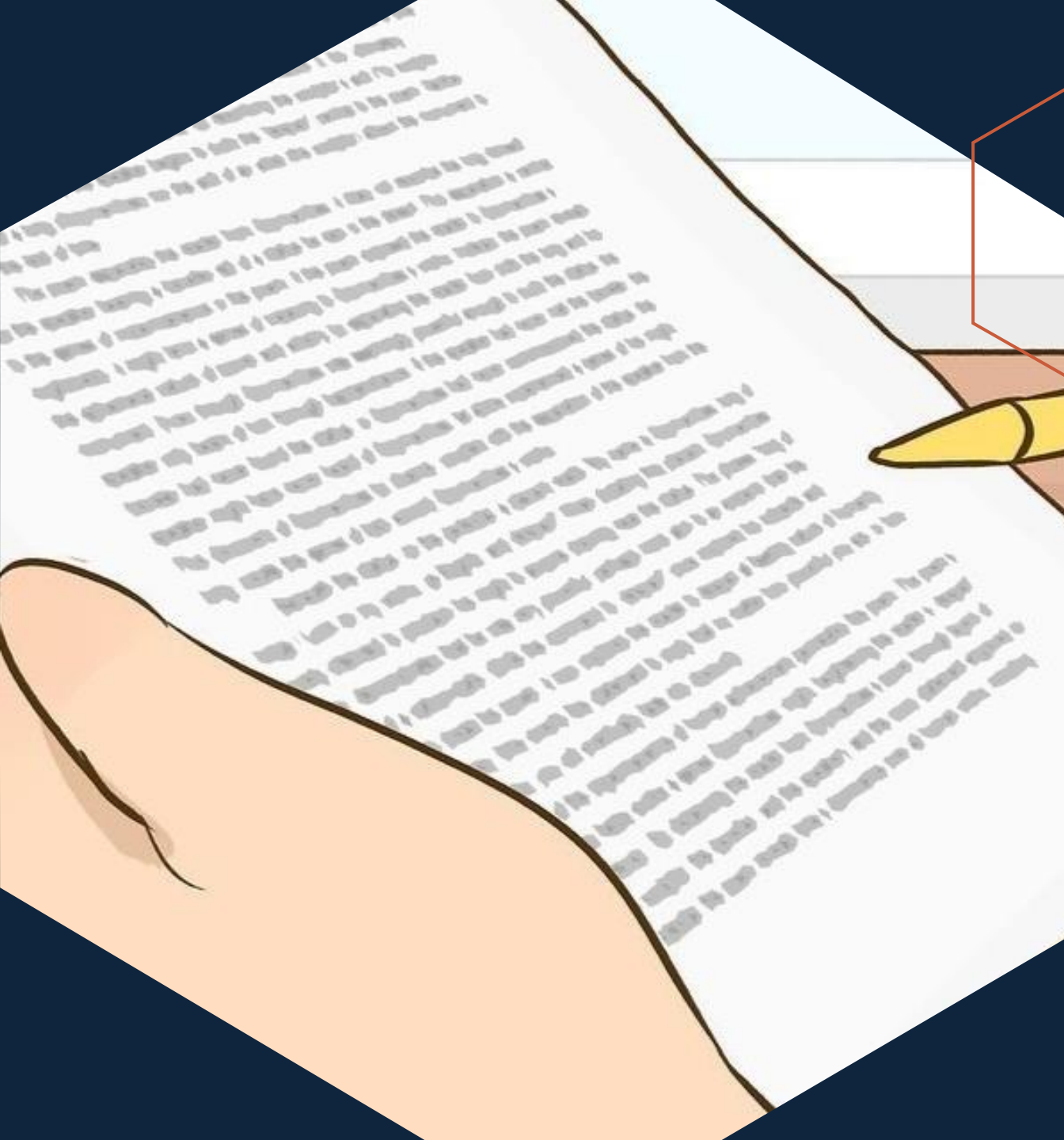
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True or False: You must advance with you team to qualify at a competition.

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True or False: You must advance with you team to qualify at a competition.

False! Many winners' teams (including my own team) did not advance to Worlds.



The Nomination Essay

Nomination Essay Overview

- Sent by your nomination mentor to SoCal as a part of your nomination
- The nomination essay consists of six written prompts, year of graduation, years participated in FIRST, and contact information
- The first five prompts have character limits of 800 characters, with a total limit of 4,000 characters
- The last prompt has a limit of 500 characters



Nomination Essay Overview


“Essays should be specific about the semi-finalist’s contributions to FIRST generally, and to their team specifically as well as inform judges of specifics on the semi-finalist’s entrepreneurial, technical, creativity, and innovation skills. Specific examples are helpful to the judges. Information about the semi-finalist outside of FIRST may also be supportive of the nomination (as it relates to skills learned in FIRST) but is secondary to information about the student’s participation in FIRST.”

– Dean’s List Nomination Guide North America



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True or False: You can write your own nomination essay.



True or False: You can write your own nomination essay.

True! Although there is no rule preventing you from writing your own essay, the essay needs to be written from the perspective of your mentor, so working with your mentor as you write the essay is **highly** recommended.

Tips Before You Begin Writing Your Essay

- Communicate with your mentor regardless of who is writing the essay. If your mentor has not known you your entire FIRST experience, it will be necessary to inform him what you did before he knew you.
- I highly recommend writing your essay in a separate document before putting it in FIRST's system. Share this document with your mentor (or have your mentor share it with you) while the essay is being written.
- This essay is about YOU, so feel free to honestly share about what you have done but do it in a realistic way that is not over-exaggerated.



Tips While Writing the Essay

- In a separate document, brainstorm several different ideas for each prompt – the more ideas the better
- Write the essay in 3rd person – from the perspective of your mentor
- 2023 winner tip: Theme your essay around a hidden theme – tell an overarching story about yourself throughout the entire essay while still keeping on track with the prompt
 - Examples: How has FIRST changed you? What has FIRST inspired you to do? How will you continue to be an ambassador for FIRST even after graduation?
- Send your essays to FIRST alumni, mentors, coaches, team members, etc. to review
- Give yourself time to complete and submit the essay – do not write the essay in one day!



Tips While Writing the Essay

- Be as specific as possible – give real, specific numbers and details
- Talk about what makes you unique – what sets you apart from another FIRST student?
- Tell stories! – stories show how you are an ambassador for FIRST and they prove credibility for what you are saying
- Talk about what you have done for FIRST, both on a team and a participant level
- Share how you are an ambassador for FIRST – does this student model a FIRST participant?
- Make the essay mainly focus on FIRST related activities and accomplishments
- Stay on topic!



Essay Topic #1

“Explain how the student embodies the philosophies of Gracious Professionalism® and Coopertition® through the FIRST Core Values: Discovery, Innovation, Impact, Inclusion, Teamwork and Fun. Please provide examples.”

Tip: Do not literally use these words – show how you use them with examples. Tell a specific story of you incorporating the FIRST core values. One 2024 winner said a good way to brainstorm this prompt is to make a list of the five core values and write down several ways you use each one on the team, at a competition, etc.



Essay Topic #2

“How has the student increased the awareness of FIRST? Describe the student’s interest and/or plans to continue to engage with FIRST beyond high school. Please provide examples.”

Tip: Show how you are an ambassador for FIRST through mentoring, volunteering, and future plans. Because FIRST has built into you, FIRST wants to know if you will build back into its programs. Be as realistic as you can when you explain your future plans.



Essay Topic #3

“How does the student's individual contribution to the team benefit the team as a whole? Please provide examples.”

Tip: Explain your team involvement and how you lead your team to success. This is also a great place to include how you are involved in team volunteering and sustainability. A good story might be something like showing you lead your team to success in the mist of an unforeseen problem.



Essay Topic #4

“Describe the students' experience in areas of STEM. This could include but is not limited to skills in engineering, software, CAD, fabrication, etc. Please provide examples.”

Tip: This is the place to get technical! Explain what you have done with your robot. Be detailed enough so that the judges know what you have done and can see the depth of your involvement and knowledge. This is also a great place to include how FIRST has inspired you to learn a new technical skill and how you have applied it within your team while building the robot.



Essay Topic #5

“Explain the student’s leadership to their fellow team members. How do they motivate others? What is their leadership style? Please provide examples.”

Tip: Show with examples how you lead your team. Leadership often looks different depending on who you are working with, so explain how you adapt to teammates’ personalities, needs, etc. I strongly recommend researching different leadership styles and including those in this section. You can also talk about your own personal growth and how you have become a leader to your team.



Essay Topic #6

“Please share anything else you’d like us to know about the student, including academic performance, specialized skills, technical expertise, or additional extracurricular activities.”

Tip: FIRST loves ambassadors who think outside the box. This is a great place to put anything else that is unique to you that has not already been written about. If you do not have anything else, you can reiterate anything you previously mentioned that you think is most important for the judges to know. Reiterate student strength. Show how you, as a nominee, are unique.





The Nomination Interview

Interview Overview

- Interview is typically 5-10 minutes long, unless special accommodations are made (SoCal has been about 7 minutes long the past several years)
- Can be in person or online (SoCal has been online for the past several years)
- Conversational interview – no presentations, videos, handouts, etc.
- The interview is about YOU! Talk about what you have done, not what your team has done
- An adult must be with the nominee during the interview
- Only the nominee will talk and answer questions – not the adult with you!



Interview Tips

- Be familiar with your nomination essay so you are prepared to discuss topics that were included in your essay
- Approach this interview as if it were a job interview: be confident, friendly, professional, etc.
- Again, this interview is about YOU – do not be afraid to talk about your accomplishments
- Prepare a list of topics you want to share with the judges – order the topics in order of importance so that you make sure to say the most important topics first
- Answer the question given – there is no right or wrong answer, so do not side-step questions
- 2023 winner tip: Make your shortest answer no shorter than 45 seconds, and make your longest answer no longer than 1 minute, 15 seconds



“Is there anything you want to share with us?”

- Make sure to answer this question!
- Prepare for this question before the interview
- Talk about one of the topics on the list that you had not talked about yet
- Reiterate the importances of one of the topics you had already mentioned
- 2023 winner talked about an applicable quote and how it related to him as a Dean’s List nominee

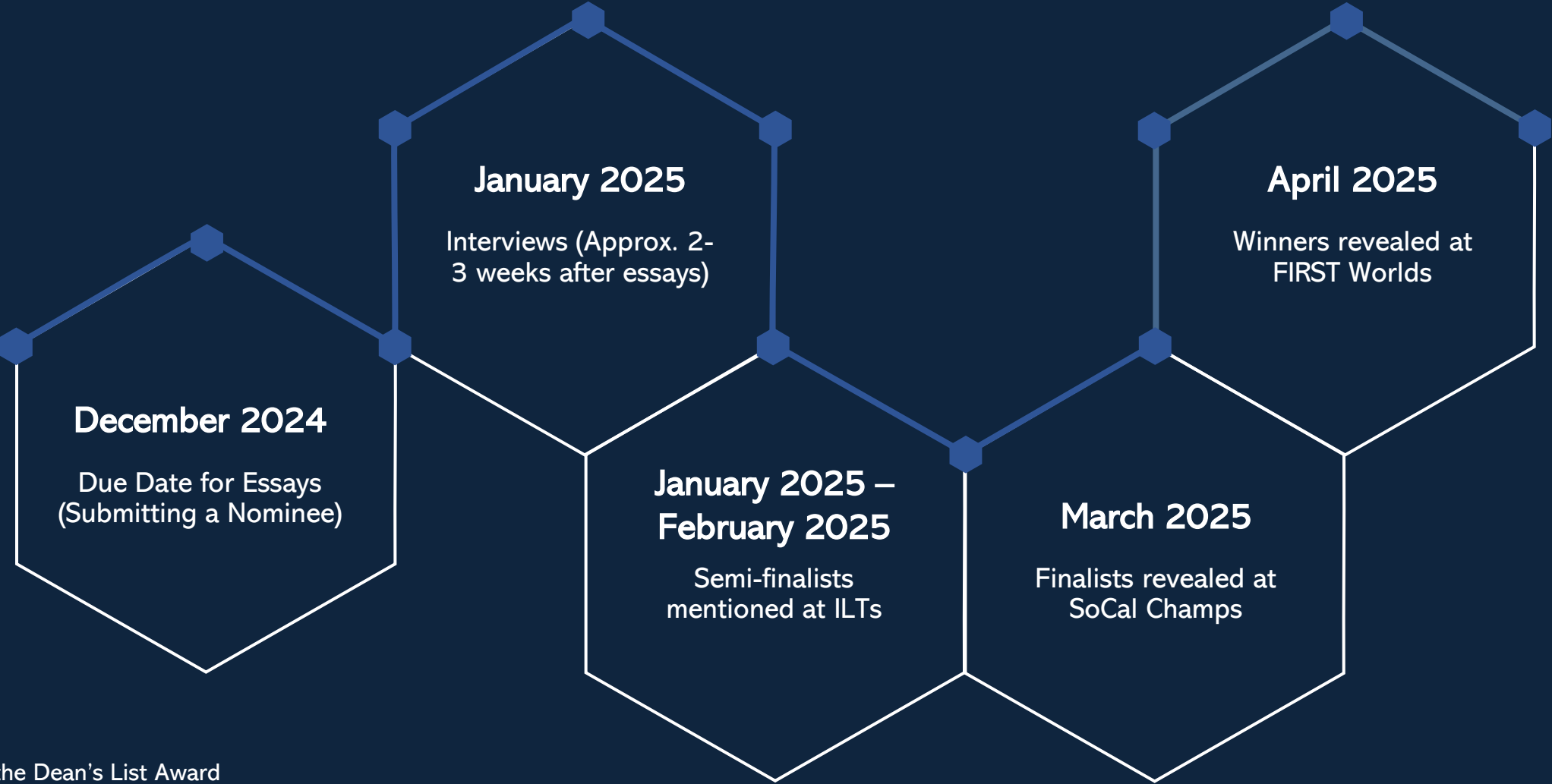


Sample Questions Provided by FIRST

- How long have you been involved with FIRST?
- Describe your roles and responsibilities.
- What is your specialty role on the team? Describe your contribution.
- Describe one example of how you were a leader.
- Describe a time you had to motivate fellow teammates. How did you do it? What were the results?
- Give me your thoughts on how you could improve the FIRST experience?
- Describe how you plan to continue to be active in FIRST through college and beyond.
- Give me examples of your FIRST activities in your school and/or community?
- What technical innovations have you brought to your team's robot?



Timeline



Resources



FIRST Tech Challenge Dean's List

<https://www.firstinspires.org/robotics/ftc/deans-list>



FIRST Dean's List Nomination Guide (North America)

https://www.firstinspires.org/sites/default/files/uploads/resource_library/ftc/deans-list-nomination-guide-us.pdf



FIRST Dean's List Interviewer Manual

https://www.firstinspires.org/sites/default/files/uploads/resource_library/ftc/deans-list-interviewer-manual.pdf





Contact Information

Name: Hannah

Email: info@operationtac.com

Discord: hannah14295