



# Dean's List Award

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# Workshop Agenda

Hello!

Award  
Definition

Essay

Interview

Resources



# Hello!



My name is **Darius De. Biagi**,  
and I am a **2024 FRC Dean's  
List Winner**. I am here to share  
with you my journey, strategy,  
and advice for winning his award.



# What is the Dean's List Award?



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 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**



# **FIRST Dean's List Award Criteria**



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 student who is activity a student on either a **FTC** or **FRC** team
- Student who is 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 3 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?





# Award Tiers



**Semi-Finalist**

**Team/School Level**  
**2 per team**

Nominees  
immediately  
semi-finalists

**Finalist**

**Region/State Level**  
**2-4 per region**

Selected by regional  
judges based on  
essays and interviews

**WINNER**

**National/Intl. Level**  
**10 per program**

Selected by world  
judges using original  
essays and interviews





# Nomination Essay Overview - FOR MENTORS

- Sent by the **nomination mentor** 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**



“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





# Tips Before Your Mentor Begins Writing Your Essay



- **Communicate with your student:** If you haven't known the student your entire FIRST experience, it will be necessary to find out what they did **before** you knew them.
- **Highly recommended** to **write the essay** in a **separate document** before putting it in FIRST's system.
- This essay is about the **STUDENT**, so feel free to have the student **honestly share** about what they have done but in a realistic way that is **NOT over-exaggerated**.





# Tips FOR MENTORS 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 you, the mentor
- **Theme** the **essay** around a **hidden theme** – tell an **overarching story** about the student throughout the entire essay while still keeping on track with the prompt
  - **Examples:** How has FIRST changed them? What has FIRST inspired them to do? How will they continue to be an ambassador for FIRST even after graduation?
  - **Send** the **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 FOR MENTORS While Writing the Essay



- Be as **specific** as possible – give real, specific numbers and details
- Talk about what makes the student **unique** – what sets them apart from another FIRST student?
- Tell **stories!** – stories show how they are an ambassador for FIRST
- Talk about what they have done for FIRST, both on a **team** and a **participant** level
- Share how they are an **ambassador for FIRST** – does this student model a FIRST participant?
  - Make the essay mainly focus on FIRST related activities and accomplishments
  - Do not just list events and what they did – explain how they did it with stories
  - 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 with examples. Tell a specific story of the student 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 the student use each one at school, on the team, 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 they are an ambassador for FIRST through mentoring, volunteering, and future plans. Because FIRST has built into them, FIRST wants to know if they will build back into its programs. Be as realistic as you can when you explain their 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 their team involvement and how they lead your team to success. This is also a great place to include how they are involved in team volunteering and sustainability. A good story might be something like showing they 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 they have done with the robot. Be detailed enough so that the judges know what they have done and can see the depth of their involvement and knowledge. This is also a great place to include how FIRST has inspired them to learn a new skill and how they have applied it within the 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 they lead the team. Leadership often looks different depending who you are working with, so explain how they adapt to teammates’ personalities, needs, etc. I strongly recommend researching different leadership styles and including those in this section. You can also talk about their own personal growth and how they have become a leader to the 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 them that you have not already written. 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 they are unique.





# Nomination Interview Overview - FOR STUDENTS



- Interview is typically **5-10 minutes long**, unless special accommodations are made
- Can be **in person** or online (NYC is in person)
- **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 if the nominee is a minor
- **Only** the **nominee** will talk and answer questions – not your mentor!





# Interview Tips - FOR STUDENTS



- 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
- 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



# Sample Interview 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



**October 31, 2024**  
12 PM EST

Submission Opens  
For Dean's List  
(FTC & FRC)

**February 6, 2025**  
3 PM EST

Submission Closes  
For Dean's List  
(FTC & FRC)



**February 2025**

Semi-Finalists are  
declared (will  
receive email)

**March-April 2025**

2 Finalists  
announced at each  
regional

**April 2025**

10 FRC Dean's List  
Winners announced  
at WORLDS



# Thank you!



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