

The Dr. Willard Thompson Scholarship Minnesota PRSA

The Dr. Willard Thompson Scholarship, sponsored by Minnesota PRSA, is given annually in honor of the late Dr. Willard Thompson of the University of Minnesota School of Journalism. A panel of Accredited Public Relations (APR) professionals will judge the student entries and the award recipients will be announced at the Minnesota PRSA Classics Award Ceremony in spring 2008 in the Twin Cities.

The top five scoring applicants (scoring a minimum of 70 out of 100 points) from the eight affiliated PRSSA chapter of Minnesota PRSA will receive Dr. Willard Thompson scholarships. The top-scoring applicants will be named “Best of PRSSA” and will receive a \$2,000 scholarship. A \$1,000 scholarship will be given for a second place, and three other winners will each receive \$500 scholarships. All award winners will receive a free PRSA associate membership.

In addition, one finalist from each chapter will be selected for the President’s Award and will receive an honorary certificate. These finalists will have the top-scoring applications within the communications experience (Section C) of the scholarship entry. The Dr. Willard Thompson Scholarship and President’s Award recipients will be invited to a special lunch with the president of Minnesota PRSA.

To qualify for the Dr. Willard Thompson Scholarship and President’s Award, applicants must:

- Be in good standing with their PRSSA chapter
- Have attained a junior or senior level standing
- Use any scholarship funds for educational expenses

The following point breakdown is considered when scoring the applications:

10 pts Grade Point Average
10 pts Faculty Recommendation
40 pts Communications Experience
40 pts Case Study

Applications are due no later than February 1, 2008

Section A: Background Information

Applicant name:

Applicant's PRSSA Chapter:

Current address:

Daytime telephone number:

Home telephone number:

Mobile telephone number:

E-mail address:

Overall grade point average:

Scholarship funds may be used for educational expenses including tuition, books, fees, student loan repayment or internship-related costs. Please specify how you will use the scholarship funds as a Dr. Willard Thompson Scholarship winner:

In accordance with the rules governing this scholarship and the PRSSA National Bylaws, I, _____, swear that all information provided in this application is true to the best of my knowledge.

Student signature:

Date:

Faculty advisor signature:

Date:

Section B: Faculty Recommendation

This recommendation will contribute to the applicant's overall point total. Please include any insight you have into the student's academic performance, leadership qualities and social skills. You may print or type your recommendation on this page, or on your personal letterhead. Please staple any additional sheets to this form and return it to the student for submission with the application.

Applicant's name:

Faculty member's name:

Institution:

Title:

Faculty signature:

Date:

Section C: Communications Experience

Please attach a copy of your resume detailing your communications experience. Include activities such as internships, related employment, PRSSA projects and volunteer community work. Be specific and list your responsibilities for each activity. Please note this portion of the application contributes significantly to the applicant's overall point total and the selection of the President's Award.

Applicant's name:

Section D: Case Study

Applicant's name:

Please complete a double-spaced, typewritten public relations plan for the following situation. Put your name on all pages and staple them to this form. Your scenario is:

You are the managing director of Twin Cities Communications, Inc., a large Minneapolis-based public relations agency. The managing director oversees all aspects of the business including client relations, media relations, new business development and community outreach. As an agency that has served the Minneapolis-St. Paul area for more than 30 years, the company is known as a well-respected, forward-thinking organization with a network of clients throughout the country.

As you are preparing to leave the office for the day, you receive a call from the building's management. The I-35W Mississippi River bridge has collapsed. Twin Cities Communications, Inc. is located at the heart of downtown Minneapolis. You are not sure if all of your employees have left for the day. The agency recently developed an employee crisis communication and public relations plan. What does it include?

Develop a plan in the event of a crisis. Include:

- Facilitating communications to internal and external audiences (employees, families, community members)
- Effective plan for employee safety
- Managing public concerns

For this case study, you need to develop a public relations plan addressing media relations, internal communications and outreach to the communities affected.

Using no more than six pages total, include in the plan:

Research

- Provide a situation analysis including a breakdown of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats

Objectives

- Outline several clear objectives for the crisis communications plan
- Define three to five target audiences
- List key messages for the crisis communications plan

Planning

- Identify three to four communications strategies
- List supporting tactics for each strategy
- Indicate a timeline and budget for crisis communications plan execution

Evaluation

- Identify three to five ways to measure the effectiveness of your plan

News Release

- Draft a news release using Associated Press style that can be used as part of your crisis communications plan. The news release should be no more than two pages.

**Please return all sections of this completed application to
LeeAnn Rasachak by no later than February 1, 2008**

Tips for Willard Thompson Scholarship Entries

The key to winning a Dr. Willard Thompson Scholarship is a clear, concise plan. The following are some things to consider while completing your entry.

- Follow the research, objectives, planning and evaluation format for your plan
- Before writing your news release, try to ask yourself what the news or media hook is
- Try not to focus on the design of the company logo and visual aspects of the news release, but rather concentrate on formatting your news release correctly – using the correct components (i.e. dateline, contact information, etc.)
- Ask someone to read through your plan (preferably someone outside your major) to look for spelling and grammatical errors
- Format your plan so it is easy to read – maybe add some section headings and bullet points
- Think about your target audience
- Do not forget to include a budget. (This is the reason most people get docked points in the plan portion of the application.) If you don't know how to formulate a budget, ask someone for guidance
- If you decide to include advertising in your plan, remember to budget for the cost to design the ad and determine the cost to purchase ad space in a publication
- Remember to include at least one quote in your news release
- Ask for help. If you don't really understand something on the application, ask a professor or call a Minnesota PRSA Student Relations committee member

Applications can be sent via fax, courier or postal mail to:

LeeAnn Rasachak
Select Comfort Corporation
6105 Trenton Lane North
Minneapolis, MN 55442
Phone: 763-551-6124
Fax: 763-694-3357

Please complete the application completely, including sections A through D.

Good luck!!