

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 the 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 2010 in the Twin Cities.

The top five scoring applicants (scoring a minimum of 70 out 100 points) from 12 affiliated PRSSA chapters of Minnesota PRSA will receive Dr. Willard Thompson scholarships. The top-scoring applicant 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 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 applicants:

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, 2010

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 may 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 name:

Faculty member name:

Institution:

Title:

Faculty signature:

Date:

Section C: Communication 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 name:

Section D: Case Study

Applicant 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 Director of Communications for Pepperton, a public university in Minnesota with an undergraduate population of 45,000. As Director, you are in charge of all aspects of campus communications, including internal and media relations.

During the second week of the fall semester, a local television station reports a freshman student living in a campus dorm has the first confirmed case of a new strain of H1N1 (swine) flu. This new strain is transferable from human to human, and is even more highly contagious than previous strains. University officials have indicated to your team they may need to cancel classes and shut down the university for containment purposes. The story has not yet been picked up by national media, but it is severe enough to warrant their attention. Your team has had various crisis training and a crisis communications plan is in place.

It is your responsibility to update the crisis communications plan for this scenario and work to ensure the right message is delivered to all appropriate audiences. Using no more than six pages total, explain your communications plan and how you will implement it in this scenario.

Research

- Provide a situation analysis including a breakdown of stakeholders and possible scenarios.

Objectives

- Outline clear objectives for the plan.
- Clearly define your audience.
- List key messages.

Planning

- Identify your strategy and supporting tactics.
- Indicate a timeline and budget/cost outline for 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 plan. The news release should be no more than two pages.

**Please return all sections of this completed application to Becca Mitchell
by no later than February 1, 2010.**

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 visual aspects of the news release, but rather concentrate on formatting your new release correctly—using the correct components (ex. 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 section headlines and bullet points.
- Think about your target audience.
- Do not forget to include a budget/cost outline (this is the reason most people get docked points in the planning section of the application). If you don't know how to formulate a budget/cost outline, 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 e-mail, fax, courier or postal mail to:

Becca Mitchell
Weber Shandwick
8000 Norman Center Drive, Suite 400
Minneapolis, MN 55437
Phone: 952-346-6414
Fax: 952-346-6188
rmitchell@webershandwick.com

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

Good luck!