

**Frequently Asked Questions**  
for the annual Richard 'Dick' Thomas Memorial Student Presentation  
Competition & Award  
Presentations in June, 2024

**About the Student Presentation Competition & Award**

**1. What is the Richard 'Dick' Thomas Memorial Student Presentation Competition & Award?**

WAGISA, the Washington State Chapter of the Urban and Regional Information Systems Association, announces the Annual Richard 'Dick' Thomas Memorial Student Presentation Competition & Award. This award was established in 2006 to honor Washington State GIS pioneer and mentor Richard 'Dick' Thomas.

**2. What is the intent of the Dick Thomas Competition?**

The intent of this award is to honor Dick by continuing his work of encouraging students to excel in their studies and transition successfully into careers in the field of GIS.

**3. What is the objective of the Dick Thomas Competition?**

WAGISA's objective is to inspire students to present their original work related to GIS, geography, or geographic research at the annual Washington GIS Conference.

**4. Who can enter?**

Current students enrolled in at least 6 hours in a relevant curriculum at a Washington State community college, technical school, or university program, or current Washington residents enrolled at least 6 hours in a relevant online GIS program can enter. The competition is also open to students who completed course work within the last year, but the presentation needs to be on work completed during the school program.

**5. How many parts does the competition have?**

The competition has three parts. The first part is the submission of abstracts describing original work in GIS or a related field. The second part is the review of abstracts by the Dick Thomas Competition judges and selection of finalists for the presentation competition. The third part is for the finalists to present their work (as detailed in the abstract) at the annual Washington GIS Conference.

**6. What if my abstract is not selected as a finalist in the presentation competition?**

Students who are not accepted to present are encouraged to submit their work as posters.

**7. Can more than one person present per abstract?**

Each abstract can have up to three co-authors/co-presenters.

### **8. Who is the contact presenter?**

The contact presenter is the lead presenter. This is the individual with whom the competition committee will correspond with and to whom all prizes will be awarded.

### **9. Should projects be the students' original work?**

Entries must be the original work by the students.

### **10. Can the project be a school project or supervised by the students' advisor or professor?**

Entries must be conducted as a school project or under the supervision of a student advisor or professor.

### **11. What academic program can the students be enrolled in?**

Students must be enrolled in a GIS, geography, technology, or a related academic program at a Washington state technical college, college, university or online degree program. Washington state residents enrolled in an online geospatial degree program may also enter the competition.

### **12. What should projects relate to?**

Projects should relate to geography, GIS, or allied disciplines

### **13. What subjects should projects apply to?**

Projects should apply geographic information science and technology to a social, environmental, business, government, or similar subject.

### **14. What topics can be entered?**

Topics of interest include but are not limited to:

- Archaeology
- Data science
- Environmental issues
- Geology
- Biology
- Natural resource issues
- Public health
- Social services
- Public safety
- Remote sensing
- Stormwater
- Transportation
- Urban Planning or,
- Surprise us!

## **15. What must entries include?**

All submitted entries must include:

1. An abstract describing the project using a maximum of 300 words that describes the proposed presentation;
2. After an invitation to present at the annual Washington GIS Conference is tendered, a letter from the students' professor or faculty advisor verifying the student's status and hours of enrollment on institutional letterhead is required. The letter can be faxed or sent as an email attachment.
3. On the day of the presentation, a PDF of the presentation slides must be given to the DTA Competition Coordinator, to be included on WAGISA's website.

## **16. What are the prizes for the Dick Thomas Competition?**

### **First Place**

- Dick Thomas Award Plaque
- \$500
- One-year membership in WAGISA
- Free registration to the 2024 Washington GIS Conference
- Publication of paper in The Summit (Washington's quarterly GIS newsletter)
- Plus, possible additional prizes

### **Second Place**

- Dick Thomas Second Place Award Certificate
- \$250
- One-year membership in WAGISA
- Publication of paper in The Summit
- Plus, possible additional prize

### **Third Place**

- Dick Thomas Third Place Award Certificate
- \$125
- One-year membership in WAGISA
- Publication of paper in The Summit
- Plus, possible additional prizes

### **Honorable Mention**

- Dick Thomas Honorable Mention Certificate
- Publication of paper in The Summit
- Plus, possible additional prizes

### **17. How are prizes distributed to group members?**

In the case of an award going to a presentation with multiple presenters, the award will be given to the contact presenter, who will be responsible for distributing the prize equitably among the co-presenters. WAGISA will not involve itself in the distribution of awards among groups of student presenters.

### **18. Will presenters earn points toward their GISPs?**

Student presenters will earn 1 GISCI Contribution Point for Conference Presentation in addition to the points earned for attending the annual Washington GIS Conference.

## **Abstracts**

### **19. How will abstracts be evaluated?**

The DTA Student Competition judges will review all submitted abstracts and select those that will be presented during the DTA Student Competition at the annual Washington GIS Conference. Abstracts will be reviewed based on the following criteria:

- Clearly identifies the issue being explored
- Clearly identifies the methods/process and GIS tools that will be used to analyze the issue
- States the results of the project
- Quality of writing

The judges retain the prerogative to choose more than 4 abstracts per track to be presented at the Conference.

### **20. What information will I need to provide to submit my abstract?**

The website will ask you for the following:

- E-mail address of Contact Presenter:
- Presenter Name(s):
- Presenter Email(s)
- Presenter Phone Number(s):
- School Name:
- Student Advisor/Professor's name:
- Advisor/Professor's Email Address:
- Presentation Title:
- Abstract (300-word max):

### **21. Are there any words of wisdom on how to improve my abstract?**

The abstract must be no more than 300 words. It needs to be succinct, descriptive and answer the following questions: What is your project? Where is your project? Why did you do this project? Who will benefit from this project? How does your project relate to GIS? Be certain to have your professor/advisor review the abstract and in the case of a team presentation, have your co-presenters review the abstract.

## **22. What is the deadline to submit abstracts?**

Deadline to submit abstracts: [April 30, 2024](#)

This deadline may be extended at the discretion of the DTA Student Competition Organizers.

## **23. Who will review the abstracts?**

The WAGISA DTA Student Competition judges will review submitted abstracts.

## **24. When will entrants be notified of their acceptance to present at the Conference?**

The DTA Student Competition organizer will notify all entrants of their status by Thursday, May 13, 2024.

## **25. Where can I submit my abstract?**

Abstracts can be submitted online starting on April 1, 2024 using the form located here:

<https://wagisa.org/DTA/>

## **26. Must all presenters register for the Conference in order to present their work?**

Yes, all presenters must register for the Conference to present their work at the Conference.

## **27. How do presenters register for the Conference?**

For groups selected as finalists for the presentation competition all group members, up to 3, will receive a 2-day pass to the annual Washington GIS Conference. Students will be given a special code to register after acceptance of their abstract.

## **28. Can student advisors or professors attend the presentations?**

Yes, we are offering a limited number of 1-day passes for student advisors/professors interested in attending the DTA Student Presentation Competition. These are on a first come basis. Advisors/professors interested in registering for the day of the competition only need to send an email request to: [dta@WAGISA.org](mailto:dta@WAGISA.org)

## **29. Can non-Conference attendees come to the presentations?**

Non-Conference attendees can come to see you speak. However, due to costs to WAGISA, they cannot participate in the lunch or coffee breaks. To arrange this, send an email request to: [dta@WAGISA.org](mailto:dta@WAGISA.org)

## **The Presentation Session**

## **30. When will students present their papers at the 2024 WAGISA Conference?**

Students will present their papers in June (Exact date undecided).

## **31. How long is the presentation session?**

Final competition presentations will be made at the Conference in an 80-minute session. Presenters should plan on 15 minutes for their presentation plus additional 5 minutes for set up, take down and audience questions.

### **32. How will presentations be evaluated?**

Presentations will be judged on the following criteria:

- Explains how the work presented relates to the topic and contributes to a greater understanding or knowledge of the topic
- Demonstrates an innovative approach and/or critical thinking
- Appropriate use of GIS, related technology, and its applications
- Visual presentation
- Public speaking skills

The Competition winners will be announced during the Closing Session of the Conference. All judges' decisions are final.

### **33. Will a laptop and projector be available?**

Students are expected to use their own computers for the online presentations.

### **34. Will internet access be available?**

Internet access in the presentation room may be available but is not guaranteed. If your presentation requires internet access, please contact [dta@WAGISA.org](mailto:dta@WAGISA.org).

### **35. Do I need to bring a PDF copy of my presentation to the presentation session?**

Yes. Please bring an electronic copy of your presentation in PDF format for publication on the WAGISA website after the Conference.

### **36. Are there any words of wisdom on how to improve my presentation?**

There are a few things you can do to make your presentation as professional as possible. When using PowerPoint, limit the number of bullets to 6 or fewer, and keep the number of words to a minimum. Use large fonts that can be seen from the back of the room.

Rather than reading verbatim from the screen, expound from an outline. Illustrations and maps spice up a presentation, but do not go overboard on animation and sound effects. At the beginning of your presentation, state what your talk will cover, and at the end do a review of what was covered. Allow time for questions from the audience. Repeat questions for the audience before answering.

Practice the presentation with a test audience using a projector. Speak in a voice that projects well, stand up straight, and make eye contact with different individuals in the audience. If possible, step out from behind the podium, to make you seem more approachable and personable.

There will be projectors in the presentation rooms. Some applications work differently with

a projector. Plan to come to the Conference session early to verify that your presentation works correctly with the projector. Copy a backup presentation onto a CD and thumb drive. If bringing handouts, make enough copies and provide internet links to the information.

## Previous winners

### 37. Where can I find the abstracts of previous years' winners?

Abstracts can be found in old presentation session reports in previous issues of The Summit.

2021 -

<https://youtu.be/dEF7Et3f40M>

[https://wagisa.org/resources/Documents/TheSummit/TheSummit\\_Issue56\\_2021\\_Fall.pdf](https://wagisa.org/resources/Documents/TheSummit/TheSummit_Issue56_2021_Fall.pdf)

2020 –

<https://youtu.be/5QSkU8MzN18>

[https://WAGISA.org/resources/Documents/TheSummit/TheSummit\\_Issue54\\_2020\\_Fall.pdf](https://WAGISA.org/resources/Documents/TheSummit/TheSummit_Issue54_2020_Fall.pdf)

2019 -

[https://www.WAGISA.org/resources/Documents/TheSummit/TheSummit\\_Issue50\\_2019\\_FAll.pdf](https://www.WAGISA.org/resources/Documents/TheSummit/TheSummit_Issue50_2019_FAll.pdf)

2018 -

<https://www.WAGISA.org/resources/Documents/TheSummit/TheSummitNewsletterIssue47.pdf>

2017 - Abstracts not available

2016 - No competition at the 2016 Conference

2015 -

[https://www.WAGISA.org/resources/Documents/TheSummit/TheSummit\\_Issue39\\_2015\\_SUmmer.pdf](https://www.WAGISA.org/resources/Documents/TheSummit/TheSummit_Issue39_2015_SUmmer.pdf)

2014 -

[https://www.WAGISA.org/resources/Documents/TheSummit/TheSummit\\_Issue35\\_2014\\_SUmmer.pdf](https://www.WAGISA.org/resources/Documents/TheSummit/TheSummit_Issue35_2014_SUmmer.pdf)

2013 -

[https://www.WAGISA.org/resources/Documents/TheSummit/TheSummit\\_Issue31\\_2013\\_SUmmer.pdf](https://www.WAGISA.org/resources/Documents/TheSummit/TheSummit_Issue31_2013_SUmmer.pdf)

2012 -

[https://www.WAGISA.org/resources/Documents/TheSummit/TheSummit\\_Issue28\\_2012\\_S](https://www.WAGISA.org/resources/Documents/TheSummit/TheSummit_Issue28_2012_S)

[Ummer.pdf](#)

2011 -

[https://www.WAGISA.org/resources/Documents/TheSummit/TheSummit\\_Issue25\\_2011\\_AUtumn.pdf](https://www.WAGISA.org/resources/Documents/TheSummit/TheSummit_Issue25_2011_AUtumn.pdf)

2010 -

[https://www.WAGISA.org/resources/Documents/TheSummit/TheSummit\\_Issue22\\_2011\\_WInter.pdf](https://www.WAGISA.org/resources/Documents/TheSummit/TheSummit_Issue22_2011_WInter.pdf)

2009 -

[https://www.WAGISA.org/resources/Documents/TheSummit/TheSummit\\_Issue16\\_2009\\_SUmmer.pdf](https://www.WAGISA.org/resources/Documents/TheSummit/TheSummit_Issue16_2009_SUmmer.pdf)

2008 -

[https://www.WAGISA.org/resources/Documents/TheSummit/TheSummit\\_Issue12\\_2008\\_Summer.pdf](https://www.WAGISA.org/resources/Documents/TheSummit/TheSummit_Issue12_2008_Summer.pdf)