



**THE AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF HISPANICS IN HIGHER EDUCATION (AAHHE)
AND TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY-CORPUS CHRISTI (TAMUCC)
OUTSTANDING THESIS IN FOOD AND AGRICULTURAL SCIENCES
COMPETITION 2012**

Guidelines

The following guidelines and accompanying explanations are provided to ensure objectivity and the highest possible standards for the Thesis Competition.

1. Who is eligible to enter the competition?

The competition is open to any Hispanic (must be a U.S. Citizen or a resident of the U.S.) individual who has completed a thesis that focuses on Food and the Agricultural Sciences between August 2010 and August 30, 2011.

Theses are eligible if they are in domains that are related to the USDA priority areas, including Food Safety, Climate Change, Sustainable Energy, and Childhood Obesity. Theses in the humanities or social sciences are not eligible.

Completion is defined as:

- (a) received the master's degree between the specified dates **OR**
- (b) satisfactorily completed all the course work and the thesis between the dates specified and the thesis are acceptable to the candidate's committee, but the degree has not been conferred.

A routine check is made with the chair of the thesis committee of the applicant to protect all competitors, the universities, the American Association of Hispanics in Higher Education, USDA NIFA, and Texas A&M University—Corpus Christi.

Studies using any research approach (historical, experimental, survey, etc.) are eligible.

2. What are the criteria used in evaluating the theses?

The following criteria will be used to evaluate the theses:

- (a) The conceptualization of inquiry and focus; creativity and innovation;
- (b) The appropriateness of the research design, approach and data analysis;
- (c) The discussion of findings focused on comprehension and integration;
- (d) The significance of its contribution to knowledge in the field: discussion of findings, implications and contributions to the discipline;
- (e) The scholarly quality of the thesis focused on the writing, literature review and bibliography (current and appropriateness to the study).

3. **What is the first deadline for the competition?**

**November 15, 2011
5 p.m. CST**

Applicants submit via PDF or Word format a copy of thesis abstract to the chair of the theses competition
Dr. JoAnn Canales: joann.canales@tamucc.edu
Subject heading: 2012 Thesis Competition

4. **How should the thesis abstracts be prepared?**

For the first round of judging, the applicant's thesis is rated **SOLELY** upon the thesis abstract submitted. These abstracts, then, must reflect accurately, concisely and precisely the research of the full thesis.

The following directions should be used in the preparation of the abstract.

a. **Format**

The abstract should include the following:

- (1) **Title page** – A blank title page is attached to these guidelines. Please provide all the information requested. One page in length.
- (2) **Letter** – A letter, on university stationery and signed by the chair of the thesis committee, must indicate how the thesis a) meets the eligibility criteria, defined earlier in these guidelines, detail is essential; b) would be ranked among previous theses chaired; meets the evaluation criteria listed above.
- (3) **Summary** – On a separate page, include a summary, **approximately 150 words in length**, stating in non-technical terms, the purpose and major findings of the study. Double-spaced and one page in length.
- (4) **Main report section** – You should include the statement of the problem; the purpose of the study; definition of key terms; sampling techniques to include size, description,(if applicable); theoretical framework; hypotheses; overview of analysis of data (if applicable); main findings, conclusions; and implications.

THE MAIN REPORT SECTIONS SHOULD NOT EXCEED FIFTEEN (15) PAGES IN LENGTH, DOUBLE-SPACED.

- (5) **Bibliography** – Include a complete reference to each item cited in the thesis abstract. References for items not used in the abstract should not be included.
- (6) **Appendix** – If the applicant requires additional space in which to present details of a research instrument, a theoretical point of view, or to elaborate on some other vital point, an appendix may be included. Not to exceed (3) three pages, double-spaced.

- b. **Length.** The total abstract should not exceed twenty-five, double-spaced, 8 ½" x 11" pages, Times Roman 12 pt. font size, including all the sections mentioned above.
- c. **Writing Style** – Your writing style should be clear, consistent, and concise. Particular care should be taken to ensure that each table, chart and/or figure is adequately explained.

5. **How many copies of the thesis abstract are required?**

An electronic copy of the thesis abstract should be sent via PDF or Word format to:

Dr. JoAnn Canales
joann.canales@tamucc.edu
Subject heading: 2012 Thesis Competition

6. **What is the general procedure that will be used in the competition?**

The judging, generally speaking, will be in two phases. The first phase will use the thesis abstract as a basis. The chair of the competition will send the abstracts to a Panel of Judges who will be asked to judge/evaluate the abstracts. Each judge will be asked to submit to the chair of the competition a ranking of the top five (5) abstracts.

Based on the judges' rankings, the Chair of the competition will determine the top five (5) to seven (7) abstracts; these become the semifinalists. The Chair contacts the semifinalists and requests a copy of a complete thesis to be submitted; this document will be used as a basis for the second phase of the judging/evaluating process by the panel of judges.

The Panel of Judges will read, evaluate, and rank the complete submissions and will determine the top three (3) theses.

A schedule, which outlines the process in more detail, is included in the **Important Dates** section that follows.

7. **What are the most important dates and deadlines?**

The schedule below, in addition to providing important dates and deadlines, provides additional information about the process.

November 15, 2011	Applicants submit via PDF or Word format a thesis abstract to the chair of the theses competition, Dr. JoAnn Canales, joann.canales@tamucc.edu . Subject heading: 2012 Thesis Competition
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November 17, 2011	Chair of the theses competition distributes abstracts to the Panel of Judges.
November 30, 2011	Panel of Judges completes screening and advises the chair of rankings. Each judge identifies five (5) top thesis abstracts.
December 1, 2011	Chair of the theses competition determines five (5) to seven (7) top abstracts and advises all entrants of the results. In effect, these are the semifinalists.
December 7, 2011	Semifinalists send a copy of complete thesis in PDF or Word 97-2003 format to: Dr. JoAnn Canales joann.canales@tamucc.edu. Subject heading: 2012 Thesis Competition
December 16 , 2011	Panel of Judges reviews and selects the top three (3) theses.
December 19, 2011	Chair of the competition notifies three (3) finalists and those selected to participate in the Career Preparation Institute as well as the others not selected of results.
March 8-10, 2012	Finalists, semifinalists, and selected entrants (not to exceed a total of 25) are invited to participate in the seventh annual national conference of the American Association of Hispanics in Higher Education, in Costa Mesa, California.
March 10, 2012	The outstanding theses competition winners for 2012 are announced at the awards luncheon at the seventh annual national conference of the American Association of Hispanics in Higher Education in Costa Mesa, California.
April 5, 2012	Announcements of the competition and guidelines are sent to all individual members of the American Association of Hispanics in Higher Education and to the presidents of AAHHE institutional members. Announcement will be posted on the website of both AAHHE, TAMUCC, and USDA. Announcements will be advertised in the <i>Journal of Hispanic Higher Education</i> , <i>Hispanic Outlook of Higher Education</i> and other journals. USDA will announce the competition to its constituencies.

8. What recognition will be given to the winners?

There will be three types, or levels, of winners:

- (1) The three (3) finalists—the writers of the theses selected by the Panel of Judges as first, second and third place winners;
- (2) The semifinalists—the writers of the top five (5) to seven (7) thesis abstracts, from which the three (3) finalists are selected; and
- (3) Selected entrants.

The three (3) finalists will be recognized formally at the annual awards luncheon during AAHHE's **seventh** annual conference in San Antonio, Texas on March 8-10, 2011. Together with the semi-finalists and selected entrants (not to exceed a total of 25), they will be designated as Graduate Fellows and participate in a Career Preparation Institute to be held concurrently with the annual AAHHE meeting.

Conference registration costs and travel expenses within the continental United States, to include hotel room for three (3) nights will be paid for the participants.

The first place winner will receive an award of \$3,000. The second place winner will receive an award of \$2,000, and the third place winner will receive an award of \$1,000. All three finalists will receive an AAHHE/ETS plaque.

The three finalists will also present their theses in individual concurrent sessions at the conference. The American Association for Hispanics in Higher Education will also ask the three (3) finalists to submit to the *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education*, an academic article based on the thesis.

9. Who makes the final decision?

All decisions by the Panel of Judges are final.

Additional details about all aspects of the competition are online in the Outstanding Thesis Competition 2012 Guidelines at www.aahhe.org or <http://gradschool.tamucc.edu/index.html>

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