



Dean Thomas Receives 2020 Goodpaster Award for Excellence in Research

ALEXANDRIA, VA (May 2021) — Dean Thomas, deputy director in the Operational Evaluation Division (OED) at a Federally Funded Research and Development Center operated by IDA, was presented with the Goodpaster Award for Excellence in Research.

The award is named in honor of former IDA president and trustee Andrew J. Goodpaster and is given annually in recognition of intellectual leadership within the IDA community.

“Dean consistently exemplifies the qualities that IDA seeks in its best researchers: he is a strong, extraordinarily productive analyst with excellent technical and quantitative skills and an outstanding presenter,” says Norton Schwartz, IDA president. “He has built an impressive portfolio of analytical contributions and a strong record of publishing research during his 30 years of service at IDA.”

Dr. Thomas developed creative approaches to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of naval air defense testing and evaluation. He also helped improve the evaluation of the Navy’s new CVN-78 aircraft carrier program. “This was a multi-year effort that changed the way we did testing of combat systems in the Navy,” he said. “It saved the country significant money and provided greater insight into the way these systems perform.”

“Dean’s work has created real impact. His analyses and innovative solutions earned the respect and trust of IDA sponsors,” says Robert Soule, OED director. “And his leadership and commitment to mentorship are a true inspiration toward high-quality research.”

Leading by example, Dr. Thomas has built a lasting legacy of mentorship. Offering support and guidance to less experienced researchers, he passes down his own high standards for in-depth analysis and good report writing. Dr. Thomas mentors others when they need it most: at the beginning of a problem and not the end. He believes in building for the future and working with young analysts to find their way in the world. He encourages early career staff to make sure they are technically accurate, understand the problem, and ensure the method of their analysis is appropriate and applicable. “I encourage new members of the team to ask questions, follow their conscious, and do the right thing,” he says.

Dr. Thomas joined IDA in 1991 after four years of service at the Center for Naval Analyses. Throughout his career, he has learned the importance of understanding everyone’s points of view. “Testing of aircraft carriers is very expensive and takes time,” he says. “You have to understand everyone’s perspectives and show how your process will satisfy all the answers and everyone’s concerns.”

Proactive in his efforts, Dr. Thomas exhibits a willingness to take charge whenever and wherever there is a need. He is motivated to be successful by trying to do something that he can be proud of and doing the best job he can. “It’s been a great 30 years at IDA,” he says. “The mission is important to making sure the weapons and systems we give to the women and men in uniform work.”

Dr. Thomas earned his bachelor’s degree in engineering physics from the Colorado School of Mines in 1982. During his time at the university, he was in the first class of the McBride Honors Program. “There were about a dozen of us in the class, and we debated topics all four years,”



he says. He credits the program with teaching him to look at problems in a variety of ways and how to understand different viewpoints. “This has been invaluable to me over my entire career,” he says. Dr. Thomas went on to earn his doctoral degree in physics from the State University of New York (SUNY) at Stony Brook in 1987.

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