The UT Forestry Club/Student Chapter of the Society of American Foresters finished in 5th place overall at the 59th Association of Southern Forestry Clubs (ASFC) Conclave hosted by Clemson University March 17-20. This tops the 6th place finish by the UT team in 2013, represents the strongest finish by a UT team over the past 18 years, and is a significant accomplishment considering that this year’s team of 9 students covered 22 events over a two-day period. The UT team also earned the prestigious Outstanding Sportsmanship Award for the fourth time in 6 years. Teams with a positive attitude, outstanding spirit, and a willingness to mentor and assist members of other teams in a sportsmanlike manner receive this award based on a vote of the officers from each team present.

Technical events at the ASFC conclave include compass and pacing, DBH estimation, dendrology, photogrammetry, pole classification, timber estimation, wildlife ID, and wood technology and count twice as much in the scoring as physical events. Physical events include archery, axe throw, log birling, men’s bowsaw, women’s bowsaw, chain throw, log roll, Jack and Jill crosscut, women’s crosscut, men’s crosscut, knife throw, underhand log chop, pole climbing and pole felling. The Stihl Corporation also holds their Southern Collegiate Qualifier event concurrently with the ASFC Conclave, in which one student from each team competes in an underhand chop, standing block chop, one-man buck, and stock saw event.

Fifteen teams competed in this year’s conclave including Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College, Alabama A&M, Auburn, Clemson, Florida, Kentucky, Louisiana Tech, LSU, MSU, NC State, Stephen F. Austin, Tennessee, Arkansas-Monticello, Georgia and Virginia Tech.

The UT team placed higher in technical events than in recent years, which reflects well on our academic programs and contributed to their success in the overall standings. Senior Brady Miller placed 3rd in pole classification and seniors Emily Judson and Heather Hatcher placed 3rd in wildlife ID. Other noteworthy accomplishments in technical events included senior Hilary Chittom ranking 4th in compass and pacing, Brady Miller ranking 5th in DBH estimation, freshman Charles Beeson ranking 5th in photogrammetry, and junior Jacob Webster ranking 7th in dendrology.

During the physical events, sophomore Brad Nellis earned 2nd place in underhand chop and Brady Miller placed 2nd in knife throw. Jacob Webster and Brad Nellis ranked 4th in log roll, and Heather Hatcher ranked 5th in women’s bowsaw. Hilary Chittom and Emily Judson, Brad Nellis and Emily Judson, and Brad Nellis and Jacob Lunsford each ranked 6th in women’s, Jack and Jill, and men’s crosscut saw, respectively.
Last, but not least, Brad Nellis placed third overall in the Stihl Southern Collegiate Qualifier, with strong performances in the underhand chop, standing block chop, and one-man buck events. Brad and the UT team received a new 1-man buck saw donated by Stihl, which is traditionally awarded to rising competitors and teams by the host school.

The students were accompanied by co-advisors Neelam Poudyal and David Buckley, who served as judges in several events. President Caley Monigan, Vice-President Brady Miller, Secretary Emily Judson, and Treasurers Heather Hatcher and Hilary Chittom did an outstanding job of planning for the trip, organizing practices at the UT Arboretum, and motivating the team. Many thanks to Dr. Kevin Hoyt for facilitating club practices, and to Adam Lethco and Jack Lipkin, UT Forestry Club alumni, for providing guidance and motivation.