Joe W. Thomas is the recipient of the 2019 Mayfield Cotton Engineering award for his work which has advanced the cotton ginning industry through technical innovations as well as educating ginners on use of those innovations.

Thomas, a Texas Tech University graduate engineer, is the chief technologist for Lummus Corporation in Savannah, Georgia. In this position, he is responsible for outreach, mentoring, knowledge transfer, and industry stewardship.

Earlier in his career, Thomas was instrumental in the development and testing of the first logic manifold and proportional controlled hydraulic systems applied to a cotton gin bale press, now the industry standard. Later, he led a research and design initiative focused on quality and throughput culminating in the commercial introduction of the Golden Eagle 161 saw gin stand and 24D lint cleaner. These cotton processing machines are commonly used in most cotton growing regions of the world today.

Throughout his career, Thomas has been an outspoken advocate of less aggressive technologies for separating cotton lint from the seed. This has been demonstrated by the commercial development of rotary knife High Speed Roller Ginning (HSRG) technology. In collaboration with the USDA Agricultural Research Service, Lummus introduced a commercial HSRG in 2006 for processing both Extra Long Staple Cotton and upland cottons at rates three to four times that of existing rotary knife roller gins. His leadership led to the introduction of a unique technology to the ginning industry, establishing a method to pre-compress lint cotton and mitigate bale weight variability independent of processing rate. This technology is of significant value to high and ultra-high capacity gins and offered commercially by Lummus as the HS/VS Tramper.

Thomas is a 24-year member of ASABE. Throughout his membership, Thomas has served with the ASABE Georgia section leadership and as a member of the ASABE Cotton Engineering subcommittee. He is a founding member of the University of Georgia, Agricultural Engineering Visioning committee and he serves as an advisor to the National Cotton Council Joint Cotton Industry Bale Packaging committee.

Over the course of his career, Thomas has been listed as an inventor or co-inventor of five United States patents and one Indian patent. He is author of five educational publications and author or co-author of fifteen technical publications related to cotton ginning technology. Thomas received the National Cotton Ginner’s Association Distinguished Service award in 2012.