FINDING BIG IDEAS

ESSAY CONTEST

“Great ideas are everywhere...
Report and share what you encounter in the world”

TWO ESSAY PRIZES - $500 EACH

In every part of the world, communities are striving to address urgent social and environmental problems. The Finding Big Ideas Essay Contest challenges students to write about a “big idea” which they have observed making a significant, positive, social impact in a particular community. This big idea could take many forms, from an inspiring new way of organizing community action, to an inventive technology, to a new institution, to a new mode of communication and many more possibilities. The challenge is for you to recognize this big idea, observe it, and write about it. We want to emphasize that this idea should not be “yours” or immediately related to “your work” but rather other people’s ideas that you are witnessing, admiring, and documenting. Winning authors will be encouraged to publish their work, and, toward that aim, will receive mentorship from Blum Center staff.

Eligibility:
This essay competition is open to all UC Berkeley undergraduate and graduate students. Eligible students must be enrolled in classes during fall term 2014.

Essay Topic:
Describe the big idea which you observed and, in doing so, address the following questions:
• How did you encounter the idea?
• How did the idea emerge?
• What problem(s) does this innovative, big idea address?
• What are the broader social, economic, political, and environmental conditions that cause this problem(s)? (Here, please reference studies, reports, and/or data to provide the necessary proof and background for this problem. Please provide appropriate citations.)
• Describe how this idea creatively and effectively addresses this problem.
• What other ideas, in that country or another one, address the same or similar problems?
• What are the available resources and factors that make this solution appropriate for this location? (This might require you to address broader social, economic, political, and environmental conditions.)
• What do the implementers and recipients of the idea say about its usefulness? (This will likely require you to gather quotes to include in the essay.)
• What are the possibilities and limitations for implementing this big idea in other locations?

Writing Guidelines:
• Your essay must be between 1750 and 2000 words (12pt font, double-spaced).
• Your essay must have a title.
• UC Berkeley’s policy on plagiarism applies to this essay (http://writing.berkeley.edu/about-us/academic-honesty). Use proper citations when/if necessary and please follow the APA in-text citation format with accompanying works cited list at the end of the essay. For reference see: http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/

Submission Guidelines:
• Essays must be submitted via the Big Ideas website before Wednesday, October 1, 2014 at 5pm. Application site: http://bigideas.berkeley.edu/finding-big-ideas-essay-competition/
• The subject line of your email should read: “Finding Big Ideas Essay Contest Submission.”
• On the first page of your submitted document please provide: your full name; major; year; email; and phone number. Also include a 1-sentence statement of the travel or other experience during which the big idea was observed including location and dates.

Terms and Conditions:
• Only one essay may be submitted per participant.
• The focus of your essay (the big idea you choose to write on) must not have been widely written on before, and your discovery of the idea must be through personal observation, not, for example, via on-line research.
• Winning authors will be assigned a mentor to assist them in developing the essay and seeking outlets for the essay’s publication. For this reason, we strongly encourage all applicants to photo document the big idea which is the focus of your essay. These photos are not part of the essay contest and should not be submitted for the essay contest. However, should your essay be selected, your photographs could prove beneficial in seeking publication of the essay.
• Blum Center reserves the right to reproduce all essay submissions in its own publications.
• Essay contest prizes will only be awarded for high quality submissions. Decisions of the judges are final and not subject to appeal. Winning authors will be notified in November 2014.