



FALL 2013

STATE OF THE LAB

Stories and Updates from the DIL Network

A Toolkit for Big Ideas



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BERKELEY - Big Ideas@Berkeley is a wildly popular, annual competition that catalyzes student innovators who have bold visions for solving social and environmental challenges. Last year some 550 students across 75 majors participated in the 7-month program, concluding with 37 finalist teams receiving funding to kick-start implementation of their ideas.

With the support of UC Berkeley's Development Impact Lab (DIL), the Big Ideas coordinators have now created the Big Ideas Toolkit, which is available free online to promote youth innovation competitions on campuses and in other organizations worldwide. The open toolkit allows new groups to leapfrog Big Ideas by leveraging the expertise and processes that the Berkeley team has built over the last half-decade. Along with developing and submitting idea proposals, the young trailblazers who enter Big Ideas @Berkeley join an exciting ecosystem of mentorship opportunities,

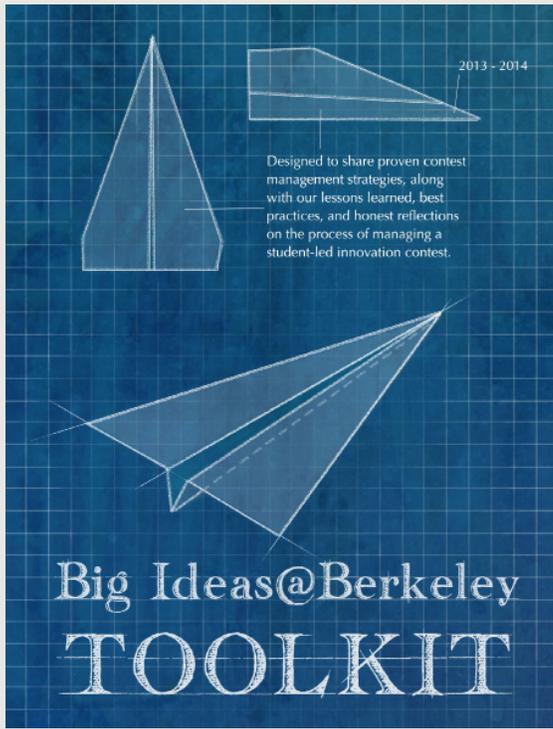


In its digital format, the toolkit is globally accessible, promoting innovation and the development of Big Ideas far beyond the UC Berkeley campus.

interdisciplinary team building, workshops, pitch sessions and other initiatives that create an social entrepreneurship and innovation community on campus. Word of the resulting student innovations has been spreading. "Cal Berkeley is again in the vanguard as a new generation of student activists emerges to help address some of the most pressing social issues of our era: energy efficiency, Third World poverty and disease, and sustainable housing, among others," writes Business Week.

The Big Ideas toolkit provides detailed instructions for how to start, implement and grow social innovation contests that also foster the development of youth and student visionaries.

In addition to laying out the broad goals of promoting student action and breakthrough ideas that drive the Big Ideas@Berkeley competition, the toolkit also spells out practical day-to-day logistics for program implementers. Indeed, the toolkit's reach-out section goes as far as to include templates of powerpoints



The toolkit can be used to help Universities and organizations start their own Big Ideas competition or launch a system of other incentives to support innovation on a new campus.

and email drafts. Other sections cover contest formats, timing and management; and sourcing of funding, mentors, and judges. Perhaps most importantly, years of experience at UC Berkeley have crystallized valuable insights on how to effectively reach out to and inspire action from a diverse group of potential young leaders.

This brand-new platform is already in use not only across the University of California system, but also at Texas A&M, Makerere University in Uganda, Duke, and the College of William and Mary. Universities are also consulting the Big Ideas toolkit to inform and improve already established competitions, plan new contests, and to stimulate excitement and promote participation in a new series of inter-campus Big Ideas@Berkeley categories. Phillip Denny, who leads the Big Ideas team, envisions that “the toolkit will continue to evolve as a living document, and that the student innovator success stories from Berkeley will be replicated more broadly as more schools use this new resource.”



Arobio, a past Big Ideas winner, designs software for coffee growers throughout Central and South America.