

FSTY 1311 Assignment 4: Big Idea Proposal

(Worth 20% of your grade; due on December 1)

Overview

This assignment draws inspiration from this year's common reader for St. Edward's University, *Three Cups of Tea*, by Greg Mortensen and David Oliver Relin. The book chronicles Mortensen's efforts to promote peace in Pakistan and Afghanistan by building schools in small villages. This "big idea"—that peace can be achieved through education, and specifically through education for girls—fuels the work of Mortensen's organization, the Central Asia Institute, which has built more than 100 schools in remote regions of Pakistan and Afghanistan.

For this assignment, you will write a persuasive proposal to solicit help with bringing your own Big Idea to life. Your project or program can be focused on a global issue (e.g., world peace) or a local concern (e.g., water quality at Barton Springs), and the audience for your proposal can be real or imaginary, but your proposal should have at its core a clear idea that you can support and defend enthusiastically.

Assignment Details

During the next few weeks, we will follow these steps to help you compose an effective proposal:

Step 1: Articulate your Big Idea. The heart of this assignment is the notion of a Big Idea that has power to change the world (or at least your city or school) and that will inspire people to action. We will look at several examples of Big Ideas in class, and you should immediately begin thinking about your own Big Idea. To find your Big Idea, try answering these questions: What are you passionate about? What do you see yourself doing in 30 years? If money were no object, what would you do with your time? If you had infinite financial resources, what problems would you try to solve? What commonly held beliefs or ideas do you disagree with? What do you secretly know to be true, even if you haven't been able to prove it?

Step 2: Imagine a project or program to enact your Big Idea. Once you have articulated a Big Idea, think about the practical steps you would need to take to bring your idea to life or to test your hypothesis. To flesh out the practical aspects of your proposal, try answering these questions: What would you call your organization or project? How many people would you need to hire and/or recruit? What would the day-to-day operations of your organization look like? What specific, short- and long-term goals would you pursue? Where would your organization be headquartered? What would your role be within the organization?

Step 3: Identify an audience for your proposal. Before you begin drafting your proposal, you need to identify your audience. Are you writing to wealthy business owners to ask for money? Are you writing to other university students, hoping they will volunteer to help your cause? Are you writing to government leaders, seeking changes to the law or federal funding to help your project? Your proposal will be written directly to your audience, and it should take the form of a letter or memo.

Step 4: Draft your proposal. The particulars of your proposal will depend heavily on your Big Idea and on the project or program you are proposing to enact your idea, so the drafting process will be highly individualized. You will meet with me next week to pitch your Big Idea and explain how you plan to enact it, and at that meeting we will discuss how to structure and format your document to match your Big Idea. At minimum, however, your proposal should contain 1,000–1,300 words and should contain a specific request or call to action.

Step 5: Submit your proposal. When your proposal is complete, save it as “Full Name Big Idea,” upload it to your Google Docs account, and share it with quinnwarnick@gmail.com. (Be sure to check the “convert to Google Docs formats” box, and be sure to make me an “editor” of the document.) The final draft of your essay is due before class begins on Wednesday, December 1.

Step 6: Present your proposal to your classmates. Although you might not submit your proposal to its stated audience, it would be a shame if you didn’t share your Big Idea with at least a few people. During the final week of the semester, you will present your Big Idea to the class in a short (5-7 minute) presentation. We will discuss the parameters for these presentations as the assignment progresses, but generally speaking, the goal of your presentation should be to inspire your classmates and to convince them that your program or project could be successful.

Evaluation Criteria

Your proposal will be evaluated using the following criteria:

Content and Development

- Does the proposal clearly articulate a Big Idea designed to change something in the world?
- Does the letter/memo contain a specific proposal for a program or project to enact this idea?
- Is the proposed program/project feasible? Has the writer convinced the reader that this plan can work?
- Does the essay contain 1,000–1,300 words?

Organization

- Does the proposal feature a clear, forward-moving line of reasoning?
- Does the proposal contain an introduction, a conclusion, and a well-organized sequence of sections?

Style

- Is the prose concise, original, and engaging?
- Does the proposal use a tone that is appropriate for the stated audience?

Grammatical Conventions and Mechanics

- Does the proposal adhere to the conventions of standard written English?
- Does the proposal follow standard conventions for a memo and/or letter?