

American History & Western Civilization Challenge Bowl™ (AHWCCB)

hosted by the

American Heritage Education Foundation (AHEF) (Houston TX)

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Responses from Participating Professors and Students

"A first-rate, spectacular event. My students came out invigorated and motivated to better understand the roots of their tradition. I commend AHEF for putting together a first-rate team of judges and essay/question writers. Their expertise and passion for the material was obvious to all. ...A noble experiment in learning and patriotism."

- Dr. Danilo Petranovich, Professor, Abigail Adams Institute at Harvard University, AHWCCB #2 2019

"A serious learning endeavor. AHWCCB focuses on specific subject matter with coherence. Its purpose is to promote (in a fun way) the patrimony of three thousand years of Western history, none of which can be neglected if we are to make sense of life today. The hope is that students will be inspired to study these works so that they and our society can profit from our common inheritance. I, for one, was so inspired."

- Liam Warner, student, Abigail Adams Institute at Harvard University, AHWCCB #2 2019

"Sadly, today's colleges and education system seem to overlook much of the curriculum addressed by AHWCCB. This event drew attention to key elements of our heritage. It offered the chance to delve deeply into the importance of constitutional accountability and American values. Moreover, it afforded the privilege of meeting fellow students who care about preserving a pride in our traditions and history. I felt motivated to continue reading about the Bible, Greco-Roman history, and American history, and to encourage others in their studies. ...Through greater efforts in this regard, we may expand the principles of republicanism and America's founding, and become more responsible citizens as we grow in this knowledge."

- Portia Berry-Kilby, student, Abigail Adams Institute at Harvard University, AHWCCB #2 2019

"AHEF's mission is honorable and deserves attention, as educational institutions withdraw from teaching the core of American history. The event allowed us to apply prior knowledge of history, using rhetorical skill. ...Cash scholarships are a great way to incentivize healthy competition and study of these important subjects."

- Finnian Brown, student, Abigail Adams Institute at Harvard University, AHWCCB #2 2019

"Rewarding young people for their mastery of Western Civ and US History is a true encouragement to them. ...The format demanded that students not only demonstrate mastery of people, places, and events but also show how these facts interact. ...The scholarships met a true need for these students."

- Dr. Jason Edwards, Professor, Grove City College, AHWCCB #2 2019

"This event provided an opportunity to explore broad questions about the development of our heritage, to examine connections, causes, and change over time. ...An engaging, memorable event which can act as an important deterrent to our nation becoming ignorant and unfree."

- Carolyn Hartwick, student, Grove City College, AHWCCB #2 2019

"The event allowed me to better answer the question, 'What ideas in history have helped create the world where I live today?' The event...led to an invaluable exchange of ideas. It also engaged other students who watched it."

- Noah Gould, student, Grove City College, AHWCCB #2 2019

"Studying for this event caused me to learn important facts about our nation's history and to think critically about how they fit together. I was motivated to contemplate principles of the Western psyche. If we forget the basis for our belief in 'self-evident' truths, our maintenance of those truths will be unjustifiable, and those truths will be threatened. ...AHWCCB promotes discussion in a competitive, fun environment."

- Elena Peters, student, Grove City College, AHWCCB #2 2019

"What a magnificent experience for myself and our three contestants, marked by enthusiasm, collegiality, and competitive suspense. Everyone walked away energized. AHWCCB's focus on cultural and historical literacy in the context of America's past is particularly relevant today in the face of the abandonment of promoting such literacy by most higher learning institutions from the late 60s to the present. ...Without a common storehouse of cultural and historical knowledge, societies lose their inner cohesiveness, and people find it difficult to communicate with and understand one another. ...Much of this unifying knowledge has been lost and replaced by tawdry commonality of our pop culture. Heaven help us!"

- Dr. Russell Nieli, Professor, James Madison Program at Princeton University, AHWCCB #2 2019

"In recent decades, much of education has become secularized, focusing on scientific advancements and social justice while moving away from the ideals and beliefs which made them possible. To truly learn American and world history, we do need to understand the Bible and the ideas that contributed to the nation's founding. The bowl was significant in promoting this effort. ...It inspired me to think about the interaction between Christianity and politics/culture. ...The hospitality and care shown by AHEF was excellent."

- Alvin Zhang, student, James Madison Program at Princeton University, AHWCCB #2 2019

"We are fortunate to live in a society that is freer and more prosperous than any other in history. Yet the abundance of these blessings can obscure how rare they are in a society and how hard it is to obtain them. The ability to speak freely, practice our faith, and be secure in our personhood and property are often taken for granted. Preparing for this event was an exercise in remembering the heroic efforts of my ancestors to create the society we live in today. I found myself in awe of our history, overcome with gratitude and encouragement. As many young people dream of utopias, they cling to far-fetched theories that they believe will remedy the world's injustices. Yet what is often forgotten is the incredible progress that has already been made and that the proposed solutions often undermine the ideas that allowed us to get this far. Those who stand up for America and her values are becoming harder to find. AHEF and the AHWCCB remind me

of what a noble cause that is. Being involved with AHEF is heartening because it means there is still hope that we may achieve even greater heights."

- Nicholas Sileo, student, James Madison Program at Princeton University, AHWCCB #2 2019

"I was honored and humbled to be able to participate in the AHWCCB. ...The understanding of America's heritage among my generation is shockingly deficient, in large part due to the abdication by our educational institutions of their duty to impart the wisdom and lessons of our past. My preparation for and participation in the bowl offered a much-appreciated respite from this bleak context. I was inspired by my peers' knowledge, which will motivate me more in my reading of the Bible, Classics, and American History. There's much value to be learned in our tradition, and the silver lining...is that we have much to discover once we choose to explore our past with open minds and pious hearts."

- Emerson Salovaara, student, James Madison Program at Princeton University, AHWCCB #2 2019

"I am very grateful for the experience of coaching our team. I was impressed by the four teams, who represented some of the best of their colleges, and the collegiality. The rhetorical skill and historical expertise displayed are reasons for optimism about the future of our country. From the level of questions to the judges and moderator, the event was a rewarding experience. ...Thank you for allowing TKC to host. It gave us a chance to remind our campus community (in an enjoyable way) of the importance of our nation's history. An excellent opportunity to sharpen our understanding of our heritage. I entered the classroom this week energized by the experience, confident in the importance of teaching Western Civilization. I am also confident that the energy surrounding the event will be contagious."

- Dr. Josh A. Kinlaw, Professor, The King's College of New York, AHWCCB #2 2019

"A wonderful event! I learned so much about the heritage of our nation. It was exciting to review and be inspired by figures, events, and ideas that have shaped who we are today. To be knowledgeable about how the West developed and has been shaped by Christianity is so important for my education and formation as a student. ...The scoreboard, buzzers, and timer built anticipation and excitement and made it feel like a full-scale trivia competition. ...The cash prizes were a blessing. They enabled us to throw ourselves into learning and gave the event a professional feel. In education and business, I will feel more confident in my knowledge of American heritage and excited to articulate core values and ideas of the West."

- Abigail Rose-Smith, student, The King's College of New York, AHWCCB #2 2019

"It was an honor to participate in the 2nd AHWCCB. ...I enjoyed meeting scholars and students from other schools. The event was an excellent way to gather like-minded people committed to preserving the wisdom of our forefathers. This mission is more pertinent than ever, given these troubling times. ...We successfully demonstrated that understanding our history and heritage today is crucial to maintaining liberty and prosperity tomorrow. What I took away most is the realization that the preservation of tradition cannot be passive. ...We are participating in important work. The Gospels and history of the West remain guiding beacons in a world of darkness, and it is critical that such beacons be kept alight. God bless the efforts of AHEF."

- Michael Napoli, student, The King's College of New York, AHWCCB #2 2019

"Participating in the AHWCCB was one of the most fun and educational experiences I have had during my college career. It felt like the culmination of 3 1/2 years of engaging with the Western tradition. Our team was asked to articulate the history of republicanism and its implications for modern civic life, a task deeply embedded in all things a liberal education should be. The event asks students to learn how historical figures and events cohere with a philosophical order of justice (of soul and city). I am grateful to AHEF for giving me a chance to participate in that noble vision. ...I am confident the event will aid my professional and educational pursuits. As I look towards graduation and apply for jobs, I find myself better able to articulate the goodness of American popular government and its roots. Discussing these topics for the event has strengthened my desire to become a lawyer and to preserve the principles of the constitutional order. ...I hope the AHWCCB continues to grow and engage students and educators in the Great Conversation. It will enable others to cherish and advocate for the founding vision long after the competition has ended. So long as AHEF continues this good work, the principles of the founders and the Western tradition will have a place in public discourse and enliven the public square."

- Ellen Rogers, student, The King's College of New York, AHWCCB #2 2019

"May I tell you how rewarding we found our experience with the AHWCCB. Let me take each of our students in turn. ...William slayed the competition, to be sure, but the bowl aided him in realizing how he can expand his curious mind further, and then put it to good use in our beloved American society. ...Scarlet learned the bearing of the young intellectual. She made good progress in seeing what it means to have a curious mind, and how to act on knowledge when you have it. She also got to learn a great deal about this nation's history, Venezuelan-born as she is. Her soaking in of American heritage is an all-too-appropriate step at this time. ...Chase is an avowed man of the left who likes to accept the challenge to be as good as the 'conservatives' on their own turf. I think this is a fine position for him to take. *Know* Western Civilization, no matter what. ... The AHWCCB lived up to its billing. The questions were a parade of the best that has been thought and said in Western Civ and the American heritage. They made the students think. The camaraderie between the teams and the overnight experience were special. We were very happy to be the inaugural champions and hope we can attract other schools across Texas and this region to try to knock us off our perch. I know that three students were enriched in their appreciation for our essential civilization on account of this experience."

- Dr. Brian Domitrovic, Professor, Sam Houston State University, AHWCCB #1 2017

"I appreciated the opportunity to come together with students from different schools in the name of friendly competition and academic scholarship, and to collaborate and discuss various topics. The most meaningful aspect for me was the opportunity to share my historical knowledge and interpretations of history...in the short oral essay. Each competitor brought a unique perspective and thoughtful insight about the topic at hand. The event gives students an opportunity to engage with each other on an academic level and to foster relationships."

- William Bailey, student, Sam Houston State University, AHWCCB #1 2017

"The AHWCCB was one of my first experiences in getting in front of a crowd with cameras, and it helped me in interviews and speeches I've had to do since then. I enjoyed being able to represent my school while meeting people that share my love for American history and see the importance of it. The event forced me out of my comfort zone, and I got a chance to learn from my teammates

who all had passions for different areas of history. For those two days, I was completely engulfed in Western Civ, and I loved it. ...The scholarship I received had a significant impact on paying for summer classes I needed to graduate. As a student who had to take out loans for school, it brought a relief. I thought it was great that all the students got scholarships because it showed the focus was on academics and encouraging the study of Western Civ. Now that I'm applying to the Bush School at Texas A&M, the bowl is definitely on my resume. I believe it will help me rise to another level. Since I will be studying American policies, I know what I learned at the AHWCCB will carry over to my research and public speaking."

- Scarlet Bolivar, student, Sam Houston State University, AHWCCB #1 2017

"As I am a student focusing on Middle-Eastern and Central Asian pasts, the AHWCCB shed new light on early Greco-Roman philosophies along with Enlightenment thinkers and their impact on America's beginning. Thanks to the educational value of the program, I have begun to take classes related to those topics and am becoming a more well-rounded student as a result. The prize money graciously awarded...was used to further my education, for a study-abroad semester in Morocco. I can't thank you enough for all the Challenge Bowl has allowed me to see and do."

- Chase M. Miller, student, Sam Houston State University, AHWCCB #1 2017

"The students were all very excited about the opportunity to expand and demonstrate their knowledge in key areas of the liberal arts like history, political philosophy, literature, and biblical studies. The format of the event as both fun and challenging was ideal. After the event, the students all remarked that preparing for the event had led them to study areas of American History and Western Civ that they might not otherwise have done. I already have a number of students who have expressed interest in participating next year—so many in fact that we may have to hold try-outs just to see who can be on the team! The generous funds provided to the team for competing was very helpful in reducing their financial burden as they pursue their studies."

- Dr. Gary Hartenburg, Honors College Director, Houston Baptist University, AHWCCB #1 2017

"The AHWCCB was the last chance I got to represent my school, and it could not have been more enjoyable. I learned from the questions, was tested by the speech topics, and was encouraged by my competitors' acumen. This contest was extremely important to me and my teammates, and I have heartily recommended that my school participate again. I have now graduated *magna cum laude* with a BA in Legal Studies, and I work full-time as a Project Manager for an IT consulting firm at a major oil company. The AHWCCB prepared me in training me to recall information well and to present ideas in a linear and clear fashion. The competition was one of the best experiences I had in college, and it is my sincere privilege to give it my wholehearted recommendation."

- Jacob Phillip, student, Houston Baptist University, AHWCCB #1 2017

"Our students felt as though their historical knowledge had been broadened because of their participation in the AHWCCB. It was a pleasure to see the students excited about history and the comradeship that this competition inspired among our team members. In addition, the students expressed how thankful they were for the monetary scholarship awards. This helped to ease the financial burden many of our students face in pursuing their higher education goals. Thank you again for allowing us to participate."

- Drs. Jesus Esparza & Julie Quesada, Profs, Texas Southern University, AHWCCB #1 2017

“AHEF did a great job putting the AHWCCB together. This tournament changed my outlook and provided me with a new perspective on the founding of the United States of America. ...I sincerely feel that this tournament needs to expand for the sole purpose of educating the public on aspects of history that have not been fully disclosed to them.”

-Amber Brown, student, Texas Southern University, AHWCCB #1 2017

“The most important thing the AHWCCB did was remind our students that America did not spring out of nowhere, but instead is a result of deep intellectual and spiritual roots. The competition offered serious, important content that focused students on how key diverse individuals such as Socrates, Jesus, and John Locke yielded critical figures such as George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, and Martin Luther King, Jr. The best thing about the event is that it transmitted this intellectual legacy in a fun way. Students found the oral essay and rapid-fire questions exhilarating. One student told me how his heart was pounding as he was listening for the next question. Another student told me how great it was to meet others who were interested in history and the place of religion in the American public square. A third student said it was an honor to be part of the event. All of them walked away realizing how much there is to learn about these topics. The event drives students to grasp the most important aspects of Western Civ and the story of the United States under the pressure of competition. As a political science professor who teaches American Government, American Political Thought, and Religion and American Public Life, I was deeply impressed by the results.”

- Dr. Rodolfo Hernandez, Professor, Texas State University, AHWCCB #1 2017

“I am grateful to AHEF for giving students like me a chance to participate in the AHWCCB. I think events like these which celebrate America’s proud heritage and roots are paramount in preserving it for future generations. People often quote Edmund Burke who said ‘Those who don’t know history are destined to repeat it’ to caution others against turning their back on the past. When it comes to America’s religious and philosophic roots, I truly do believe that his saying couldn’t be more applicable. The very reason for America’s existence has been slowly muddled and obfuscated over time, to the point that today the values that made our nation great have been not only forgotten but often times seen as something to be scorned. It is through events like the AHWCCB that we are reminded of how our great nation came about and why it’s essential that we preserve it for future generations.”

- Miguel Carandang, student, Texas State University, AHWCCB #1 2017

“My involvement with the AHWCCB greatly and positively impacted me. It allowed me as a student and citizen to engage in an atmosphere that tested students’ knowledge of early American revolutionary history and philosophy. It gave me an educational experience I would not normally have been exposed to. A fantastic team of people from AHEF. AHEF is a great organization—keeping alive within education a passion for American history and values, especially in younger generations.”

-Molly Williams, student, Texas State University, AHWCCB #1 2017