Wisconsin Ideas Conference

The Wisconsin Ideas Conference will bring together an intellectually diverse group of students to discuss the future of American policy. We will open a forum for cross-disciplinary, innovative discussion, and empower the youth perspective on the issues of tomorrow.

Our intent is to foster transformative, non-partisan discussion.

The event will take place Friday, April 20th - Saturday, April 21st, with a social event on Thursday evening. Participants should expect to arrive Thursday night and stay until Saturday evening, and are welcome to make arrangements with their hosts to stay until Sunday to enjoy the Madison nightlife.

The conference is supported by Sifting & Winnowing, an undergraduate academic journal that promotes discourse on policy, law, and public service at the University of Wisconsin. Its goal is to provide opportunities for peer-reviewed publication to undergraduates, and encourage “that continual and fearless sifting and winnowing by which alone the truth can be found.”

Participants: Participants will include both undergraduate and graduate students from universities across Wisconsin and the Midwest. Travel stipends will be provided based on geography to partially or fully offset transportation cost. In addition, professors will be invited to advise breakout sessions and participate in panel discussions. Names of participating professors will be revealed in late-fall, 2017.

Breakouts: Over the course of the weekend, students will participate in three breakout sessions dedicated to addressing a specific American policy area (ie. energy, immigration, or infrastructure). Over the winter break, selected students will prepare one page-long Future Brief for each breakout. In each brief, participants will discuss the future of that specific policy area, current trends, proposed solutions, and personal intuitions. After briefs are presented and discussed in each breakout, participants will select key themes that emerged and spend the remainder of the time in small groups drafting more-specific policy proposals that will be published by Sifting & Winnowing.

Panels: Following each breakout session, students will participate in a moderated panel discussion with advising professors to continue the discussion and gain cross-disciplinary insight into key issues of American policy. These panels are intended to allow students to regroup after their breakouts and discover common themes among their specific focus areas.

Outcomes: The conference seeks to empower the youth perspective on the future of American policy. We will ask participants to prepare Future Briefs in advance of the conference and revise them in breakout sessions with experts. Sifting & Winnowing commits to publishing these briefs in a special fall edition, and promoting them over our social network. To this end, we will also develop a network of participants to support future initiatives and professional development, over Facebook, Slack and other media.

Please contact sifting@polisci.wisc.edu with any questions.