

Big History Summer Institute at Dominican

The institute enabled [Dominican's Big History](#) faculty to share with colleagues pedagogical strategies for teaching Big History to students in an interactive and engaging manner, said Big History program director Mojgan Behmand.

“One of the main concepts of Big History is collective learning,” Behmand said. “Collective learning sets humans apart as a species and led to their being the dominant species on Earth. We feel that the summer institute is a living example of collective learning.”

Big History looks at 13.7 billion years of history – from the Big Bang to modernity – with a goal of revealing common themes and patterns that help students better understand people, civilizations, and the development of political, social, religious, and aesthetic systems. Dominican is the only institution in the world to have taken on the ambitious task of using Big History as a common academic first-year experience.

Initially created for Dominican's faculty, the Summer Institute now attracts a global audience as Big History grows in popularity. The Institute draws on the expertise of noted faculty, including Behmand and Dominican's resident Big Historian, Cynthia Brown, author of *Big History: From the Big Bang to the Present* and winner of the American Book Award.

Brown also is the co-author, along with Big Historians David Christian and Craig Benjamin, of a soon-to-be published text book, *Big History: Between Nothing and Everything*. Due to be published in August by McGraw Hill, this will be the first college-level Big History textbook. Dominican's Big History faculty have used a preliminary version of the textbook for the past two years.

This year, two representatives from The Big History Institute, housed at Australia's Macquarie University, will participate in Dominican's summer institute. Since 2010, Macquarie University has been collaborating in the Big History Project, an initiative supported by Bill Gates, to create and refine a curriculum and online experience that will ultimately be freely available to high schools worldwide. To date, more than 80 partner schools in the United States and Australia are enrolled in the Big History Project's pilot program.

Next summer, Dominican will host the 2014 International Big History Association Conference. Held August 6-10, the conference will attract a global audience of more than 200 Big Historians.

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