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# Big History as General Education

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**DOMINICAN  
UNIVERSITY**  
of CALIFORNIA  
1890

# **“Big History as General Education”**

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**CIC Institute for Chief Academic and Chief Financial Officers  
Portland, Oregon  
November 1-4, 2014**



# Today's Outline

1. What Is Big History?
2. Why Big History?
3. Why Big History at CIC?
4. The How and Where of Big History
5. Aligning Big History with Mission and Institutional Outcomes
6. The Role of CAOs and CFOs
7. Final Thoughts and Questions

# 1. What Is Big History?

- New emerging discipline
- 13.8 billion years of natural and human history
- Combines cosmology, astronomy, chemistry, geology, biology, archaeology, anthropology, art, literature, etc.
- Provides comprehensive story of our universe
- Is taught through division into eight chronological thresholds and the future.

## 2. Why Big History?

- Interdisciplinary and integrated approach brings bodies of knowledge into relationship with one other
- Approach creates a scaffold for the contextualization of all knowledge ... counteracts fragmentation
- Vast spatial and temporal scales allow learners to study past, present, and envision a role in the future

## 2. Why Big History?

**FALL 2013. Total Enrollment =305. Response Rate=27%**

Q. Do you ever think about what you've learned in your Big History course or talk about it with others?

#	Answer	Response	%
1	Yes	68	80%
2	No	17	20%
	Total	85	100%

Q. Has your Big History experience changed the way you see or understand aspects of the world?

#	Answer	Response	%
1	Yes	61	73%
2	No	23	27%
	Total	84	100%

Q. Has your Big History course changed the way that you see your role in the world?

#	Answer	Response	%
1	Yes	41	49%
2	No	43	51%
	Total	84	100%

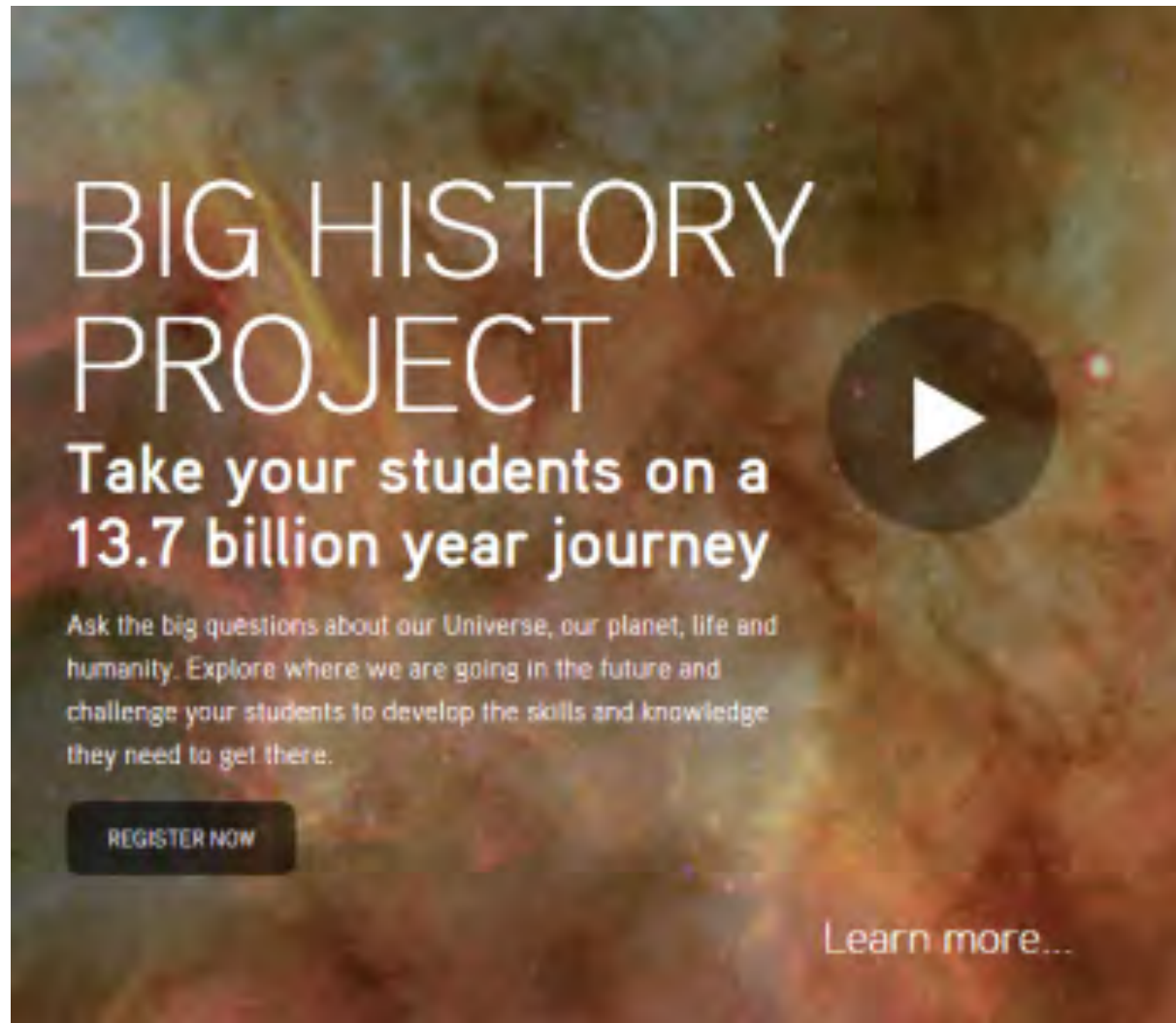
### 3. Why Big History at CIC?



One Dominican: *Our spirit, our history, our future*



## 3. Why Big History at CIC?

A promotional graphic for the Big History Project. The background is a cosmic image of a nebula. The text is white and centered. A play button icon is on the right side.

**BIG HISTORY  
PROJECT**

**Take your students on a  
13.7 billion year journey**

Ask the big questions about our Universe, our planet, life and humanity. Explore where we are going in the future and challenge your students to develop the skills and knowledge they need to get there.

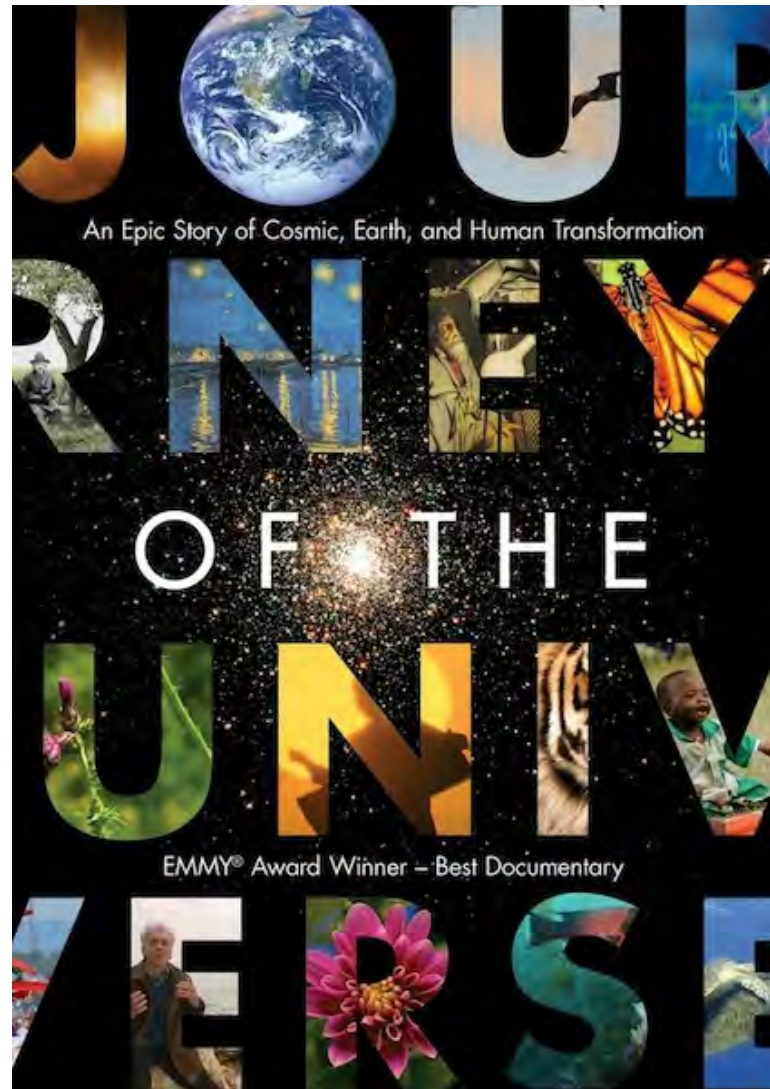
[REGISTER NOW](#)

[Learn more...](#)

# Why Big History at CIC?



### 3. Why Big History at CIC?



### 3. Why Big History at CIC?

- Heightened visibility: *New York Times* U.S. and U.K. coverage; Bill Gates' s Big History Project; History Channels H2's Big History series; Swimme and Tucker's *Journey of the Universe*
- Feedback and data: student testimony and feedback from various institutions; data from four years of implementation and assessment at Dominican University of California to confirm powerful nature of content and its potential to educate and situate the whole person
- Size and flexibility: CIC member colleges and universities have size and flexibility to bring an innovative—even transformative— program to campus

# 4. The How and Where of Big History

## Levels Taught

- Kindergarten and primary schools: Montessori schools globally
- Middle schools; high schools: The Big History Project globally Foremost: United States, Australia, South Korea
- Secondary education; higher education Foremost: United States, Australia, Netherlands, South Korea, Canada, South Korea, Russia

## 4. The How and Where of Big History

### Programmatic Homes in Higher Education

- General Education programs —Requirement or elective in history, social science, literature (cosmic narratives)
- Honors program —Requirement or elective
- Major — Requirement or elective in history
- First Year Seminar/Experience— Requirement or elective

## 4. The How and Where of Big History

### Formats and Pedagogical Approaches in Higher Education

- Lecture— single lecturer
- Lecture— lecturer and rotating guest lecturers
- Seminar
- Seminar sequence/First Year Experience with strongly aligned co-curriculum
- Online curriculum (Big History Project)
- MOOC (Possible future Coursera course)

## 5. Aligning Big History with Mission and Institutional Outcomes

### A Vast and Expansive Content

- Proper alignment ensures achievement of intended outcomes
- Align Institutional Mission, Program Objectives, and course Student Learning Outcomes—carefully consider knowledge areas, skills, and high-impact practices



## 5. Aligning Big History with Mission and Institutional Outcomes

### Dominican's Alignment & Notable Features

Mission Statement	General Education Goals	First Year Experience Goals	FYE Course SLOs
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- Alignment with AAC&U's LEAP Outcomes 1-3
- Triple high impact practice—First Year Experience, Common intellectual Experience, Writing Intensive
- High impact practice for faculty—Learning Community

## 6. The Role of CAOs and CFOs

### The Role of the Chief Academic Officer

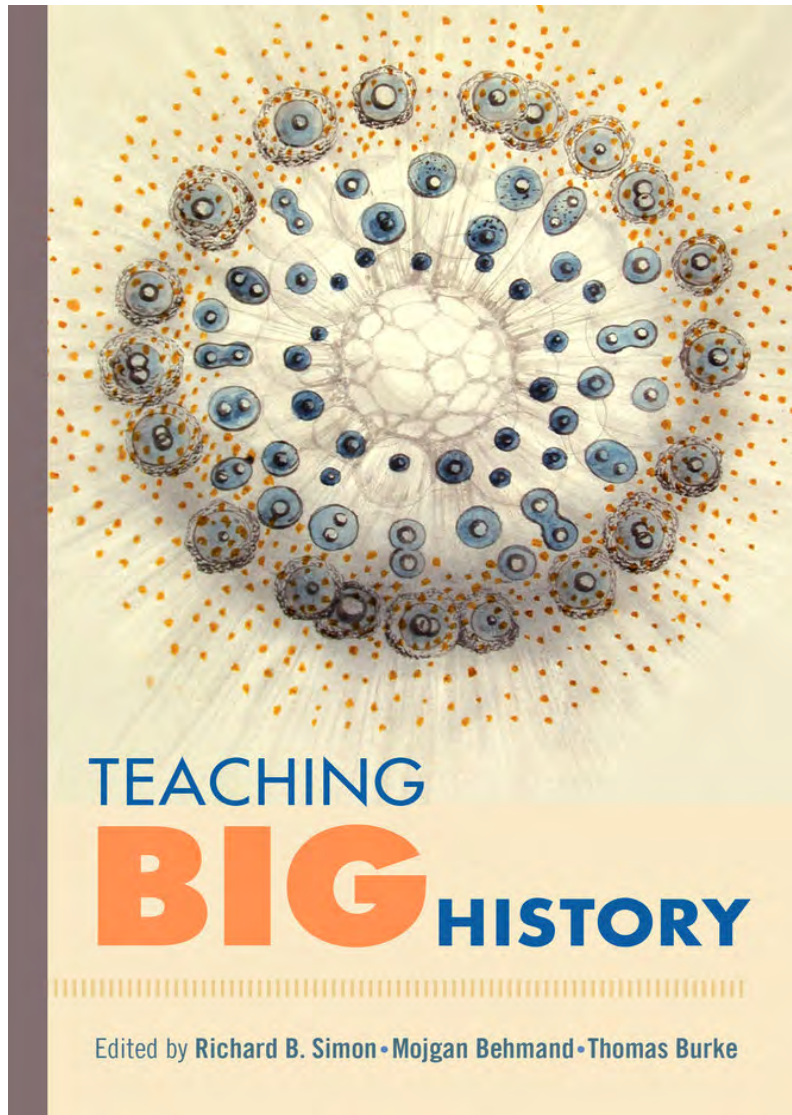
- Alignment of mission with outcomes
- Commitment of administration
- Engagement with faculty leadership, committees, opinion makers—address issues of displacement and territory
- Opportunity for campus dialogue with experts
- Opportunity for intensive faculty development
- Incentives—Reassigned time, campus-wide acknowledgement, travel funds, aligned tenure and promotion policy
- Implementation, ongoing meaningful assessment with continuous quality improvement

## 6. The Role of CAOs and CFOs

### The Role of the Chief Financial Officer

- Philosophy: Ensure an approach aligning mission and academic priorities with fiscal priorities; encourage innovation; include opinionmakers, librarians, and campus spiritual leaders
- Curricular redesign: Plan for reassigned time, visiting experts, conference or institute attendance
- Pre and post-approval: Plan for faculty development—seminar fees, experts' honoraria, stipends or travel funds for participants, materials, catering, facilities, administrative support.
- Implementation: Plan for learning kits, co-curricular activities
- Continuous quality improvement: Plan for ongoing faculty meetings—weekly, semesterly, annually—assessment retreats, conference attendance

# Further Dominican Resources



**BIG  
HISTORY**  
DOMINICAN UNIVERSITY of CALIFORNIA  
*Summer Institute*  
June 15-19, 2015



**Dominican's Big History Program** takes students on an immense journey through time—from the first moments of our universe to the birth of stars and planets, from the formation of life on earth to the dawn of human consciousness and the unfolding story of humans as Earth's dominant species. As we study this evolution, students explore fundamental questions of the nature of the universe and our place in it.

The **Summer Institute** provides experienced and aspiring teachers of Big History with a unique opportunity for collectively learning the fundamentals of the Big History narrative and pedagogical tools needed for teaching a Big History curriculum.

This five-day course will include sessions for both new and seasoned instructors. We will begin with a detailed exploration of Dominican's innovative Big History curriculum using *Teaching Big History* (UC Press) as a guide. Dominican faculty—many of whom are contributors to the book—will demonstrate effective and engaging teaching practices and activities culled from our experiences. Mid-week, the discussion will turn to strategies for developing, implementing, and assessing a Big History curriculum in your institution.

Examples of topics to be covered are:

- Understanding and teaching Big History using the thresholds framework
- Curriculum development and educational assessment
- Incorporating writing and information literacy skills
- Interdisciplinary faculty development and collaboration
- Strategies for engaging institutional stakeholders
- Integrating co-curricular events and activities
- Addressing questions of meaning in the Big History narrative

Tuition is \$1850 and includes:

- Five full days of interactive seminars, activities, and consultation with experienced Big History faculty
- All instructional materials, including a copy of *Teaching Big History*
  - \*Breakfast and lunch each day
  - \*Closing reception

On-campus housing will also be available.

For more information and to apply, please visit:

[www.dominican.edu/academics/big-history/summer-institute](http://www.dominican.edu/academics/big-history/summer-institute)



## 7. Final Thoughts and Questions

Thoughts?  
Questions?



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**Thank You!**

**Nicola Pitchford, VPAA  
Mojgan Behmand, AVPAA**

First Year Experience

**BIG HISTORY**

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