



COMMENTARY

The 2021 Bigelow Institute for Consciousness Studies (BICS) Essay Contest

Robert T. Bigelow

Colm A. Kelleher

Bigelow Institute for
Consciousness Studies
Las Vegas, NV

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HIGHLIGHTS

The BICS essay contest successfully increased attention to the latest and perhaps most compelling scientific research on the topic of “life after death.”

ABSTRACT

BICS was founded in 2020 to communicate, facilitate, educate, and organize scientific research and exploration into the survival of human consciousness (SOHC) after permanent bodily death. In early 2021 BICS announced an essay contest on the best evidence for survival of human consciousness with \$950,000 in prizes. Essay contestants were tasked to present evidence for SOHC after death beyond a reasonable doubt. “Beyond a reasonable doubt” is the most demanding and rigorous burden of proof in the criminal justice legal system and BICS challenged essay contestants to achieve this very high bar in order to maximize the focus on presentation of evidence from as many directions and sources as possible. By December 2020, seven respected judges from the research and academic communities were recruited. BICS received 1300 applications from all continents and invited 264 authors and groups of authors to submit essays. 204 essays were received from 38 countries. Following an intensive five-month judging process, a large group of essays was down-selected. So high was the standard among the dozens of essays that the judges had difficulty in choosing three essays for the top prizes. After several more rounds, eventually 29 essays were chosen and the prize money was increased from \$950,000 to \$1,800,000. Prizes were awarded at a gala in Las Vegas on December 4, 2021. Following the conclusion of the BICS essay contest, the organization is preparing for another major program. On September 1, 2022, BICS will unveil “Challenge 2023,” which is a targeted grants program that is aimed at funding research proposals on SOHC with a particular focus on contact and communication with the afterlife.



Robert T. Bigelow

INTRODUCTION

The Bigelow Institute for Consciousness Studies (BICS) essay contest that was held in 2021 was arguably the most successful essay contest in the history of Surviv-

al of Human Consciousness (SOHC) research, both in the United States and internationally. By awarding a total of \$1,800,000 in prizes to 43 essay authors for 29 essays, the contest became a global phenomenon and galvanized more than 1300 contestants to submit applications to enter the



competition. The question that contest authors attempted to answer in no more than 25,000 words was: What is the Best Evidence for Survival of Human Consciousness After Permanent Bodily Death?

Out of the 1300 applications, BICS chose 264 individuals and groups to submit essays, of which 204 did so before the deadline. In the fall of 2020, BICS interviewed and recruited a team of scientists, physicians, and researchers to serve as BICS essay judges. Due to the high level of complexity inherent in the field of SOHC, BICS made the decision to cast a wide net for the recruitment of judges to incorporate broad expertise into the evaluation of the essays. It was the task of the seven judges to read, evaluate, and rank the 204 submitted papers.

The purpose of this article is to describe the origin and execution of, and next steps following, the BICS essay contest.

WHAT IS BICS?

BICS was founded in March 2020 by aerospace entrepreneur Robert T. Bigelow to support research into both the survival of human consciousness after physical death and, based on data from such studies, the nature of the afterlife.

Despite intriguing evidence, the number of research groups and funding devoted to investigating the SOHC beyond death is surprisingly small in the Western world. The purpose of BICS is to raise awareness among the public and within the scientific community of the importance and relevance of the survival of consciousness after death and the afterlife.

BICS hopes to serve as a facilitating and organizing catalyst within this field in North America, Europe, and South America. BICS hopes to facilitate communication and foster synergy between individuals and groups researching the subject. BICS also aspires to serve as a partner and coordinator in encouraging novel research initiatives in this unique area.

In April 2022, BICS released its Mission Statement:

The mission of BICS is to communicate, facilitate, educate and organize scientific research and exploration into the survival of human consciousness. These efforts shall focus particularly on consciousness surviving permanent bodily death. Additionally, research and investigations shall embrace all areas of human consciousness that can acquire information and/or cause effects upon space, time, animate or inanimate subject matter without the use of conventional means.

BICS as a Facilitator of Communication:

□ BICS will engage in outreach and communications with existing survival of consciousness (SOC) organizations and individuals based in the US and internationally. The communications will serve to foster commonality and to encourage discussions on projects and programs between groups and individuals.

□ Publication of a six-volume set of 28 essays for distribution to hospices, selected religious organizations, university libraries, and other groups involved with the Afterlife.

□ Beginning in 2024, depending on the pace of personnel recruitment, BICS will begin organizing BICS symposia, conferences, and small gatherings on the topic of SOC in different locations in the United States. These gatherings will be funded by BICS (there will be no registration fee).

□ Outreach and communication of BICS material to psychiatrists, psychologists, religious groups, hospice, and other groups.

□ Promoting communication by means of the BICS website and social media outreach.

Origins and Aims of the BICS Essay Contest

As of 2022, BICS is not aware of previous essay contests in the SOHC field from which to draw comparisons. The essay contest therefore could be considered a unique event in the history of SOHC research.

Opinion polls over decades in the United States and in many countries have consistently shown that a high percentage of the public believes in life after death (see referenced Roper Poll, Roper Organization, n.d.). This belief appears to be global and, according to a recent survey, is held by 79% of hunter-gather societies in different countries (Peoples et al., 2016). This acceptance is not necessarily shared by mainstream science. BICS initiated the contest knowing that a significant percentage of scientists and some sectors of organized religions were skeptical of, or even antagonistic toward, research into the SOHC topic.

The purpose of the BICS Essay Contest was threefold:

- (a) Energize the field of SOHC after Death.
- (b) Encourage more individuals and groups to learn about and take an interest in the field.
- (c) Delineate the global state-of-the-art research in 2021 on SOHC after Death.

Energizing the SOHC Field

While there are numerous individual professors at several universities in the US studying survival, there is only one academic department affiliated with a University

staffed by several researchers and students (critical mass) in the US, located at the University of Virginia. The newly established Exceptional Experiences Research lab (EERL) at the University of West Georgia also has an academic affiliation. In addition, a number of high-quality research organizations such as the Institute of Noetic Sciences (IONS), the Parapsychological Association (PA), the Parapsychology Foundation (PF), the Society for Psychical Research (SPR), the International Association for Near Death Studies (IANDS), Windbridge Research Center, and others compete for limited funding and resources. There are scattered researchers and institutions in the United Kingdom, Europe, South America, and the Far East/Pacific that also are funded by small research grants.

It could be argued that the lack of research dollars, personnel, and resources over multiple decades may be one of the most important factors that has kept the SOHC field from thriving and expanding.

On September 1, 2022, BICS will announce a substantial grants program for 2023 that will help support research in the field of SOHC (see last page for more details). It is intended that an increase in grant funding may contribute to energizing the SOHC research field.

Encourage More Groups and Individuals to Enter the Field

BICS announced the essay contest with publicity in print journalism (*The New York Times*), TV reports, and multiple digital stories on the Internet. The result was many expressions of interest (more than 6000 emails to BICS) from more than 40 countries. The BICS application process stipulated that all entrants must sign a copy of the rules and BICS encouraged applicants to summarize their background and qualifications to enter the competition.

The application form (Appendix 1) contained the essay guidelines as well as a release agreement, in the following section BICS requested that applicants demonstrate some basic evidence of prior interest and experience in the area:

a) Applicants must provide evidence that they have investigated the topic of Survival of Human Consciousness after Death for 5 years or more. For multi-author submissions, only one author must have 5 years of experience in the topic, while the other authors can be less-qualified. Evidence of investigation such as published papers, monographs, books, or producers/directors of film or digital documentaries will be accepted. Embedded links to written or digital work will be welcomed as part of the application.

b) It may help if applicants are/were a member of relevant organizations, for example, the Society of Psychical Research, Society for Scientific Exploration, American Society for Psychical Research, Institute of Noetic Sci-

ences, International Association for Near Death Studies, Rhine Research Center, Windbridge Research Center, Parapsychological Association, Eternea, Center for Research on Consciousness and Anomalous Psychology (CERCAP), Koestler Parapsychology Unit (University of Edinburgh, Scotland), NUPES—Research Center in Spirituality and Health (Brazil), or be a staff researcher (including emeritus) at an accredited university. Submission of curricula vitae is allowed.

c) Applicant may be an ordained member of a religious order or group. Formal ordination, or membership in religious orders, is relevant only if the affiliation relates to scholarly works in the body of the essay.

d) BICS included the statement: *“BICS understands that true (or veridical) evidence includes a combination of a wide variety of forms; scientific, experiential, witnessed, repeatable, anecdotal and otherwise persuasive far beyond rules of traditional evidence-based hypothesis tested research paradigms”* into the essay guidelines in order to broaden the scope beyond evidence from peer reviewed scientific research.

Further, in order to encourage a broader spectrum of applicants to enter the contest, BICS expanded the entry criteria and included the following paragraph in the application: *“BICS encourages, and will accept, the inclusion of credible eyewitness and witness testimony as valid evidence for the Survival of Human Consciousness after Death. Eyewitness testimony is a bedrock for conviction by juries and judges in the United States and in International Court Systems. Therefore, BICS will accept evidence and eyewitness testimony supporting the legal requirement that establishes proof beyond a reasonable doubt.”* This phrase “proof beyond a reasonable doubt” was included in an attempt to encourage essay applicants to cite additional evidence in their essays that lay beyond the traditional scientific standardized levels of evidence (see, for example Tressoldi et al., 2022). In doing so, BICS was placing a value on eyewitness testimony and personal anomalous experiences as potential supporting evidence for submitting a 25,000-word essay on the SOHC. In addition to scientific evidence hierarchy (Tressoldi et al., 2022) that included reviews of experimental studies, BICS was also interested in the potential inclusion of ethnographic and participant observer research in essays.

Both the publicity in the media and the broadening of the qualification process were overt attempts by BICS to encourage more individuals and groups to enter the essay competition and thus, potentially, to enter the field. Multiple anecdotal followup messages from essay authors informed BICS that the advertising of monetary rewards for essays was the major motivator for initiating research into multiple

SOHC areas they had not worked on before. Thus the essay competition played a role in broadening the SOHC field.

Delineate the Current Global State-of-the-Art Research on SOHC after Death

Evidence that the word had spread globally came from the 38 countries that hosted multiple applicants approved by BICS to submit essays. Table 1 summarizes the countries from which the majority of essays were submitted.

In addition, one essay was submitted by authors from each of the following countries: Kuwait, Hungary, Venezuela, Ecuador, Taiwan, Bolivia, Slovakia, Nigeria, Egypt, Belgium, Slovenia, Cuba, Sri Lanka, Singapore, Sweden, Dominican Republic, Austria, Romania, and South Korea.

The spectrum of countries spanning all continents indicated that research on SOHC was occurring across the planet and was somewhat independent of culture. These data, as well as the content of the essays submitted, gave an indication to BICS of the state of research into the SOHC across the planet.

Judging of the Essays

Between July and December 2020, BICS senior management recruited a panel of judges that had broad backgrounds in diverse subjects that collectively constitute the SOHC after death. BICS decided that simply having a panel of judges that had a deep level of expertise only in the SOHC would be insufficient to adequately judge the anticipated broad spectrum of technical (physics, biology, neuroscience, medical science) and participant observer research-based essays. Secondly, it was felt that judges with varied eclectic backgrounds in medical sciences, statistics, humanities, SOHC research, and theoretical physics would contribute expertise across the maximum spectrum of anticipated subject areas.

Who Were the Judges?

Jeffrey J. Kripal, Ph.D., is the Associate Dean of the Faculty and Graduate Programs in the School of the Humanities and the J. Newton Rayzor Chair of Philosophy and Religious Thought at Rice University. He is also the Associate Director of the Center for Theory and Research at the Esalen Institute in Big Sur, California.

Leslie Kean is an independent investigative journalist. She is the author of the award-winning *Surviving Death: A Journalist Investigates Evidence for an Afterlife* (Crown Archetype, 2017) and *UFOs: Generals, Pilots, and Government Officials Go on the Record* (Crown Publishing Group, 2010), a *New York Times* best-seller.

Christopher C. Green, M.D., Ph.D., worked for the U.S. government from 1969 to 1985 and was awarded the National Intelligence Medal for his work in forensic investigations. Currently, he applies his 40-plus-year background in neurophysiology and forensic neurology with a new clinical focus using high-field brain MRI to determine the differential diagnoses of neurodegenerative disease and study the neural aspects of cognition.

Brian Weiss, M.D., a graduate of Columbia University and Yale Medical School, is Chairman Emeritus of Psychiatry at the Mount Sinai Medical Center in Miami.

Jessica Utts, Ph.D., is Professor Emerita of Statistics at the University of California, Irvine. After receiving her Ph.D. in Statistics at Penn State University, she spent 30 years as a professor and associate vice provost at the University of California, Davis, before moving to UC Irvine.

Harold (Hal) Puthoff, Ph.D., is President and CEO of EarthTech International (ETI) and Director of the Institute for Advanced Studies at Austin (IASA). Earning his Ph.D. from Stanford University in 1967, Puthoff's professional background spans more than five decades of research.

Dianne Arcangel, M.S., is a former hospice chaplain, psychiatric hospital therapist, and Director of the Elisabeth

TABLE 1. Countries from Which the Majority of Essays Were Submitted

Country	# of Essays	Country	# of Essays	Country	# of Essays
United States	110	Italy	4	Japan	2
United Kingdom	15	Russia	4	China	2
Canada	7	Netherlands	3	Ukraine	2
Germany	6	Spain	3	Chile	2
Brazil	6	India	3	Finland	2
France	5	Mexico	2	Ireland	2
Australia	4				

Kubler-Ross Center of Houston. She served on the board of directors at the Rhine Research Center and the National Institute for Discovery Science (NIDS), where she also led trainings and conducted research.

All of the responsibility for judging of the BICS essay contest lay on the shoulders of the seven judges. There was no influence from senior BICS management on the judging process. The essays were chosen by majority rule with the central criterion being the cumulative evidence for Survival of Human Consciousness beyond permanent bodily death and beyond a reasonable doubt.

Because of the very large number of high-quality essays that BICS received, the judges spent up to five months of intensive work in evaluating, deliberating, arguing, and eventually making their decisions. The winners were chosen based on the power of the arguments presented and on a consensus of judges on how persuasively the essays made the case for survival of human consciousness beyond a reasonable doubt.

The Expansion of Prize Money

Most of the publicity surrounding the BICS essay contest focused on the fact that the top essay was to be awarded \$500,000, the second prize was to be \$300,000 and the third winning essay would receive \$150,000. Within a couple of months, the panel of judges had already recognized that it would be exceedingly difficult to choose three winners, so great was the pool of high-quality essays. Robert Bigelow presented an immediate solution to the conundrum. He would add a further \$550,000 to the winner's pot and award an additional \$50,000 for each of 11 runner-up essays. This increased the total BICS prize money to \$1,500,000.

Even when the first 14 essays had been identified and selected by the judges, there remained a significant number of high-quality essays that the judges continued to champion. At that stage it was decided to create an Honorable Mentions category for another 15 essays that the judges wished to recognize for the hard work and scholarship that they demonstrated. Robert Bigelow then decided that rather than just formally recognizing the group of 15 essays by publishing them on the BICS website, he made the decision to award these 15 essays an additional tranche of prize money. Robert allocated another \$300,000 into the prize pot that was divided equally among the 15 Honorable Mention essays. Each of these essays was awarded \$20,000. This brought the total prize money for all twenty-nine essays to \$1,800,000, arguably an unprecedented level of financial support for this field of research.

Beyond a Reasonable Doubt

As BICS designed the essay contest, we considered the three legal standards involved with producing burden of proof. These were (i) preponderance of the evidence, (ii) clear and convincing evidence, and (iii) proof beyond a reasonable doubt.

Preponderance of evidence is more commonly used in civil lawsuits and the plaintiff must prove that their case against a defendant is more likely than not true. Clear and convincing evidence is utilized in family law cases and is the highest standard in non-criminal cases. Clear and convincing evidence requires proof that a fact is substantially more likely to be true than false.

Proof beyond a reasonable doubt is the main burden of proof in criminal cases. To convict a person in a criminal case, a prosecutor must prove the defendant is guilty beyond a reasonable doubt. This burden of proof indicates that the prosecution must demonstrate that there is no other reasonable explanation for the evidence presented during a criminal trial.

BICS opted to impose proof beyond a reasonable doubt to aim for the highest standards of evidence possible. The crossover between burden of proof in the legal and scientific systems has been ambiguous for years, although there have been attempts to create quantitative scales to correlate legal and scientific standards of evidence (see, for example, Weiss, 2003).

Weiss created a quantitative scale from 1 to 10 for legal standards of proof and defined preponderance of evidence as 5 out of 10, clear and convincing evidence as 8 out of 10, and beyond a reasonable doubt as 9 out of 10. The authors argued that a parallel scientific level of certainty to "beyond a reasonable doubt" would be "scientifically rigorously proven." Weiss characterized "scientifically rigorously proven" as evidence in which critical experiments give a clear and unambiguous result, excluding alternative explanations. Finally, because of extensive media coverage of criminal prosecutions over the past few decades, the phrase "beyond a reasonable doubt" was judged by BICS to be a familiar and understandable term to the public.

In late 2021, after the 43 authors had received their monetary prizes, all 29 winning essays were published on the BICS website (https://www.bigelowinstitute.org/contest_winners3.php) and have been available to the public to download free of charge. As of mid-2022, there have been thousands of downloads from North and South America, Europe, Asia, and Africa, indicating a sustained and broad global interest in reading the material. In addition, media coverage has increased the public appetite for this information.

BICS obtained agreement from the authors to publish

the winning essays in book form. As a further step in expanding global access to the information in the essays, 28 of the papers will be published as a multi-volume hardcover set of books that BICS will make available to interested individuals and groups.

In conclusion, BICS believes that some of the original three aims of the essay contest ((i) Energize the field of the SOHC after Death, (ii) Encourage more individuals and groups to learn about and take an interest in the field, and (iii) Delineate the global state-of-the-art research on the SOHC after Death in 2021) were achieved.

What is Next? The BICS Challenge for 2023

BICS is following up the 2021 Essay Contest with a new program called “The Challenge,” to be unveiled on September 1, 2022. The Challenge comprises a significant grants program that initiates in 2023 and is targeted toward researchers in the field of the SOHC. The three main bounding parameters for The Challenge are:

- The research is to be exclusive to the survival of human consciousness beyond permanent bodily death.

- The research is to be exclusively focused on Contact or Communication with the “Other Side.”

- The research should preferably break new ground.

BICS requires all applicants to submit information about themselves and their capability to conduct this research.

Important Dates for the BICS Challenge for 2023

- BICS Announces the 2023 Challenge: 9/1/2022

- Applicants send their required information to BICS and BICS notifies selected applicants of acceptance to submit a grant proposal: 11/1/2022–1/1/2023

- Applicants submit proposals: 1/1/2023–4/1/2023

- Proposal submission cutoff date: 4/1/2023

- Accepted Grantees announced: 8/1/2023

- Conclusion of Work and Final Reports Due: 5/1/2024

A brief summary of grant proposal requirements may better prepare readers to submit proposals to BICS for Challenge 2023:

- Contact and Communication with “the other side” is the exclusive focus of the grants program. However, this does not include contacting alleged deceased relatives.

- BICS requires a preliminary application procedure to validate that applicants have the required background and experience to submit proposals for the BICS Challenge. Applicants will be requested to submit brief descriptions of their education, backgrounds, and experience in researching the SOHC. Secondly, applicants are requested to submit a summary of the proposed research

that contains sufficient information for reviewers to evaluate the proposed research. Applications will need to be submitted between 11/1/2022 and 1/1/2023. Successful applicants will be notified that they are authorized to submit proposals on or before 1/1/2023.

- The total proposal (in 12-point font) must not exceed 10,000 words (resumes or CVs do not count in the 10,000-word limit).

- Any significant upfront dollar amount needs to be justified. BICS will automatically disqualify a proposal that requests the majority of funds upfront.

- The proposal must have:

- A Table of Contents

- Abstract at the beginning of the proposal

- Objectives the grant or proposal intends to achieve

- A budget

- A breakdown of milestones with deliverables indicating the dollar amount to be paid to the grantee upon satisfactory completion of each milestone

- A section describing why the proposed work is important and novel and which gives details of experimental designs and controls.

- A Conclusion and Summary at the end.

In conclusion, the popularity and global reach of the BICS essay contest showed that SOHC research is an active scientific discipline in multiple countries and continents. The anecdotal evidence gleaned from the 204 essays submitted indicates that the contest was responsible for attracting additional people and groups to research and write essays on the SOHC topic. BICS hopes to follow the success of the essay contest with the new grants program, BICS Challenge 2023, which may further energize the SOHC field.

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APPENDIX



BICS ESSAY Competition Rules, Qualifications, Confidentiality and Media Release Form

1. Essay Application

- a. All Essay Competition Entrants must first apply to BICS.
- b. Prior to essay submission, each prospective entrant must submit this signed application by email describing their background and qualifications to receive BICS approval to enter the Awards competition (see #2 for more detail).
- c. All applicants must sign releases to BICS for any and all media interviews and publicity. By signing this document applicants agree to make themselves available for media (TV, radio, newspaper, social media) interviews if their essay is declared a winner.
- d. Only those entrants with approval from BICS will be eligible to enter the Essay Competition.
- e. Preliminary Applications must be received by BICS **January 26-February 28, 2021**. People who have been approved to submit an essay will hear from us on or before February 28, 2021. If you have not been approved, you will not hear from us.

2. Essay Applicant Qualifications:

- a. Applicants must provide evidence that they have investigated the topic of Survival of Human Consciousness after Death for 5 years or more. For multi author submissions, only one author must have 5 years' experience in the topic while other authors can be less qualified.

Evidence of investigation such as published papers, monographs, books or producers/directors of film or digital documentaries will be accepted. Embedded links to written or digital work will be welcome as part of the application.

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- b. It may help if applicants are/were a member of relevant organizations for example Society of Psychical Research, Society for Scientific Exploration, American Society for Psychical Research, Institute of Noetic Sciences, International Association for Near Death Studies, Rhine Research Center, Windbridge Research, Parapsychological Association, Eternea, Center for Research on Consciousness and Anomalous Psychology (CERCAP), Koestler Parapsychology Unit (University of Edinburgh, Scotland), NUPES – Research Center in Spirituality and Health (Brazil) or be a staff researcher (including emeritus) in an accredited university in the world. Submission of *curricula vitae* is allowed.
- c. Applicant may be an ordained member of a religious order or group. Formal ordination, or membership in religious orders is relevant only if the affiliation relates to scholarly works in the body of the essay.

3. Essay Question

Each essay must address the following question:

What is the best available evidence for the Survival of Human Consciousness after Permanent Bodily Death?

4. Essay Submission Deadline

Essays must be emailed to, and received by, BICS by 5.00pm Pacific time **August 1, 2021**

5. Judging

- a. Essays will be judged by a panel of five internationally renowned experts.
- b. Judges' decisions are final
- c. Winners will be announced on **November 1, 2021**
- d. All judging deliberations and inter-BICS discourse in any form are proprietary to BICS and will not be disseminated to candidates or to the public.

6. Essay Formatting

- a. Essays must be in English, typed in 12 font, be up to 25,000 words not counting references.

- b. Each submitted essay must detail all citations and references of information sources and evidence. Paraphrasing other people's work must be referenced.
- c. References must be numbered in the body of the text and arranged numerically in a reference section at the end of the essay. Footnotes are also acceptable. References can be in the styles of the writers, but should use the American Psychological Association Manual style for guidance and cite: Author(s), (Year) volume, page number(s) and book or journal title / publisher.

7. Essay Guidelines

- a. Quoting sacred scripture is an expression of faith. For the purposes of this contest, faith is not sufficient and does not constitute evidence, although it may well inform or influence the specific argument and choice of materials used. Therefore scriptural quotations would not be accepted as evidence beyond a reasonable doubt, that is, they will carry no authority for the sake of this contest because they claim as much for the believer. Of course quotations from scholarly faith-based literature if relevant to experimental research of others, or non-evidentiary material is permitted [eg if related to case or subject of past research criteria being analyzed]. BICS understands that true (or veridical) evidence includes a combination of a wide variety of forms; scientific, experiential, witnessed, repeatable, anecdotal and otherwise persuasive far beyond rules of traditional evidence-based hypothesis tested research paradigms.
- b. All essays must be original, unpublished, and not submitted elsewhere. Authors are free to refer to, explain, analyze and cite, their own previous work in their essays.

8. Copyright & Essay Publication Rights

- a. Authors retain all rights to their work.
- b. BICS reserves the right to publish the winning entries on this website, in a possible proceedings volume and in the media.
- c. Derivative publications in other media are permitted, if/as permitted by the publication's rules.

9. Beyond A Reasonable Doubt

BICS encourages, and will accept, the inclusion of credible eyewitness and witness testimony as valid evidence for the Survival of Human Consciousness after Death. Eyewitness testimony is a bedrock for conviction by juries and judges in the United States and in International Court Systems. Therefore BICS will accept evidence and eyewitness testimony supporting the legal requirement that establishes proof beyond a reasonable doubt.

10. Applicant Participation, Confidentiality Agreement and Media Release

WHEREAS, Bigelow Institute for Consciousness Studies ("BICS") is sponsoring an essay contest for the best research and/or presentation regarding the survival of consciousness beyond physical death (the "Contest").

WHEREAS, each applicant in the contest ("Entrant") will be required to provide an essay supported by studies, research and other empirical evidence supporting survival of consciousness after death (collectively the "Entry") in order to participate in the Contest.

WHEREAS, each Entrant will be required to electronically submit their Entry (an essay together with all supporting research) by August 1, 2021 at 5.00 p.m. Pacific Daylight Time, through the BICS website (bigelowinstitute.org).

WHEREAS, as a condition to participation in the Contest, each Entrant must agree to and sign this consent and release, according to the terms set forth below.

NOW, THEREFORE, in exchange for, and in consideration of, the opportunity to enter the Contest, the receipt and sufficiency of which is hereby acknowledged by the Entrant's signature below, Entrant hereby states, avers, and agrees as follows:

A. RELEASE AND CONSENT OF CONTEST ENTRANT

By submitting my Entry to the Contest, I hereby grant BICS and its designees the perpetual, worldwide right to reproduce, promote, and otherwise use my Entry and/or its contents in any media advertising, promotional, and/or any other purposes, as BICS and/or its designees may determine or see fit, without having to seek permission from, and without consideration or notification

to Entrant or any third party. Entrant acknowledges and warrants that it holds all rights to the Entry and all supporting research submitted in support thereof. I also agree that the entry may, in BICS' sole discretion, be posted online at the contest website and/or any other website as determined by BICS, for visitors to the website(s) to view.

I understand that at or for purposes of this Contest, my image may be captured and used by either still photography or video recording. I agree to allow my photo, video or film likeness to be used for any legitimate purpose by BICS, the contest event holders, producers, sponsors, organizers and or assigns. I further agree to participate in any interviews with media or other promotional activities, (health permitting), designated by BICS if I am the recipient of any award through the Contest (as long as BICS pays the reasonable travel expenses, including airfare and lodging, associated with such promotional activities, which must be pre-approved by BICS in writing before BICS has any obligations). I further acknowledge and agree that all enforcement of any Contest rules and the determination of the Contest winner(s) shall be the exclusive right, and at the exclusive discretion, of BICS, and/or BICS' judges. I further acknowledge and agree that BICS shall have the right to disqualify and remove me from participating in the Contest at any time, and for any reason, which reason need not be provided to me.

In consideration of my Entry and permitting me to participate in this Contest, I hereby take action for myself, my executors, administrators, heirs, next of kin, successors, and assigns as follows: (A) I agree to Waive, Release and Discharge BICS, the Contest Judges, as well as any other persons, vendors, entities, and/or businesses participating in staging the Contest which are not otherwise named herein, as well as their directors, officers, employees, volunteers, agents, Contest holders, Contest promoters, Contest sponsors, Contest volunteers, Contest permit grantors, Contest property owners, from any and all liability for my death, disability, personal injury, property damage, cell phone damage, property theft, lost income, or any other losses, costs or actions of any kind which hereafter may accrue to me by virtue of my participation in this Contest, or my travel to or from BICS or any location necessary for promotional purposes if I am a winner of any award through this Contest; (B) I agree to Hold Harmless and Indemnify the entities or persons mentioned in this paragraph from

and against any and all liability, losses, costs and expenses (including attorneys' fees) incurred as a result of my Entry being submitted to BICS in violation of any terms of this Agreement or any rules adopted by BICS for this Contest, including, but not limited to, any failure on my part to obtain the releases required from any and all persons who may claim any interest in my Entry or the contents thereof. I have read and fully understand the above important information, warning of risk, assumption of risk and waiver and release of all claims. Participation in the Contest will be denied if I have not signed this waiver before the start of the Contest.

B. WARRANTY OF CONTEST ENTRANT

I represent and warrant that I own all right, title and interest and have obtained all appropriate permissions and releases to grant BICS the right to use and publish my Entry, the content thereof, and all research associated therewith, which shall include but not be limited, all right, title and interest to any patent, trademark, trade secret, copyright or other proprietary rights, including but not limited to, privacy and publicity rights, in and to, my Entry, to enable BICS to review, judge, use and publish my Entry. I further represent and warrant that I have obtained a Participant Release Form from any identifiable person who appears in, is heard in, has allowed the use of his/her name, likeness, or voice in the Entry, or that has otherwise contributed to the Entry. If Entrant is a minor, I have received the written consent of Entrant's legal guardian.

I hereby agree to indemnify, defend and hold harmless BICS and its affiliates, licensees, successors and assigns from and against any and all liability, losses, costs and expenses (including attorneys' fees) incurred as a result of any Entry submitted to BICS in violation of any terms contained in this Agreement or in any rules for the Contest that may be promulgated by BICS. I further agree that contacting the judges for any reason is forbidden and could result in disqualification from the Essay Contest.

C. NONDISCLOSURE AGREEMENT OF CONTEST ENTRANT

In consideration of my Entry and permitting me to participate in this Contest, I hereby take action for myself, my executors, administrators, heirs, next

of kin, successors, and hereby agree that I will not share any information whatsoever, including, but not limited to, the following:

(a) I will not disclose, or take any unauthorized pictures, still or moving of, any portion of any of the Contest proceedings, Contest judges, Contest managers, Contest presentations, Contest holders, Contest promoters, Contest sponsors, Contest volunteers, Contest permit grantors, Contest property owners, as well as their directors, officers, employees, volunteers, and agents;

(b) I will not directly or indirectly disclose to any person or entity (including, without limitation, to any media source or social media source or any other social networks, websites or the internet) any information of any kind relating to or concerning the Contest, the Contest Judges, my Entry, or BICS, including its affiliates, officers, shareholders, directors, managers, members, representatives, licensees, successors and assigns, as all such information is strictly confidential. I understand and agree that disclosure of any of the information prohibited by this Paragraph can only be permitted with an express, written agreement signed by BICS.

I understand and agree that all such information is confidential and that the dissemination of any such information shall constitute a breach of this confidentiality and non-disclosure Agreement and will cause BICS irreparable harm, not readily measurable in money.

D. MISCELLANEOUS

(i). Applicable Law. This Agreement shall be construed in accordance with the laws of Nevada, with regard to its choice of law provisions. If legal action is initiated relative to this Agreement or the rights or obligations of any party hereunder, such action must be initiated, maintained and continued in Clark County, Nevada.

BICS shall have the right to take all measures necessary to protect its rights, including without limitation, the right to seek civil and criminal penalties for any violation of this Agreement. Further, BICS shall have the right to all other remedies at law and in equity, including injunctive relief.

For multi-author essays, each individual author must: (a) provide their names and addresses on this application, (b) they must separately sign this application and (c) they must agree on this application to divide the prize money equally among each author. Thus, for multi-author works, this application must be printed, individually signed, scanned and emailed back to BICS.

I have read, understood and agree to abide by, the rules, confidentiality and media release requirements for the BICS essay competition

Co-Author #1

Signed _____

Date _____

Name _____

Address _____

Email Address _____

Co-Author #2

Signed _____

Date _____



Name _____

Address _____

Email Address _____

Co-Author #3

Signed _____

Date _____

Name _____

Address _____

Email Address _____

If there are more than three co-authors, the additional coauthors must sign, date, and give their names, mail addresses and email addresses.

