OMEGA PSI PHI FRATERNITY, INC.

International High School Essay Contest Application

INFORMATION & INSTRUCTIONS

SECTION I – Contest Announcement. The **Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc.** is pleased to announce its **International High School Essay Contest**. The contest represents a significant element of the annual International Achievement Week Observance where high school (H.S.) seniors from around the world are invited to participate in the essay contest for an opportunity to compete for scholarship awards. Scholarship awards may be offered at the local Chapter level where the contest begins with competition at the local area level, and/or may include scholarship award opportunities at the District level where local Chapter winners compete against other local Chapter winners across the state and other states or respective jurisdictions within the District. District winners can compete for scholarship award opportunities at the International-level. Students submitting essays hereby grant to the Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc., and its unincorporated associations – i.e., the local Chapters and the Districts – a non-exclusive right to keep essays and to publish them for the purpose of advertising and publicizing the International High School Essay Contest to members and the general public.

SECTION II - Essay Topic**.** This year's essay topic is:

How Can Young People Use Leadership, Service, and Innovation to Create Positive Change in Their Communities?

SECTION III – Award Amounts. Awards vary at the local Chapter level and may or may not be monetary. Similarly, awards also vary at the District level and may or may not be monetary. Monetary awards are determined by the local Chapter and the applicable District. The amounts for International scholarship awards as follows:

International:

1st Place | $5,000	2nd Place | $3,000	3rd Place | $2,000	4th Place | $1,000

Locally:

1st Place | $750	2nd Place | $500	3rd Place | $200	4th Place | $100

SECTION IV – Application Deadline. The deadline for application submissions to the local chapter, including all accompanying documentation, is **11:59 p.m., November 6, 2026**. The respective Districts' Achievement Week Committee Chairmen will determine their respective deadlines and communicate them to their local Chapters within their respective Districts for winners to compete for District level consideration. The International Achievement Week Committee Chairman will determine the application submission deadline for all District winners and will communicate that deadline to the District Achievement Week Committee Chairman for District winners to compete for International-level consideration.

SECTION V – Submission Eligibility. The contest is open to all college-bound, high school seniors who MUST submit their essay application through a local Chapter of the Fraternity. A student seeking to compete may submit ONLY ONE (1) application and may apply to JUST ONE (1) one local Chapter. The local Chapter chosen **MUST BE the *closest by virtue of their listed mailing address to the address of the applicant's high school address.*** Multiple applications and/or multiple local Chapter submissions will result in disqualification for each application.

SECTION VI – Submission Process**.** Applications MUST be submitted to and reviewed by a Local Chapter of the Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc. Complete applications, including all components noted in the "H.S. Essay Application Submission Checklist", must be received via the email address or other *electronic* submission process indicated by the local chapter. Paper application submissions by postal mailing or other means are NOT ACCEPTED. Applications sent to any other location shall not be considered and no further notice will be provided. ***Submissions will not be accepted for consideration after the deadline*.**

Before You Begin

- ☐ Read all requirements carefully before writing and submitting your essay.
- ☐ Submit only ONE application through ONE local Chapter.
- ☐ Your essay must be your original work. (Reference Page 3, Section B, "Ar*tificial Intelligence (AI))"*
- ☐ Complete and sign all required forms before submission.
- ☐ Keep a copy of everything you submit.

NEED HELP?

If you are unsure which local Chapter serves your school or area, contact the appropriate Chapter Point of Contact below before submitting your application.

Visit the Find a Chapter (https://members.oppf.org/OPPMembers/ChapterSearch/ChapterSearch.aspx) and use the "Chapter Search" to locate a local Chapter.

A. *Local Chapter/Sponsor/Deadline*

Chapter Name: _____

Contact Person: _____

Email / Submission Address: _____

Phone: _____

Local Chapter deadline: _____

Who May Participate?

- ☐ Be a college-bound high school senior.
- ☐ Be enrolled in a public, private, or qualifying home-school program.
- ☐ Submit your application through an eligible local Chapter.
- ☐ Submit only one application and apply to only one local Chapter.

Where Do I Submit?

Your completed application must be submitted electronically to the local Chapter serving your area. Use the email address or electronic submission method provided by that Chapter.

- ☐ Paper Applications sent by mail are NOT accepted.
- ☐ Applications sent to another location will not be considered.
- ☐ Applications received after the deadline will not be considered.

Essay Requirements

YOUR ESSAY MUST BE 700–750 WORDS

Header and footer text do not count toward the word total.

B. *Formatting Checklist*

- ☐ Microsoft Word file (doc or .docx)
- ☐ 12-point Times New Roman or Arial font
- ☐ Double-spaced
- ☐ 1-inch margins on all sides
- ☐ No minimum or maximum page count

Original Work

Your essay must be your original work. It must not have been previously published and must not violate another person's copyright.

C. *Artificial Intelligence (AI)*

AI POLICY

The use of **artificial intelligence (AI)** software/technology (e.g., ChatGPT, Claude, Grammarly) is **prohibited**. Essay submissions will be reviewed to detect AI use, and essays found to exceed the 30% threshold will be disqualified. The International Achievement Week Committee retains the sole authority to select the AI detection software for its use and shall render the final decision.

D. *How your Essay is Scored*

All local Chapters shall be responsible to assemble a review panel, as will each District, to assess essays based on the following criteria. The maximum rating score is 100 points based on the following:

Development of Topic/Thesis – 30 points maximum	Topic is well-developed; covers and develops major points, supplies enough information for understanding
Progression – 20 points maximum	Composition progresses from beginning to end in a logical flow of information
Readability – 25 points maximum	Concise language that sticks to the point in a coherent writing style; holds reader's attention
Grammar – 15 points maximum	Agreement of subject and verb; proper tense; correct sentence structure with transitional phrases, and accurate paragraphing and citations
Spelling – 5 points maximum	Appropriate to dictionary and aligned based on sentence use (e.g., "to" versus "too" versus "two")
Punctuation – 5 points maximum	Appropriate and aligned based on sentence use

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TITLE PAGE

The following information must be completed and this cover page included with the essay submission.

ESSAY TOPIC: ****Entered Annually by IAWC****

ESSAY TITLE: _____

STUDENT / ESSAYIST:

Name _____ Email _____

Address _____ _____ _____ _____

Street *City* *State* *Zip*

HIGH SCHOOL:

Name _____

Address _____ _____ _____ _____

Street *City* *State* *Zip*

LOCAL CHAPTER / SPONSOR:

Name _____

Location _____ _____ _____

Area, borough, county or similar *City* *State/Country*

OMEGA PSI PHI FRATERNITY, INC.

International High School Essay Contest Application

ESSAY RELEASE FORM

STUDENT: _____ Age _____

Name

Home Phone # _____

Email _____ Cell Phone # _____

Address _____ _____ _____ _____

Street *City* *State* *Zip*

PARENT / GUARDIAN:

Name _____ Email _____

Home Phone # _____ Cell Phone # _____

I, the undersigned **Student,** or **Parent/Guardian** of, _____ declare that the essay authored and submitted to the Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc., and its unincorporated associations – i.e., local Chapter and/or District – for purposes of consideration in its International High School Essay Contest is an *original* work that does not exceed a 30 percent AI-generated threshold. I hereby grant to Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc., and its unincorporated associations a non-exclusive right to publish the essay for distribution to members and to the public to advertise or publicize the contest and any winners. Distribution may include and not be limited to print, oral or web-based, Internet distribution.

I further acknowledge that I have been apprised of the Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc., policy relating to use of the essays at the time of my application to the contest. The International High School Essay Contest Application document states:

> *Persons submitting essays hereby grant to the Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc., and its unincorporated associations – i.e., the local Chapters and the Districts – a non-exclusive right to keep essays and to publish them for the purpose of advertising and publicizing the International High School Essay Contest to members and the general public.*

I hereby grant the Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc., and its unincorporated associations an irrevocable, worldwide license to use, reproduce, distribute, or modify the essay in its entirety or portions thereof. I also declare that if any parts of my child's submission are copyrighted, permission has been sought and received by me/us, or appropriate attribution has been made. I further agree that the name, likeness, and biographical material, including affiliations of the author, may be used in connection with, and promotion of, the essay and/or the *International High School Essay Contest* itself.

_____ _____ _____ _____

Student Signature (if 18 years or older at signing) *Date* *Parent/Guardian Signature (if Student under 18 years)* *Date*

(MUST be signed digitally, electronically or via pen & ink.)

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International High School Essay Contest Application

MEDIA RELEASE & CONSENT FORM

STUDENT: _____ Age _____
Name
Home Phone # _____
Email _____ Cell Phone # _____
Address _____ _____ _____ _____
Street *City* *State* *Zip*

Name _____ Email _____

Home Phone # _____ Cell Phone # _____

I hereby grant to Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc., and its unincorporated associations – i.e., local Chapter and/or District – permission to use my likeness in photographs, video recordings or electronic images in any and all of its publications, including website entries, without payment or any other consideration. I understand and agree that these materials will become the property of the Organization and will not be returned. I hereby irrevocably authorize the Organization to edit, alter, copy, exhibit, publish or distribute these images for purposes of publicizing the organization's programs or for any other lawful purpose. In addition, I waive the right to inspect or approve the finished product, including written or electronic copy, wherein my likeness appears.

Additionally, I waive any right to royalties or other compensation arising or related to the use of my image. I hereby hold harmless and release and forever discharge the Organization from all claims, demands, and causes of action which I, my heirs, representatives, executors, administrators, or any other persons acting on my behalf or on behalf of my estate have or may have by reason of this authorization.

I am 18 years of age and am competent to contract in my own name, or if I am under age 18, a parent or guardian has signed below. I have read this release before signing below and I fully understand the contents, meaning and impact of this release.

Student applicants under age 18 must also have their parent or guardian sign below.

I hereby certify that I am the parent or guardian of the student named above who is under the age of 18 years at this time, and I do hereby give my consent without reservation to the foregoing release on behalf of the student named.

_____ _____ _____ _____
Student Signature *Date* *Parent/Guardian Signature* *Date*

Key Terms. For the purposes of this application, the following key terms are described herein.

High school refers to public and private educational elements that typically include, but are not limited to, Grades 9 through 12, and that involve study that leads to a diploma upon successful completion and graduation, and thereby, typically, prepares the graduate to matriculate to other levels of advanced education, such as, but not limited to an associates or a baccalaureate degree program at a college or university. It may also extend to "home schooled" when evidenced by registration documentation from the state and/or local jurisdiction applicable to the senior year of the essay application demonstrating a high school diploma may be conferred to the student.

Local chapter refers to the closest unincorporated association of the Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc., that is chartered and active in a specified location within the United States, a U.S. territory, or a foreign country, where it is also determined to be the closest by virtue of their listed mailing address to the address of the applicant's high school address. Where there are two or more local Chapters that may qualify based on proximity and service area to the school or their overlapping service areas (e.g., same borough, city, county, parish or similar area within a state or jurisdiction), the applicant should contact them and/or may SELECT ONE (1) for application submission. An applicant may submit ONLY ONE (1) application and may apply to JUST ONE (1) local Chapter, subject to disqualification for each application if more than one application is submitted and/or to more than one chapter.

District refers to the closest unincorporated association of the Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc., that is chartered and active in a specified region within the United States, a U.S. territory, or a foreign country, where it is also determined to be the closest by virtue of their listed mailing address to the address of the applicant's high school address.

Award Announcement. International awards will be announced on or about August 1, annually and the decision of the International Achievement Week Committee judges shall be final. Local Chapter and District awards will be announced as determined appropriate by the respective local Chapters and Districts.

Award Requirements. Winners shall be required to furnish written proof from their high school as evidence that they were enrolled at the time their essay was submitted. Evidence may be a *signed and dated* letter from the principal or other school administrator *on school letterhead*, or an email from the same originating *from their assigned school email account*. Awards will be released to each winner, upon written verification from their chosen institution of higher education (e.g., college or university) that the winner is enrolled. Verification may be from a school administrator on letterhead or from their assigned school email account. A current course schedule may also be required to verify enrollment, and notice will be provided if applicable. Awards must be claimed within 18 months after the announcement date, or they will be forfeited and voided without opportunity to reissue.

Application Forms. Awards WILL NOT BE issued without properly executed releases – i.e., the "Essay Release Form" and the "Media Release & Consent Form". The releases grant the Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc., and its unincorporated associations – i.e., local Chapters and Districts – the rights to retain and publish the awardees' names, images and essays on the International, District, and Chapter websites and social media pages, as well as various publications and informational documents about the community service performed at the local, district, and international levels. However, information associated with a home address, phone numbers, and emails WILL NOT be shared without additional written consent from the student or the parent/guardian, as appropriate.

Release Information. By completing the included *Essay Release Form*, the signatory – applicant and/or the named parent/guardian – thereby grants to the Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc., including its unincorporated associations – the applicable District and local Chapter – the right to manage and maintain the essays and the associated forms and communications as its records of the contest, and to exercise full publishing rights to the same.

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International High School Essay Contest Application

H.S. Essay Application Submission Checklist

The following is provided as a guide to assist applicants with ensuring the proper documentation is identified and provided for submission. Use of the checklist does not imply nor suggest submission of any or all listed will ensure eligibility nor an award. Note, references to "signed & dated" refer to the signature of the student applicant, as a requirement, as well as the signature of the appropriate parent or guardian, as a requirement when the student applicant is a minor at the time of his/her signature on the forms in question where a parent or guardian appears. Failure to secure the appropriate signatures may immediately disqualify the student applicant without further notice or exception.

The following have been completed and submitted:

- ☐ Essay is 700–750 words.
- ☐ Essay directly addresses the assigned topic.
- ☐ Essay is my original work.
- ☐ Essay is saved as a Word (doc or .docx) file.
- ☐ Essay is double-spaced, 12-point Times New Roman or Arial.
- ☐ Essay has 1-inch margins.
- ☐ Title Page is complete.
- ☐ Essay Release Form is signed and dated.
- ☐ Medial Release & Consent Form is signed and dated.
- ☐ Parent/Guardian has signed required forms if student is under 18.
- ☐ Clear, color head-and-shoulders photograph is included.
- ☐ Photograph was taken within six months of submission. (Note: Attire should be business casual or smart casual with appropriate background and lighting.)
- ☐ All required documents are included.
- ☐ I am submitting to only ONE local Chapter.
- ☐ Application will be submitted before the deadline.

E. *Student Confirmation*

Student Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

SIGNATURE REQUIREMENT

A parent or guardian must sign when the student is under 18 at the time of signing.

Review your application one last time before submitting. Make sure every required document is included, all required signatures are present, and your application is submitted on time.