

# Sustained Exploration of the Inner Solar System

*An Essay Contest sponsored by*



Mars is on the horizon for future space explorers, with national space agencies as well as private corporations making plans to send humans to the red planet in the coming decades. Meanwhile, remote exploration of Mercury, Venus, and the asteroid belt continues to escalate, which provides insight into the history and resources of the inner solar system. Our planetary neighbors are closer to our reach than ever before, but the long-term exploration of space remains expensive, risky, and uncertain.

The [Blue Marble Space Institute of Science](http://www.bmsis.org) invites undergraduate students to address this theme by responding to the question: ***How can human civilization develop a successful strategy for the sustained exploration of the inner solar system for the next 200 years?*** The purpose of the essay contest is to stimulate creative thinking that explores how human space exploration will affect humanity's future.

We invite essays from undergraduate students between the ages of 18 to 30. To be eligible, each applicant must have been enrolled in a degree program at a qualified educational institution (2-year or 4-year college/university) in at least one term during the 2015 calendar year. Applicants should limit their essays to 1500 words or less. The deadline for essay submission is **30 September 2015** at 5:00 PM US Pacific time. Essays will be assessed based on scientific accuracy, originality, and writing style.

The author of the winning essay will receive a \$500 prize and will be invited to present his or her ideas in an episode of the "[BlueSciCon](http://www.bmsis.org/bluecon)" podcast series as well as lead a discussion on [SAGANet.org](http://www.saganet.org). The winning essay will also be considered for publication in a scientific journal or magazine with a commentary by an acclaimed journalist and author. Two honorable mention prizes of \$200 each will also be awarded.

Essays will be judged by an expert panel of BMSIS research scientists as well as a group of outside judges of esteemed scientists and writers. Essay winners will be announced on 17 December 2015.

Submit your essay to: [essaycontest@bmsis.org](mailto:essaycontest@bmsis.org)

Visit [bmsis.org/essaycontest](http://bmsis.org/essaycontest) for more details.