Palm Beach State College (the College), through its Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP), is currently engaged in a College-wide focus on critical thinking. In an effort to promote critical thinking among individual students and in classroom discussions, the QEP Support Team is sponsoring the 2nd Annual Contest to Promote Critical Thinking.

Additionally and new this year, a critical thinking component is included in a separate contest offered by the speech cluster.

The QEP Support Team thanks the Student Activities and Services Fee Committee for its support.

1. **Eligibility**
   - Entries will be accepted from Palm Beach State College students who are enrolled in at least one class during the spring 2015 semester (status will be verified).

2. **Contest dates and deadlines**
   **Essay**
   - The contest begins February 9, 2015. Early entries will be accepted if submitted electronically with official submission form (see #7, Official Entry).
   - Entries will be accepted until 11:59pm on Monday, March 23, 2015.
   - Winners will be announced at campus year-end award ceremonies in April and in online venues by May 1, 2015.

   **Speech**
   - Speeches will be selected at the campus level to participate in a College-wide competition. Campus nominations will be forward to contest chair by April 16th.
   - Finalists will give their speeches at a live event on April 23, 2015 on a selected campus (to be announced) – judging decisions will be made and prizes will be awarded at the event
   - Non-speech students must contact the contest chair by April 1, 2015.
   - Please see [Speech Contest Guidelines](#) for details and contact information.

3. **Contest prompt**
   - What is the most pressing issue for college students in 2015, and what is the best solution?

4. **Evaluation criteria**
   Students are expected to accomplish the following general outcomes in essay entries and in the critical thinking category of the speech contest:
   - demonstrate an ability to interpret and analyze relevant information
   - draw conclusions based on a reasoning process
   - evaluate and appropriately explain those conclusions
   - cite sources
Additionally, 20% of essay criteria is based on written communication skills. Essays should be submitted without spelling and grammatical errors. Specific criteria for essays are stated in the essay rubric. These criteria will be used to score essays as well as the critical thinking component of speech entries.

5. Requirements for all submissions
All work must be original. Entries must sufficiently respond to the contest prompt using academic sources and will be judged based on how well the entry meets the criteria stated in the applicable rubric. Specific requirements for essays and speeches vary; students should review the applicable requirements for their entries.

6. Multiple entries
Students may enter only once in each contest (one essay and one speech). A separate submission is required for each entry.

7. Official Entry
All essays must be submitted electronically using a web-based submission form (student login required), available until March 23, 2015. Essay entries will be confirmed upon receipt. Speeches will be delivered live on April 23; location to be announced.

8. Prizes and awards
- Cash prizes in the form of gift cards will be awarded. Amounts will vary; awards will be up to $150. No prizes will be awarded to ineligible students or for entries that do not meet the submission requirements.

   All winners will be announced by May 1, 2015. Essay winners will be announced at campus award celebrations; names and work may be published on the QEP webpage, College homepage, social media sites, and in various College newsletters. Speech winners will be announced at the live speech event and later on the QEP webpage.

9. Judging Process
- Entries are expected to meet the requirements stated on the essay rubric and speech guidelines. All entries that meet these requirements will be scored.
- Essays will be scored independently by two judges on a panel comprised of faculty and staff on the QEP Support Team; a third judge will score tied entries when needed. Judges will be representative of all campuses and a variety of disciplines; judges who are also professors will not score entries submitted by students they teach.
- Speeches will be judged live by members of the speech cluster; critical thinking component of speeches will be judged by QEP faculty and staff.
- Winners will be announced as specified under “Prizes and awards.”

Discrepancies or appeals of the essay judging process will go to a panel selected from the QEP Leadership Team and the QEP Support Team members who do not serve on the contest judging panel. Their decision will be final. Speech cluster will address any discrepancies in the speech contest process or judging.
Additional information

- Students who enter an essay are strongly encouraged to review the essay rubric that will be used to evaluate entries and to do so before developing an essay response and submitting an entry!

- It is appropriate for students to seek help in developing their response to the contest prompt or in understanding the rubric. The Student Learning Centers (SLC) on all campuses are available to assist with essay entries, and students are encouraged to visit their SLC before final submission. Reading lab tutors can help with critical thinking skills, and writing lab tutors can help with writing skills.

- The speech contest is open to all Palm Beach State College students. However, it is strongly recommended that participating student be a current or former speech student, so that student can work with current or former speech instructor. If a student is not working with a Palm Beach State College speech instructor, the student must submit his/her name and contact information directly to contest chair at pachterm@palmbeachstate.edu no later than Wednesday, April 1.

See QEP Documents and Reports for details about the Quality Enhancement Plan, or contact Professor Carleton Chernekoff at 561-868-3021. Prizes for the contest are funded by Student Activities and Services Fee Committee with academic and promotional support by campus Student Learning Centers.