



March, 2026

To Whom It May Concern:

The Planning & Law Division of the American Planning Association announces its **43rd Annual Smith-Babcock-Williams Student Writing Competition**. The Competition, which honors the memory of three leading figures in American city planning law (R. Marlin Smith, Richard Babcock, and Norman Williams) is open to law students and planning students writing on any question of significance in planning, planning law, land use law, local government law or environmental law. It is not necessary to connect the writing to the competition's namesakes.

The Competition is open to both current students and recent graduates (less than five years). Entries can include articles written for academic journal or law review publication, long essays, or shorter essays (at least 2,000 words). **Entries may already be published, or in the process of pursuing publication, if the applicant secures permissions from the publishing journal or magazine.**

The winning entry will be awarded a prize of \$3,000, the second-place paper will receive a prize of \$1,000, and one honorable mention paper will receive \$500. All three winning entries will be published in the semi-annual newsletter of the Planning and Law Division. Depending on the format of the winning entry and the interest of the author, the Competition Committee may also work with the winner to place the article in a journal or coordinate and present a Division webinar.

The deadline for submission of entries is **June 30, 2026**. Winners will be announced by September 30<sup>th</sup>, 2026. Please refer to the enclosed official rules for further details.

Our past experience has shown that faculty in planning, planning law, land use law, local government law or environmental law are in an ideal position to stimulate student and recent graduate interest in research and writing and to encourage participation in the Competition. Each year, many of the entries appear to have been prepared initially for courses or seminars. We hope you will add your support to the Competition by encouraging your current and past students to submit entries.

If you have questions, please contact me at [pld@planning.org](mailto:pld@planning.org) or [quattrocm@appstate.edu](mailto:quattrocm@appstate.edu) and include "SBW Writing Competition" in the subject.

Sincerely yours,

Dr. Chris Quattro, AICP, Chair  
APA-PLD Smith-Babcock-Williams  
Student Writing Competition Committee



## STUDENT WRITING COMPETITION - 2026

The Planning & Law Division of the American Planning Association announces its 43rd Annual Smith-Babcock-Williams Student Writing Competition. The winning entry in the competition will be awarded a prize of \$3,000, the second-place paper will receive a prize of \$1,000, and one honorable mention prize of \$500 will be awarded. All three winning entries will be published in the semi-annual newsletter of the Planning and Law Division. Depending on the format of the winning entry and the interest of the author, the Competition Committee may also work with the winner to place the article in a journal or coordinate and present a Division webinar.

---

### RULES

---

1. **Eligibility.** The competition is open to law students at ABA accredited law schools and planning students at Association of Collegiate Schools of Planning member institutions (<https://www.acsp.org/page/Members>) or PAB Accredited institutions (<https://www.planningaccreditationboard.org/accredited-programs/all/>) who are enrolled in a program of study leading to the J.D., LL.M., Masters, or Ph.D. degree during the 2025-2026 academic year. The competition is also open to any graduate of such program, provided the entrant graduated on or after August 1, 2021. All entries must be the work of an individual. Jointly-authored entries will not be considered. Entries may have been written for another purpose within the last year – e.g., a paper submitted for a course or internship. Entries that have been previously published must be accompanied by written permission for the Division to reproduce the paper from the publisher.
2. **Subject Matter.** Entries should demonstrate original thought on a question of significance in either city planning or associated areas of law (e.g., land use, local government or environmental law). Entries do not need a direct connection to the specific work of R. Marlin Smith, Richard Babcock, or Norman Williams. Entries will be evaluated based on: (1) originality; (2) contribution to the understanding or development of the fields of planning and law; (3) quality of scholarship; and (4) quality and organization of writing.
3. **Publication.** As a condition of publication, the author grants to the Division the following rights: 1) the right of publication of the Work throughout the world as part of the Division newsletter; 2) the nonexclusive right to reprint the Work whenever necessary and to license use of the Work, or any part thereof, in any medium or form of communication in the English language, to others; and 3) the right to use the Work, or any part thereof, in any other publication with which the Division coordinates. The author shall reserve all exclusive rights not specifically granted to the Division and will have the rights not specifically granted to the Division and will have the rights, after the Work has been published, to print the Work in any publication, provided that the author includes in the publication the proper credit to the Division for awarding the Work.
4. **Directions for Entries.** Entries may be between 2,000 and 12,000 words. Entries must be formatted with a 1” margin on all-sides, text should be double-spaced, and in a minimum eleven point font. Manuscripts should follow the stylistic guidelines of the Chicago Manual of Style (latest edition) published by the University of Chicago Press. The entry should utilize a recognized format for footnote citation that is appropriate for the content of the entry (i.e. Bluebook citations for entries intended for a law review audience or Chicago Manual of Style for planning-oriented entries). Your entry must have two title pages: the first title page should contain the title of the entry, the name/address/e-mail of the student, and identify the student's school and date of graduation; the second title page should contain only the title of the entry. If your entry has already been published or is under review for publication, you must also supply a letter signed by the publication's editor or agent authorizing the Division to publish the work as described in (3), above, with attribution to the original publication (including volume and issue number, if available).
5. **Submission of Entries.** To enter the competition, e-mail your entry, no later than 5:00 p.m. Eastern Daylight Time on June 30, 2026, to Dr. Chris Quattro, Competition Chair, at [PLD@planning.org](mailto:PLD@planning.org). Please include “SBW Writing Competition” in the subject line.