The Advocating Change Together (ACT) Award

The Caltech Y Advocating Change Together (ACT) Award provides motivated Caltech students with an opportunity to learn about themselves and their place in society, and to act to impact the world through community engagement, activism and leadership.

The goals of the Caltech Y ACT Award are to increased awareness and promote civic engagement:
• encouraging activists to explore an issue or cause of local, national, or global significance, and
• empowering activists to get educated and engaged in the cause through trainings, conferences, and/or immersion experiences (where they learn from, and volunteer alongside, experienced activists).

The ACT Award offers an opportunity to explore a cause and to make a difference. Activists determine what cause to address and the mentor, organization, conference or trainers they would like to learn from.

| Applications Due: April 8th by noon | Finalist Interviews: Thursday, April 14th between 3pm and 6 pm |

Who is Eligible
• Applicants must be enrolled Caltech Undergraduate or Graduate students in good academic standing.
• Solo applicants and co-applicants (joint applications) are both welcome. Both must do an application.
• Applicants choosing an international destination must be 18 years or older. There is no age restriction for domestic destinations, however a parent/guardian will be expected to sign a waiver.

What Activists Receive
• Applicants may request up to $4,500 to cover expenses for the educational experience, including registration and program fees, travel, lodging, food and incidentals. The selection committee will determine award amounts based on need, and funding available. Partial funding may also be offered.

What is required of Activists
• Meet with Y staff to review and sign a contract outlining expectations and deadlines
• Coordinate and complete the proposed experience as outlined and approved. If your plans change, please notify Y staff as soon as possible.
• For those choosing an immersion experience – turn in a work plan, in consultation with a mentor or organization, outlining plans and expectations, for approval by Y staff prior to starting.
• Submit a 1-2 page report outlining what was learned / gained from the experience, along with pictures, that can be shared with donors and used for reports and promotional materials.
  o Recipients may also be asked to provide an optional presentation summarizing the experience to members of the Y Staff, Board of Directors, and/or donors, as well as interested students as available.
Selection of a Cause

The applicant should pursue a cause that she/he finds intriguing, that merits response, and which will benefit society. The issue can be one of local, national or global significance.

The proposed cause cannot:

- Support proselytizing activities exclusively to promote a religious faith
- Support a political campaign to elect a candidate into office
- Support an organization or an effort that inspires / promotes hate (as determined by Y staff)

For example, a proposal to volunteer with a faith-based organization to eliminate capital punishment would be acceptable whereas an application to convert death row inmates to a specific faith would not be. Please consult the Caltech Y staff for further clarification.

Selection of an Educational Experience

Applicants are asked to indicate the conference, workshops, or training, or in the case of an immersion experience - activists or organizations they have chosen.

Venues can be local, national or international, however international travel to countries where the U.S. does not have diplomatic relations, where State Department Travel Warnings are in effect, or to locations that the Y deems inappropriate or high risk, will not be allowed. The Y reserves the right to deny any organization or site, even after the award was already made, if a concern develops.

In the case of an immersion experience, the guidance of a mentor is critical to helping the student activist create a work plan or project which benefits the organization, the student, and ultimately the cause. Mentor organizations should be asked to provide:

- A project or task and the resources needed to accomplish that assignment
- Oversight and guidance of the activist as requested

Award Selection Criteria

- A review committee consisting of Caltech Y Board Members, students, faculty and staff will review proposals, nominate and interview finalists, select the recipients, and determine award amounts based on need, and funding available. Partial funding may also-be offered.
- Awardee(s) cannot hold multiple travel awards (e.g. Bishop, San Pietro, ACT, etc).
- Criteria includes the following:
  - Is the issue or cause relevant to the mission and purpose of the ACT Award?
  - Does the learning opportunity - conference, training, workshop or immersion experience - seem to directly address the cause or issue proposed by the applicant?
  - Is the proposed budget reasonable?
  - Does the applicant clearly demonstrate a personal commitment and interest in the issue?
  - Does the applicant distinguish herself or himself as someone who will learn to be a new or important voice for the issue addressed?
  - In the case of an immersion option – are the applicants goals and timeline realistic, manageable, and in solidarity / alignment with those of the host?
Proposals

If you are an interested Caltech undergraduate or graduate student who is in good academic standing, you should submit the itemized budget form with anticipated expenses and the application that provides:

- demographic information
- a concise written proposal (200 to 600 words) explaining: the cause that you would like to explore/address, and why it warrants attention; the educational experience (conference, training, workshop, mentor or organization) you would like to use to learn more about the cause you have identified – and why you believe it would make a valuable learning experience; what you personally hope to gain from the experience.
- added details, if travel is proposed
- acknowledgement of the agreements that recipients will be expected to sign

Help from the Caltech Y

The Caltech Y is here to help! Applicants with questions about the award or application process are encouraged seek input via phone 626-395-6163, email caltechy@caltech.edu, or in-person at the Caltech Y.

Past Recipients

2019  Anna Helena de Oliveira Lobo (Grad) – tackled STEM under representation for girls – volunteered with, and mentored by the Parana Federal Institute of Education, Science and Technology (IFPR) – Brazil.


2019  Sarah Sam (Grad) – addressed the marginalization of groups within STEM education – took HS students to the Biomedical Research Conference for Minority Students (ABRCMS) – Anaheim.

2018  Stephanie Kong (Grad) – Global Climate Change – Global Climate Action Summit - New York City and San Francisco.

2017  Jinglin Huang (Grad) and Yu Su (Grad) – affordable / sustainable housing – researched communities 2 communities – China.


2016  Katherine Guo (Undergrad)– availability of clean drinking water – volunteered with Engineers Without Boarders and partner the Namsaling Community Development Center (NCDC) – Nepal.

2015  Amanda Shing (Grad)– sustainable living - training through the Growing Club, the LA Ecovillage, Urban Homestead, CA Recycle, and the Center for Sustainable Energy – Los Angeles.

2014  Ryeen Islam (Undergrad) – blindness in the developing world – volunteered with and mentored by Touching Souls International - Bangladesh.


2012  Amol Kamat (Undergrad) – limb replacement and amputee support – volunteered with and mentored by the Bhagwan Mahaveer Viklang Sahayata Samiti – India.

2008  Joey Koehler (Undergrad) – mobility and economic sustainability for the disabled in the developing world – volunteered with and mentored by Intelligent Mobility International - Guatemala.

2008  Alice Robie (Grad) – providing access to affordable, nutritious food to low-income and limited-resource residents – trained through the Common Ground Master Gardener Program – Los Angeles.