



COLA Undergraduate Student Contest: Call for Creative Submissions

Experiencing Awe: Wonder, Creativity, and the Liberal Arts.

Overview and Purpose

The College of Liberal Arts invites undergraduate students to participate in the Festival of Ideas, a campus-wide celebration of creativity, curiosity, and bold thinking. This initiative supports UTA High-Impact Practices and experiential learning by engaging students in creative inquiry, reflective practice, and community-engaged scholarship.

This year, all Festival of Ideas activities center around the theme of “awe,” inspired by Dacher Keltner’s 2023 book *AWE: The New Science of Everyday Wonder and How It Can Transform Your Life*. In it, the author depicts awe as a powerful human emotion that arises when we encounter something vast that goes beyond our current understanding of the world. Dacher Keltner shows that awe is not rare but can be found in everyday experiences such as nature, art, music, moral courage, and human connection. Awe shifts attention away from the self, fostering humility, generosity, creativity, and a sense of community. Think of a purple and red Texas sunrise on a cold winter morning or a stadium full of strangers singing your favorite sports team’s anthem during a game that cannot be won anymore.

We invite you to find awe, explore awe, and tell your story. What makes you pause and wonder? When, where, and how do you experience awe? Why is that so? Turn your ideas, experiences, or questions into a product that can be shared with others.

Selected works will be recognized with a \$500 cash prize, highlighted through COLA communications (website and social media), and featured in AcCOLAdes, COLA's annual student award ceremony scheduled for April 22, 2026.

Eligibility

- Open to undergraduate students currently enrolled in at least one course in the College of Liberal Arts at the University of Texas at Arlington
- Submissions may be individual or collaborative

Types of Submissions Sought

You may interpret awe broadly and creatively, drawing on personal experience, cultural traditions, artistic exploration, scientific inquiry or interdisciplinary perspectives.

We seek completed works. Eligible submissions include, but are not limited to:

- Visual art (painting, drawing, sculpture, digital art, mixed media)
- Poetry or creative prose
- Short essays or reflective writing (maximum word count: 1500)
- Data visualizations (infographics, maps)
- Recorded performances (music, theater, spoken word, dance)
- Multimedia or digital projects
- Fabricated or designed objects

All formats are welcome, provided they meaningfully engage the theme of awe.

You are encouraged, though not required, to make use of campus creative resources, including the University's [FabLab](#), studios, performance spaces, or digital production tools, as appropriate to their work.

Submission Requirements

Each submission must include:

1. The product

- Submitted digitally via the Festival of Ideas website if possible (file uploads, links, or recordings)
 - Submitted to the College of Liberal Arts Dean's Office (University Hall, Suite 210) if your product is not suited for digital submission
2. Artist/Author Statement (approximately 300–500 words)
- Explaining how the work engages the concept of awe
 - Referencing ideas from *AWE* by Dacher Keltner as relevant
 - Submitted electronically on the Festival of Ideas website
3. Contributor Information
- Name(s), major(s), and contact information
 - Faculty advisor name(s) and contact information as relevant
 - Submitted electronically on the Festival of Ideas website

Group submissions should clearly identify all contributors.

Please submit via our [Festival of Ideas website](#).

If your product cannot be submitted digitally, which is fine, please drop it off at the College of Liberal Arts Dean's Office suite, University Hall (UH) Suite 210 during regular business hours. Label it with your name and contact information including your UTA student ID and email address. You will still need to fill out the submissions form on the Festival of Ideas website.

Evaluation Criteria

Submissions will be reviewed by a COLA graduate student committee using the following criteria:

- Engagement with the theme of awe
- Clarity of concept and execution
- Originality
- Creativity
- Reflective depth

Timeline

- Promotion starts: February 18, 2026
- Submission deadline: March 23, 2026
- Review period: March 23 to April 10
- Notification of selected works: April 12, 2026
- AcCOLAdes recognition event: April 22, 2026