

Ricco Ethics Awards Guidelines

Nicholas D. and Anna G. Ricco were longtime friends of the University of North Texas and provided a generous gift to endow the Ricco Ethics Scholarship Competition in 2011. It is open to undergraduate and graduate students at the University of North Texas who meet the eligibility requirements. The ethics competition was created to promote intellectual debate and discussion on ethics related to students' areas of study at UNT, their vocation, or their avocation. The goal is to stimulate the applicants to new heights of reasoning and self-discipline. The ultimate result will be a higher level of ethical understanding in one's area of study and daily life. It was the hope of the donors that students will recognize and better comprehend the need for a higher understanding of ethics in their personal and professional lives.

Awards

- \$5,000 will be awarded to the student selected as the 1st-place winner in the undergraduate category. Similarly, \$5,000 will be awarded to the student selected as the winner in the graduate category
- In some years there may also be a second-place winner in the undergraduate category with substantial award amounts. In 2025, the second-place award was \$2,000.
- Award funds will be deposited into the winners' student accounts at UNT in the following academic year. Award funds will be distributed evenly between the fall and spring semesters unless the winning student is graduating after the fall. In that case, the entirety of the award will be disbursed in the fall semester.

Eligibility

Applicants must meet the following criteria:

- Must be in good academic standing with the University at the time of any award.
- Maintain full-time enrollment as established by the University, unless the student is nearing completion of their degree program and does not need full-time enrollment.

- Enroll as a full-time student in any undergraduate or graduate degree-granting program at the University.
- Submit an original 1,000-word maximum essay, double-spaced excluding bibliography. The essay will highlight what the applicant believes to be the epitome of ethical behavior. Students may use any UNT faculty member for guidance in this competition.

Preference will be given to applicants completing their first undergraduate or graduate degree.

All participants must agree to the posting of his or her name and essay to the Provost's website, if declared one of the winners.

Topic

All applicants will write on a case study topic. This year's topic can be found on the [student success](#) website.

Case Study Topic = *A.I. & Accountability: Who's at the Wheel*

Evaluation

- The Ricco Ethics Award Evaluation Committee will evaluate the essays and choose winners.
- The top three essays may be made available on the Provost's and the winners' college websites for the community's edification.
- **Evaluation will be based on the following criteria:**
 1. Relevant facts of the case. The applicant should clearly identify the relevant facts of the case that should be considered in their analysis.
 2. Thesis or position. The applicant should form a solid statement of the dilemma to be resolved.
 3. Discussion of an Ethical Behavior Standard. The essay should include discussion of an ethical standard or framework and appropriately apply that standard or framework to their analyses.
 4. Intellectual Debate or Discussion. The discussion should demonstrate an ability to analyze the case from multiple

perspectives. Supported by their standard or framework, a definite resolution should be arrived at and defended.

5. Mechanics. The essay is well organized and well written with solid usage of grammar and punctuation; follows instructions.

Submission of Materials

- All entries should be submitted by following the link below and providing all the information. Entries should be uploaded to that site.
- The deadline for entries is 11:59 p.m. **December 1, 2026.**
- Essays to be submitted must be uploaded as a PDF.
- Uploaded essays should not include the author's name or any identifying information.
- No paper or hard-copy submissions will be accepted.
- Incomplete entries will not be considered.

[Click here to submit](#)

Contact

Please contact studentsuccess@unt.edu, Office of the Vice Provost for Student Success, or call 940-565-4259 with any questions.