

IT'S IN THE IN-BETWEEN

The ad industry is a magnet for all kinds of creative types: artists, designers, writers, filmmakers, you name it. But the thing they all have in common is a rare ability to produce big ideas and then make them into something that moves people. This application is designed to give us a sense of your ability to do just that.

The Goal: offer a smart, creative, profound, funny, serious, wonderful, compelling answer to the prompt above using any medium you see fit (visual, audio, video, paper, digital, printed, handmade, etc.) as long as it abides by the guidelines below. Whatever you choose to do, make sure it's not obvious, cliché, easy or ordinary.

Please know that this is NOT a request for an ad. In fact, your submission doesn't have to mention anything about advertising at all if you so choose. Likewise, while we encourage those with artistic talents to flex them, keep in mind that the strength of the idea behind your submission is just as important. So, place as much emphasis on *thinking* about your answer as you do in *crafting* it.

Make sure your response is fully yours, fully original and isn't likely to be duplicated by other applicants. We want to see how YOU think, so don't base your answer on someone else's work, or something you found on the Internet. Make your own statement.

A Note About Generative AI:

Since this is a program dedicated to the supremely valuable and distinctly human capacity of creativity, we would encourage you to be selective about when, how or even *if* you use AI at all to answer this prompt. So much of the AI-generated noise that's been unleashed in the world is characterized by a glossy sameness. And that's the *last* thing you want anyone to think when they consider your application. In the end, if you choose to use AI (and that's a really big IF), make sure you're using it to complement or amplify a core creative idea that came from YOUR intelligence; or a mode of craftsmanship that came through your own hands.

Your submission can be as short or as simple as you like. It can also be as intricate or complex as you like. Just make sure that whatever you submit requires no more than 90 seconds of reading, viewing or listening from beginning to end. However, your aim should be to leave an impression that lasts much longer than this. Make us want to re-watch, re-read or think about your submission again (and again).

Do not include any words, images or video footage that might reveal your name, face or identity. In other words, you should remain totally anonymous. All submissions, physical or digital, must be placed into a sealed envelope no larger than 12" x 18". The only thing that should be written on this envelope is: "Creative Application" and your SMU ID number.

If you are submitting a digital file, it must be saved on a small USB drive in a standard file format that is easily opened without special software or expertise (Ex: pdf, jpg, mp4, mov, mp3).

So that we can connect you with your anonymous submission, make sure that your SMU ID number is clearly indicated somewhere on your submission—not just the outer envelope. If it's a physical submission, consider attaching a tag or a label in an inconspicuous place. If submitting a digital file, make sure you label or tag your USB drive with your SMU ID number and use the same ID number for the name of your actual file: (Ex: SMU_ID_12345678.jpg).

To ensure the fairness and anonymity of the process for you and future applicants, please do not share or post your submission online/publicly, before or after the process has been completed.

All materials due to TAI office (ULEE 202) by 2 p.m. on February 25, 2026.

Application materials become the property of TAI and will not be returned.

Good luck!