

TED^x AustinCollege

x = independently organized TED event



confluence



AUSTIN
COLLEGE

2021

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September 25, 2021

Confluence is the coming together and merging of two rivers into one.

But it goes beyond just water. It involves allowing oneself to naturally respond to change and create connections.

Over time and space, we gradually draw together and deepen our connections with new people and ourselves through shared experiences and ideas.

Even our own minds are separated into the left brain and the right brain, logic and creativity. When these two parts naturally flow together, new and stronger ideas emerge.

Broaden your mind to allow the joining and mingling of differing ideas.

TEDxAustinCollege 2021: Confluence

Greetings from the President

Welcome to TEDxAustinCollege 2021!

This student-initiated conference is one of my favorite experiences of the fall semester. It offers a global platform for the creativity and innovation cultivated on our campus. As I have said many times since becoming President at Austin College, here, we transform students so that they can transform the world. Today, we will hear some of those transformative ideas.

Our speakers are not the only people sharing ideas today. The student organizers of this conference, too, have been buzzing about for months with their own ideas as they selected the theme of **Confluence**, worked to curate our speakers, and handled the logistics of this year's interactive program.

The perspectives and ideas expressed today will reach beyond our campus through you and through the global TEDx platform. The TED organization has pioneered a way to share, in their words, "ideas worth spreading." We are proud to host this conference so that Austin College voices can be part of that global conversation.

Sincerely



Steven P. O'Day, J.D., L.H.D.
Austin College President

EVENT SCHEDULE

8:30 A.M. | Doors Open **Welcome to the Show!**

Take your seat. Flip through the program. Prepare your mind for the new ideas about to be shared. Creativity. Logic. Confluence. All found at TEDxAustinCollege.

9:00 A.M. | Session One: Begin Connecting

We welcome you to event of the year! Now broaden your horizons with our first three speakers. Connecting begins now.

10:15 A.M. | Break with Engagement

Take a deep breath. Relax and reflect. Time to include you, the audience, from the comfort of your seat. Join us for audience engagement.

10:45 A.M. | Session Two: The Merging

New ideas. Shared purposes. The rest of our speakers are ready for you—are you ready for them? Let’s merge our thoughts. Together.

12:00 P.M. | Event Concludes

Thank you for your time, commitment, and participation. We hope you will continue to reflect on the ideas that were shared today. We’ll be back next year. We hope you will be, too.

Introducing our Master of Ceremonies:

Dr. Kirk Everist
Associate Professor of Theatre

TED^x AustinCollege

2021



Speakers



Mariam Abeje '22

Two Languages, Two Personalities?

➤ **Mariam Abeje grew up immersed in two languages and cultures, living in the United States and Ethiopia and speaking both English and Amharic. She has observed as she uses each language, difference is evident not only in the words she speaks but in the way her personality feels. What's more, from talking to family and friends, she has learned that the same experience might be common to others who are bilingual. Mariam will share her own story and insights she has gained from her cultural confluence.**

Mariam Abeje is an Austin College senior from Murphy, Texas. She is majoring in Healthcare Administration with a minor in Chemistry, and will pursue a career in medicine. At Austin College, she is involved in Alpha Phi Omega national service fraternity; Students Today, Alumni Tomorrow; and the Pre-Health Society; and is an Academic Skills Center peer tutor. Beyond Austin College, Mariam works with MarNat: One Child at a Time, an organization she and her family founded to provide school uniforms, shoes, backpacks, and school supplies for underprivileged children in Ethiopia. She is passionate about helping underserved communities and bringing opportunities to people who can help make a difference in those communities.



Kate Kahle '23

Behind the Mask: Autism in Women and Girls

► As a woman with autism, Kate will talk about the gender discrepancy in autism diagnoses. Women and girls often display completely different behaviors than what neurotypical people have been taught to associate with autism, which affects when and how (and if) they are diagnosed. Autism being diagnosed at a younger age leads to a higher chance of that child receiving evidence-based treatment, which can help with better life outcomes. This discrepancy is why Kate wants to encourage more research be done on symptoms of autism in women and girls so that they can be more easily and accurately diagnosed in the future.

Kate Kahle is a junior at Austin College from Dallas, Texas, and is studying Political Science and Art. At Austin College she is involved in Mock Trial, Pre-Law Society, and Xi Epsilon sorority. She is also a ceramicist and skateboarder. As an autistic woman, Kate is an advocate for autism acceptance. She hopes to promote autistic self-love as well as help neurotypical individuals see autism, not as a tragedy or a disease but rather for what it is, a lifelong, genetic developmental disability that is just another way of thinking and being in the world.



Laura J. Lawson '10

Time and Space: Arts' Most Valuable Resources

➤ As an artist, Laura J. Lawson has learned that time and space are the two most valuable resources for creatives. She believes in the importance of allowing yourself to have unstructured time to think, to play, to seek inspiration, and to let thoughts come together—the “invisible” time that goes into making works of art. She also believes that a crowded space leads to a crowded mind, which is why artists’ spaces are vital. Her idea is based in her own studio art practice, but its application encompasses all forms of creativity and problem-solving.

Laura J. Lawson is from Dallas, Texas, and graduated from Austin College in 2010 with majors in French and Psychology, then earned a Master of Fine Arts degree from The University of Memphis. She was selected for the first cohort of studio artists at The Cedars Union art incubator in Dallas and was awarded a two-month residency at the Centre d’Art Marnay Art Center in Marnay-sur-Seine, France. She is currently an artist, educator, and adjunct faculty for Austin College, Dallas College, and Tarrant County College. Laura creates artwork that explores the surfaces of Earth and other planets.



Ann Crews Melton '03

**Building Consensus
Across Differences**

➤ Our society is fractured, and shouting often supersedes listening at public events. In a diverse, multipartisan society, how can we begin to solve community problems? Ann Crews Melton describes how to build consensus, a decision-making process that ensures no voices are left out. What she's discovered may surprise you: the best way to find common ground is to bring all of your differences to the table.

Ann Crews Melton is from Longview, Texas, and graduated from Austin College in 2003 majoring in Religion. She received a master's degree in Publishing and Writing from Emerson College. Ann is currently the Executive Director of Consensus Council, a nonprofit based in Bismarck, North Dakota. She has served as an advocate or editor at organizations across the country, including the Presbyterian Church (USA) in Louisville, Temple Israel of Boston, and Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts in New York City.



Ting Lan Sun '87

**Bound Feet and the American Dream:
A Lesson Through Perception, Value, and Courage**

➤ Newly arrived in the U.S., 5-year-old Ting Lan Sun sat in the back of her American kindergarten class unable to understand a word of English. With no special language programs available, she didn't learn how to read until the third grade. Only two years later, she won an essay contest about what America meant to her. However, Ting's story originates two generations earlier with her paternal grandmother who belonged to one of the last generations of women who had their feet bound in China. Ting will show us how perception, value, and courage are meaningful in the process of assimilation and in becoming your authentic self.

Ting Lan Sun graduated from Austin College, then earned a master's degree in Education from Stanford University and a Ph.D. in Education from the University of California at Davis. Co-Founder of Natomas Charter School, she served in many roles there, including Executive Director. She has been Educational Programs Consultant in the California Department of Education and held leadership roles with the California Charter Schools Association and Cambridge Education consulting firm. Ting lives in Sacramento and is a member of the California State Board of Education.



Kelly Yarbrough '09

Tallgrass Prairie and the Power of “Perenniality”

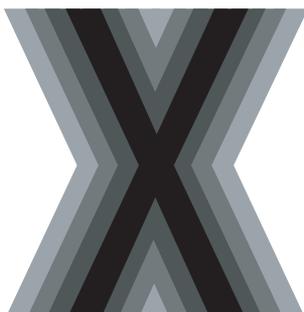
➤ “Perenniality” isn’t a real word. (Yet.) But it is a good way to describe the worldview that Kelly Yarbrough has found embedded in the Kansas tallgrass prairie. The tallgrass prairie is arguably the most endangered ecosystem on the planet. Besides being ecologically threatened, Kelly thinks that the prairie is entirely underappreciated for its model of how to live well in community with others. Connecting the dots between art, agriculture, ecology, and interpersonal problem-solving, Kelly shares some examples of what the unassuming prairie landscape can teach us all about life well-lived.

Kelly Yarbrough graduated from Austin College in 2009, with majors in Art and English, then earned a Master of Fine Arts degree from Kansas State University in 2016. She is the Founder of the Tallgrass Artist Residency and a regional representative of the Kansas Creative Arts Industries Commission, with a focus in Art and Ecology. Kelly works within an ecosystem of visual art, arts administration, and environmental education directly inspired by the native tallgrass prairie. She lives in Manhattan, Kansas.

What is TED?

Many of you have experienced TED talks online. TED began in 1984 as a conference where Technology, Entertainment, and Design converged, and today covers almost all topics—from science to business to global issues—and has grown to support its mission with multiple initiatives. The annual TED Conferences invite the world’s leading thinkers and doers to speak for 18 minutes or less. Many of these talks are then made available for free at [TED.com](https://www.ted.com). TED speakers have included Bill Gates, Steve Jobs, Jane Goodall, Sarah Silverman, Al Gore, Stephen Hawking, Temple Grandin, and Brene Brown.

TED talks don’t exist without TED conferences. TEDx programs were created to support individuals or groups in hosting local, self-organized, TED-style events around the world.



What is TEDx?

x = Independently Organized TED Event

In the spirit of Ideas Worth Spreading, TEDx is a program of local, self-organized events that bring people together to share a TED-like experience. At a TEDx event, speakers from that location deliver their talks to a live audience. These local, self-organized events are branded TEDx, where x represents an independently organized TED event.

Today marks our sixth annual TEDxAustinCollege conference. This project was initiated by several students in the Austin College chapter of the national service fraternity Alpha Phi Omega, and is still produced by a team of students. Our speakers are locally sourced as well, including Austin College students, faculty, and alumni. This year's TEDxAustinCollege organizers are pleased to bring together remarkable people and let the ideas flow.

Once again TED has opened up TEDx conferences to remote participation, and we are happy to welcome all of you who are joining us virtually. Whether you are with us in the theatre or with us on the livestream, you will experience live speakers and interactive programming. The videos we produce today will be added to TEDx.com to contribute to the global conversation. But only YOU can say you were present for the live event!

WORD SEARCH

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MergingIdeas

TwentyTwentyOne

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HiltonGardenInn

MariamAbeje

KateKahle

LauraLawson

AnnCrewsMelton

TingLanSun

KellyYarbrough

KirkEverist

LeftRightBrain

Bilingual

Autism

TimeSpace

Consensus

Courage

Perenniality

Logic

Creativity

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OUR TEAM

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Electra Coffman '22
Molly Corso '23
Nick Estes '24
Grant Garrison '22
Marissa Graf '22
Josue Gonzalez '24
Lily Harris '22
Carrie Johnson '24
Randall Jones '22
Jade Kemp '22
Jacob Moreno '22
Evan Preston '24
Claudia Theriot '22
Andrew Thomas '22
Maddie Wilson '23

The East Fork

Ayaz Ali
Melanie Fountaine
Nick Hummert
Sharon Jackson
Vickie Kirby
Christopher Maniet
Leigh-Ellen Romm
Heidi Rushing '04
Cary Wacker
Lynn Womble, Ph.D.

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Kirk Everist, Ph.D.
Dan Pucul '04
David Tarvin

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Beau Beshires '23
Mac Bolen '21
Nicole Deluna '22
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Lily Harris '22
Nye Howard '21
Jade Kemp '22
Michael Marks '23
Cody McCasland '24

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Cece O'Day
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