



101ST ANNUAL COLLEGIATE DAIRY PRODUCTS EVALUATION CONTEST

April 14-15th, 2026

Joe Larson Merit Award

The Collegiate Dairy Products Evaluation Contest is pleased to announce the continuation of **The Joe Larson Merit Award**. This award was created by a generous contribution by Joe Larson. Mr. Larson was the founder and President of the Sparta Brush Company and a strong supporter of the Contest. He passed away on April 3, 2013.

The award objective is to recognize undergraduate Dairy Products Evaluation Contest competitors that best uphold the ideals of the Contest: potential leadership, professionalism, mature behavior, and an understanding of the importance of the sensory techniques applied to dairy products. The award consists of \$500 and a plaque given at this year's awards presentation.

Undergraduate nominees should be submitted by **Tuesday, March 24th, 2026**. The nomination will be a one-page letter written by the coach and a one-page essay written by the student. The attachments will provide specific criteria and the selection process.

Please send completed Joe Larson Award nominations to (Email preferred):

Attn: Chad Galer
Contest Coordinator
Dairy Management Inc.
6133 N River Rd, Suite 200
Rosemont, IL 60018

E-mail: chad.galer@dairy.org

If you have any questions, please contact Chad at (847) 627-3249. Thank you.

Joe Larson Merit Award Scoring Criteria

- I. The coach's nominating letter shall be evaluated on the following qualities displayed by the student.
 1. Demonstrated leadership skills (offices held, work experience, etc.)
 2. Decision making and problem solving abilities
 3. Observed professional traits
 4. Self-confidence
 5. Others (appropriate to the objectives of the award)
- II. The student essay shall be evaluated on the following.
 1. Statement of career intent
 2. How the sensory training for the Contest will
 - Enhance one's career
 - Benefit the dairy industry
 - Be applied to the food industry

Objective: The Joe Larson Merit Award is presented annually at the Collegiate Dairy Evaluation Contest to the undergraduate student who best represents the traditions of the Contest.

General

Criteria: The awardee will be a mature professional student and one with demonstrated leadership skills.

Nomination: To be a success, the Joe Larson Merit Award should be competitive. The coach nominates students from the undergraduate team members. The coach's selection shall be based on the student's potential leadership, decision making and problem solving abilities, professional traits, self-confidence and other criteria appropriate for the objectives of the award. The nomination letter must be no more than one page.

Also required is a maximum one-page essay written by the nominated student describing career intentions and how this sensory training will be career enhancing and benefit the dairy and food industries. **The coach should e-mail the student's name, the nominating letter and the student essay to the Contest Coordinator, Chad Galer on or before Tuesday March 24th, 2026.** The Contest Coordinator will forward the nomination materials to the Contest officials in advance of the meeting.

Selection: The final selection will be based on the coach's recommendation, the student's essay, and the final selection jury's evaluation. The results will be announced at this year's Contest awards presentation.

The student who is selected for the Joe Larson Merit Award must judge in the contest and be present to accept the award.

The final selection jury will include contest judges, proctors and superintendents. In the case of a tie, a majority or plurality vote will be taken to break the tie.

The Award: The Joe Larson Merit Award of \$500 and a plaque will be presented to two winners in 2025.