

USDLA Trendsetter Innovation Award/Artificial Intelligence (AI)

Award description: This award recognizes faculty, instructional designers, schools, or organizations that exemplify visionary leadership in the use of digital tools and platforms. Award recipients demonstrate their commitment to advancing the field of online and virtual learning by establishing creative, effective, and forward-thinking approaches that are redefining traditional learning experiences. Their work reflects innovation that forges beyond conventional practices to set new standards of excellence in the era of digital education.

Artificial Intelligence (AI)

This award recognizes outstanding contributions by faculty, instructional designers, schools, organizations, or individuals in the ethical and innovative application of artificial intelligence to online teaching and learning. Award recipients leverage AI to create engaging, innovative, and personalized experiences that improve learning outcomes by extending the possibilities of digital pedagogy. Emphasis is placed on principled and responsible implementation to ensure that AI is used to enhance and enrich—not replace—the human aspects of education.

Rubric:

Criterion	Strong (10)	Medium (5)	Weak (1)
Ethical Implementation of AI	Demonstrates responsible, transparent, and ethical AI use, with safeguards for bias, fairness, equitable use, and transparency.	Some ethical considerations but incomplete or inconsistently applied.	Little or no attention to ethical concerns.
Pedagogical Value	AI clearly augments teaching, learning, personalization, or assessment in ways that are specific and measurable.	AI moderately improves pedagogy but is limited in depth or scope.	Minimal or no impact on pedagogy.

Innovation in AI Use	Creative and pioneering application of AI technologies in education.	Somewhat innovative but mostly adapts existing applications.	Standard or unoriginal use of AI.
Student-Centered Impact	AI clearly benefits learners through engagement, personalization, or improved learning outcomes.	Some benefit to learners, but limited in evidence or scope.	Minimal or unclear benefit to learners.
Evidence of Effectiveness	Well-documented results (e.g., data, research findings, case studies) confirm AI's positive impact on learning outcomes.	Some evidence was provided, but it was limited in rigor.	Claims are unsupported by evidence.