

2025-26 CTE Award Rubrics

Trailblazer Awards

Commitment to Excellence

Focus: Dedication to continuous improvement through refinement, quality assurance, and best practices.

Description

This award honors individuals who demonstrate an unwavering commitment to elevating the quality of online education through systematic refinement and adherence to best practices. Their work reflects a deep dedication to excellence, with consistent efforts to improve processes, standards, and outcomes.

Jurors will consider the nominee's sustained commitment to improving the quality of online education through systematic refinement, quality assurance, and the promotion of best practices. They will evaluate the scope and consistency of improvement efforts, the nominee's responsiveness to feedback, and their role in advancing instructional standards. Emphasis will be placed on leadership in setting benchmarks for excellence, driving meaningful change, and modeling a culture of continuous improvement.

Score Rationale

- **9–10:** Leads sustained efforts in quality improvement; sets benchmarks for excellence; drives systemic change.
- **7–8:** Regularly contributes to process improvements and promotes best practices.
- **5–6:** Participates in improvement efforts; shows openness to feedback and refinement.
- **3–4:** Occasionally engages in improvement activities; impact is limited or inconsistent.
- **1–2:** Minimal involvement in quality enhancement; little evidence of commitment to improvement.

Creative Problem-Solving & Ingenuity

Focus: Original thinking and inventive strategies to overcome challenges.

Description

This award celebrates individuals who bring fresh perspectives and inventive solutions to complex challenges in online education. Their creativity leads to novel approaches that break from convention and result in meaningful advancements.

Jurors will consider the originality and inventiveness of the nominee's approach to solving complex challenges in online education. They will evaluate how creative thinking led to novel strategies, tools, or practices that break from convention and result in meaningful improvements. Emphasis will be placed on the significance of the problems addressed, and the impact of the solutions on teaching, learning, or course design.

Score Rationale

- **9–10:** Demonstrates exceptional originality; consistently implements innovative solutions with significant impact.
- **7–8:** Frequently applies creative thinking to solve problems; results in notable improvements.
- **5–6:** Occasionally introduces new ideas; some evidence of inventive problem-solving.
- **3–4:** Rarely applies creative approaches; limited innovation.
- **1–2:** No evidence of creative thinking or novel strategies.

Community-Building

Focus: Fostering connection, inclusion, and shared purpose.

Description

This award recognizes individuals who cultivate a sense of belonging and shared purpose among colleagues, learners, and online communities. Their efforts strengthen relationships, promote a welcoming environment, and build a collaborative culture.

Jurors will consider the nominee's efforts to foster a sense of belonging, inclusion, and shared purpose within online learning environments or professional communities. They will evaluate how the nominee promotes collaboration, and creates welcoming spaces where individuals feel valued and connected. Emphasis will be placed on the intentionality, consistency, and reach of community-building practices across diverse groups.

Score Rationale

- **9–10:** Actively builds inclusive communities; inspires connection and collaboration across groups.
- **7–8:** Frequently promotes camaraderie and shared purpose; impact is broad and positive.
- **5–6:** Occasionally contributes to community-building; influence is moderate.
- **3–4:** Limited efforts to foster connection; impact is minimal.
- **1–2:** No evidence of community-building or inclusive engagement.

Going the Extra Mile

Focus: Exceptional effort beyond job expectations.

Description

This award honors individuals who consistently exceed expectations to enhance the learning experience. Their initiative and dedication go far beyond their formal responsibilities, leaving a lasting impact on students and the educational community.

Jurors will consider the nominee's initiative, dedication, and willingness to exceed the expectations of their formal role in support of student learning and the broader educational community. They will evaluate how the nominee's extra efforts result in transformative experiences, meaningful support, or lasting impact. Emphasis will be placed on consistency, creativity, and the extent to which the nominee's contributions go above and beyond typical responsibilities.

Score Rationale

- **9–10:** Regularly takes initiative beyond role; creates transformative learning experiences.
- **7–8:** Often exceeds expectations; contributes meaningfully to student success.
- **5–6:** Occasionally goes beyond role; impact is noticeable but not sustained.
- **3–4:** Rarely exceeds expectations; contributions are limited.
- **1–2:** Performs within expected scope; no evidence of extra effort.

Service Mindset

Focus: Consistent support and collaboration with others.

Description

This award celebrates individuals who embody a spirit of service, consistently offering support to colleagues and learners. Their reliability, responsiveness, and collaborative attitude empower others and contribute to a positive working environment.

Jurors will consider the nominee's consistent demonstration of a service-oriented mindset, including their willingness to support colleagues, students, and the broader educational community. They will evaluate the nominee's reliability, responsiveness, and collaborative spirit, as well as the impact of their actions on team dynamics and student success. Emphasis will be placed on the frequency, authenticity, and effectiveness of their service contributions.

Score Rationale

- **9–10:** Always available to support others; actions significantly empower and uplift the team.
- **7–8:** Frequently offers help; fosters a collaborative and supportive atmosphere.
- **5–6:** Occasionally provides support; impact is moderate.
- **3–4:** Rarely assists others; collaboration is limited.
- **1–2:** No evidence of support or service-oriented behavior.