

UNIVERSITIES OF WISCONSIN

USING AI ASSIGNMENT EXAMPLES TO BUILD FACULTY CONFIDENCE



The Universities of Wisconsin Office of Online and Professional Learning Resources developed an AI category within its public online teaching showcase to help faculty see how AI can be used in authentic, meaningful ways in online courses. Rather than presenting AI as a standalone innovation, the showcase offers concrete assignment examples that faculty and instructional teams can adapt within existing courses.

THE CHALLENGE AND OPPORTUNITY

As generative AI became more visible in higher ed, many faculty members experienced anxiety about its impact on teaching, learning, and academic integrity. Some instructors viewed AI primarily as a cheating tool or as a threat to online learning quality. UW saw an opportunity to help faculty move from fear and uncertainty toward practical experimentation by showing real examples of AI-enabled assignments that support deeper learning.

Academic directors and instructional leaders are using the site to help faculty “AI-enable” courses in ways that feel manageable, pedagogically grounded, and adaptable.

AT A GLANCE

Institution:

Universities of Wisconsin Office of Online and Professional Learning Resources

Unit/Department:

Instructional design/online learning

Use Case Category:

Teaching and learning; instructional design/ course development; faculty development

Stage of Implementation:

Scaled implementation/ongoing practice

Primary AI Tool(s):

Multiple generative AI tools, reflected through adaptable course activity examples

Explore the AI page:

<https://id.uwex.edu/showcase/artificial-intelligence/>

UNIVERSITIES OF WISCONSIN CASE STUDY

THE AI USE CASE

UW's AI Showcase curates examples of online course activities that integrate AI in purposeful ways. Each example includes a short description, implementation suggestions, and practical considerations that help faculty adapt the activity to their own disciplines and teaching contexts.

A key message of the showcase is that AI should not replace foundational learning. Instead, assignments are designed to help students use AI as a tool for higher-order thinking, such as evaluating, critiquing, revising, and reflecting on AI-generated outputs. The showcase also includes faculty-informed "Keep in Mind" guidance, helping instructors anticipate challenges and make thoughtful design choices.

IMPLEMENTATION SNAPSHOT

The broader showcase was developed over approximately two years by a team of instructional designers. UW added the AI category in 2024 in response to growing faculty interest and the need for concrete, replicable examples. The resource has been promoted internally, including through conference presentations and academic program leadership channels. Its guiding principle is simple: "Success is worth replicating."

The showcase succeeds because it is approachable, practical, and grounded in authentic teaching practice.

RESULTS, BENEFITS, AND EARLY SIGNALS

The AI category has become the most highly engaged area of the showcase, indicating strong faculty demand for practical examples. Academic directors and instructional leaders are using the site to help faculty "AI-enable" courses in ways that feel manageable, pedagogically grounded, and adaptable. The resource also helps normalize experimentation by showing that instructors do not need to be AI experts before they begin designing thoughtful learning activities.

WHAT MADE IT WORK

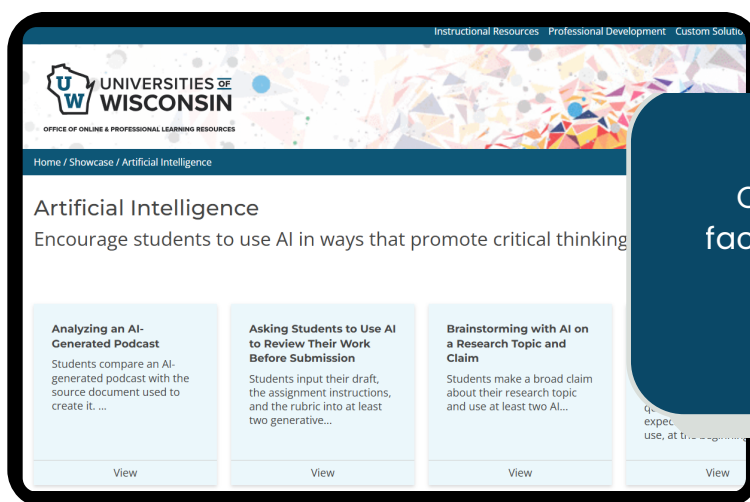
The showcase succeeds because it is approachable, practical, and grounded in authentic teaching practice. Its clean design reduces intimidation, while the examples are broad enough to be adapted beyond UW-specific contexts. The inclusion of faculty perspectives and implementation notes adds credibility and helps other instructors understand not only what worked, but what to consider before trying something similar.



UNIVERSITIES OF WISCONSIN CASE STUDY

RISKS, GUARDRAILS, AND ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

UW's approach emphasizes responsible use of AI in teaching and learning. The examples encourage faculty to think carefully about academic integrity, student transparency, and the role of AI in supporting—not replacing—learning. One emerging consideration is student resistance to AI, especially among students who have ethical concerns about using generative AI tools. UW's experience suggests that faculty should either provide reasonable accommodations or clearly explain why AI use is relevant to future workplace expectations.



One important lesson is that faculty need concrete examples more than abstract encouragement.

LESSONS LEARNED

One important lesson is that faculty need concrete examples more than abstract encouragement. Seeing adaptable assignments helps instructors move from anxiety to action. UW also found that openness and vulnerability matter: faculty should feel comfortable acknowledging that they are learning alongside students. Institutions should frame AI as part of an evolving teaching practice rather than as a finished area of expertise.

TRANSFERABILITY FOR OTHER INSTITUTIONS

This use case is highly transferable for institutions seeking to support faculty AI literacy, online course quality, or instructional innovation. It may be especially useful for centralized online learning units, professional and continuing education divisions, and institutions that want to promote responsible AI adoption without requiring major course redesigns. To replicate the approach, institutions would need instructional design capacity, examples from faculty or courses, a public or internal web platform, and a process for updating examples over time.

