

USDLA recognizes Excelsior College Online Writing Lab with two 2015 Excellence in Distance Learning awards

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Excelsior College was among the institutions honored with 2015 International Distance Learning Awards by the United States Distance Learning Association (USDLA) at its National Conference in St. Louis, Missouri.

The USDLA Awards were created to acknowledge major accomplishments in distance learning and to highlight those distance learning instructors, programs, and professionals who have achieved and demonstrated extraordinary results through the use of online, videoconferencing, satellite and blended learning delivery technologies.

Excelsior took home two awards, including a “Gold” award for Best Practices for Distance Learning Programming for the integration of its [Online Writing Lab \(OWL\)](#) into the College’s English 101 course. By replacing the required textbook for the course with the [award-winning OWL](#), Excelsior was able to save each student \$85 and help bring the course “to life” by integrating the lab’s engaging multimedia elements into the learning experience.

“We hope this award can help bring additional attention to the Excelsior College OWL and the way it can be used in the course design process to replace costly textbooks and enhance the learning experience,” said [Dr. Crystal Sands](#), OWL director. Dr. Sands [recently sat down with Excelsior Life to discuss her vision](#) for the OWL, which an [independent study found boosted skills and final grades by 6.5 points](#).

In addition, Darren Walsh, assistant vice president for learning and academic support services at Excelsior, was honored by USDLA for Outstanding Leadership by an Individual in the Field of Distance Learning for his work on the OWL and other online academic services, including the Excelsior College Library, Career Center, student community, book store, student orientation, and online student success guides.

Ms. Jenny Jopling, Chair of USDLA Board of Directors noted that, “This year’s award winners represent many of the most innovative leaders in the field of distance learning.”

The Excelsior OWL is available to the public. To see the Online Writing Lab (OWL) go to:
<http://owl.excelsior.edu>

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