

Northwestern Innovation Institute Launches International Prize Celebrating Human-Machine Partnerships

Kellogg School of Management honors transformative discoveries powered by partnerships between humans and machines.

The [Northwestern Innovation Institute \(NI Institute\)](#) at Northwestern University's Kellogg School of Management today announced the Northwestern Innovation Prize for Human-Machine Partnership (NI Prize), the premier international award recognizing transformative achievements in innovation resulting from human-machine partnerships. The prize honors extraordinary breakthroughs born from the powerful synergy between human creativity and machine capability.

The launch of the NI Prize marks a turning point in how innovation is understood and recognized. Over the past fifty years, nearly every transformative scientific advancement—from detecting gravitational waves to sequencing the human genome to predicting protein structures—has depended on technologies capable of greater accuracy, scale or speed than humans can achieve independently. The prize celebrates purpose-built machines that decisively extend human capability in discovery.

"At Kellogg, we believe the future belongs to those who can harness the power of human-machine collaboration to create meaningful impact," said Francesca Cornelli, dean of the Kellogg School of Management. "The NI Prize celebrates the innovators leading this transformation and inspires others to follow."

In a [commentary](#) in *Nature*, Professor Dashun Wang, Kellogg Chair of Technology and faculty director of the NI Institute, explores how the recognition landscape for scientific achievement is evolving to acknowledge the critical role that machines play in discovery—a shift that the NI Prize embodies.

"The most profound innovations of our time arise when human insight meets machine power," said Wang. "This prize honors the visionaries who have mastered this partnership to tackle society's most pressing challenges and deliver profound benefits to humanity."

The NI Prize builds on the institute's long-term research agenda on the science of science and innovation, which combines human and machine intelligence to measure, understand, and predict innovation. This research provides a foundation for recognizing transformative human-machine partnerships driving discovery.

Recognizing Impact Across All Disciplines

The NI Prize is intentionally broad in scope, welcoming candidates from any field where human-machine collaboration has driven transformative change. Whether in science, medicine, engineering, the arts, public policy or emerging disciplines, the prize seeks to recognize work that has fundamentally changed how we understand or address critical challenges facing society.

The annual award will be selected by a distinguished panel of experts and includes a \$250,000 cash prize.

Who Can Apply

Eligibility for the NI Prize is designed to be inclusive:

- Any affiliation: Candidates may be from universities, national laboratories, nonprofits, industry or other institutions
- Any discipline: All fields are eligible
- Global reach: Candidates worldwide are welcome
- Individuals or teams: Both solo innovators and collaborative teams may be nominated
- Human recipients: The prize recognizes humans who receive the award on behalf of the human-machine partnerships they have forged

More information about eligibility criteria and the nomination process is available at www.niinstitute.org/ni-prize. Nominations are now open and must be received by March 15, 2026.

A New Era in Recognizing Innovation

The launch of the NI Prize reflects Kellogg and Northwestern's commitment to fostering innovation that bridges human and technological capabilities. As artificial intelligence, quantum computing, synthetic biology, and other technologies continue to evolve, the potential for human-machine partnerships to address global challenges has never been greater.

The Prize aims to not only celebrate past achievements but also inspire the next generation of innovators to explore what becomes possible when human wisdom guides machine power toward the benefit of all.

About the Northwestern Innovation Institute

The Northwestern Innovation Institute at the Kellogg School of Management was established in 2025 with a transformative \$25 million gift from the Future Wanxiang Foundation. The institute examines how innovation occurs across science, technology,

and business, using big data analytics and artificial intelligence to aggregate, integrate, and analyze diverse datasets on inventions, patents, licenses, revenues, grants, and publications from institutions around the world.

Through this work, the institute aims to maximize research outcomes, identify untapped innovation opportunities, and guide investments to the people, ideas, and institutions most likely to lead to impactful advances. Building on Kellogg and Northwestern's rich innovation ecosystem, it collaborates with entities like the Ryan Institute on Complexity and the Center for Science of Science and Innovation.

Read more:

[Kellogg School of Management Launches Northwestern Innovation Institute with \\$25M gift](#)