

USDLA 2004 Awards of Distinction

John G. Flores

One of the most satisfying things our association does each year is to formally recognize certain individuals for their contributions to the distance learning community.

Because so many participate directly in it, probably more of our membership is familiar with the annual “best of” competition for distance learning programmers. Once again this year, that competition was fiercely competitive and

set a new benchmark of excellence. Well done. My congratulations to the winners—and really to *all* of the participants—and to Don Lake, USDLA Award Chair and his team for staging a truly stellar event.

In this column, though, I want to focus not on the competition but on the individual awards of distinction. There are two categories: The Eagle Award and the USDLA Hall of Fame.

The Eagle Award recognizes an individual in public life whose work has promoted distance learning as an educational solution. This is the 13th year for the award. This year’s recipient is the **Honorable Robert F. Bennett**, U.S. Senator from Utah. Senator Bennett is no doubt that chamber’s leading proponent of technology—and especially so in applying it to educational needs. He deserves our profound thanks for his effort.

The USDLA Hall of Fame recognizes a broad spectrum of individuals who have made noteworthy contributions to the development of distance learning. This year, six individuals received that distinction. **Dr. A. Frank Mayadas** had a distinguished career in research with IBM before moving to the Sloan Foundation and founding their Asynchronous Learning Network. **Mr. Fred**

Poker has worked internationally in distance learning for 2 decades and now advises key Federal agencies in that area. **Dr. Mary Beth Susman** was the founding CEO of Kentucky Virtual University, former Executive Director of the widely acclaimed Colorado Community Colleges Online and now Director of Education Services for Rocky Mountain PBS in Denver. **Dr. Jack M. Wilson** is a well-known entrepreneur and distance educator, co-founder of LearnLinc Corporation (now Mentergy), was the founding CEO of UMassOnline, and now serves as president of the University of Massachusetts statewide system.

These people are all giants in the field of distance learning. They richly deserve this recognition by their colleagues. I want to make special note, though, of two other inductees to the Hall of Fame: **Glenn R. Jones** and **James E. Vautrot**. Both are true pioneers in our industry. Glenn Jones is chancellor of Jones International University, which he founded as the first university to be wholly online and fully accredited. Jim Vautrot, as president and CEO of BAF Satellite & Technology has consistently (and successfully!) pushed the technical envelope and thereby extended the



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reach of distance learning as a viable option within the industry.

If these men had done no more, they would, indeed, be worthy candidates. Yet they distinguished themselves not only by accomplishment but also by *commitment*. Both are great friends of USDLA.

Years ago, Glenn Jones had a vision that one day it would be

important to have acknowledged standards of excellence in distance learning. Typical of him, he acted on that belief and has been a supporter of our association in accreditation and credentialing. Likewise, Jim Vautrot has given us tremendous logistical support in developing standards. Jim, in fact, was also a key figure some time ago in shep-

herding and financially supporting the association through its reorganization.

I salute all of the recipients for having enriched our distance learning community through their hard work and service.

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