

What are the best ways to train retired professors to use AI tools effectively for academic, professional, and social engagement?

ChatGPT 17.08.2026

I would recommend a *practical, activity-based and peer-oriented approach* built around five principles.

1. Start with their real needs—not with AI technology

Training should begin by asking:

- What would you like to accomplish after retirement?
- Whom would you like to stay connected with?
- What academic activities would you like to continue?
- What information or knowledge would you like to share?
- What tasks take too much time?

AI tools can then be introduced as solutions to these needs.

For example:

Retired professor's goal	AI-supported activity
Maintain academic contacts	Draft emails, invitations and follow-ups
Continue research	Literature exploration and research assistance
Write papers	Outlining, editing, translation and language improvement
Give lectures	Prepare presentations and teaching materials
Collaborate internationally	Translation and communication across languages
Share expertise	Articles, blogs, videos and online courses
Participate in professional networks	Prepare contributions and discussion topics
Organize alumni/emeriti activities	Invitations, agendas, summaries and newsletters
Learn something new	Use AI as a personal tutor

2. Teach through real projects

A “*learn by doing*” model is likely to be much more effective than conventional lectures.

For example, during the first session, each professor could create something useful:

Project: “My Academic Life After Retirement”

Using an AI assistant, participants could develop:

- a short professional biography;
- a list of their areas of expertise;

- an updated academic profile;
- a personal webpage or LinkedIn profile;
- an invitation to former colleagues;
- ideas for future research or collaboration.

The participant leaves the session with something *useful and personally meaningful*.

3. Teach a small number of AI tools deeply

It is probably better to master 3–5 *useful tools* than to demonstrate 30 different applications.

A basic program could include:

AI assistant

- ChatGPT, Claude, Gemini or Copilot
- asking good questions;
- improving and transforming text;
- research brainstorming;
- summarization;
- translation;
- creating teaching materials.

AI-supported research

- finding and evaluating information;
- working with academic papers;
- comparing sources;
- extracting key ideas;
- identifying research questions.

Documents and presentations

- turning ideas into articles;
- preparing PowerPoint presentations;
- creating tables and diagrams;
- editing and translating manuscripts.

Communication

- professional emails;
- newsletters;
- invitations;
- Zoom meeting preparation;
- maintaining international contacts.

4. Include an “AI literacy and critical thinking” component

This is particularly important for professors.

Training should explain that AI can:

- produce incorrect information;
- invent references;
- misunderstand context;
- reproduce biases;
- expose confidential information if used carelessly.

Therefore, professors should learn a simple principle:

AI assists the professor; it does not replace the professor's judgment.

A useful training exercise would be to give participants an AI-generated answer and ask them to *find its mistakes*. This turns professors' existing critical-thinking skills into an advantage.

5. Build a community, not just a course

This may be the most important element.

Instead of ending after a 10- or 20-hour course, establish an *AI Learning Community for Retired Professors*.

For example:

Monthly 60-minute Zoom meeting

1. 10 minutes — one new AI development
2. 15 minutes — demonstration of one practical application
3. 20 minutes — participants show what they have done
4. 10 minutes — discussion of problems and discoveries
5. 5 minutes — next month's challenge

This creates a *virtuous cycle*: *learn* → *experiment* → *share* → *help others* → *learn again*.

A particularly promising model: “AI for Academic Life After Retirement”

I would structure a 20-hour program around *four stages*:

Stage 1 — Discover

What can AI do for me?

Participants experiment with AI using their own professional interests.

Stage 2 — Practice

How can AI help me every week?

Email, writing, translation, research, presentations, meetings and information management.

Stage 3 — Create

What can I contribute?

Each participant develops a small project—for example an article, lecture, research proposal, online presentation, digital archive or professional network.

Stage 4 — Connect

How can AI help me remain academically and socially active?

Participants connect with colleagues, universities, former students and international networks.

The key pedagogical principle

I would formulate the philosophy of the program this way:

Don't teach retired professors how AI works. Teach them what they can accomplish with AI.

They already know how to think, teach, research, write, communicate and solve problems. AI training should help them apply those abilities in new ways.

And there is a potentially powerful broader objective:

AI can turn retirement from the end of an academic career into a new phase of academic contribution.

That could become a strong theme for the *Professors Emeriti Network* and its September 16, 2026 Zoom meeting: *"AI Tools for Retired Professors: Staying Connected, Productive and Engaged."*