



*Lincoln*



*Omaha*



*Kearney*



*Medical Center*

## **The Buffett Early Childhood Institute: Leveraging the resources of the University of Nebraska's four campuses**

The Buffett Early Childhood Institute at the University of Nebraska will capitalize on the diverse contributions that can be made by NU's four campuses. The result will be an integrated effort in which there is access to a broad range of expertise and in which teams can be formed to respond to needs and opportunities that arise.

Early childhood education – one of six academic priorities of the Campaign for Nebraska – is an area of historical strength for the university, with relevant research and scholarly activities occurring on each campus. More than 30 full-time faculty across the university are engaged in the field of early childhood development and education. Moreover, university researchers and educators have been awarded millions in federal funding to support research initiatives currently underway.

Now, with an aggressive, coordinated agenda for research, education and policy and outreach, the Buffett Early Childhood Institute will allow the university and its partners across the state to take the work of faculty and others in the field to the next level. Among the university's current activities related to early childhood:

### **University of Nebraska-Lincoln**

UNL's Center for Research on Children, Youth, Families and Schools has received \$40 million in educational research since 2003, with half of that – \$20 million – targeted toward early childhood research. Research on parental engagement and child learning from birth to age 5 and on rural language and literacy connections are representative of the center's projects. For example, UNL recently received a \$10 million grant for education research in rural areas. UNL also is home to the Ruth Staples Child Development Laboratory, which is now celebrating its 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary; the Barkley Memorial Center, which provides child speech and hearing services; and the Center on Children, Families and the Law. The College of Education and Human Sciences offers more than 100 courses across seven departments related to early childhood; UNL offers several certification programs at undergraduate and graduate levels aimed at developing professionals who can meet the diverse needs of young children and their families.

## **University of Nebraska Medical Center**

UNMC has substantial investment in its pediatric medicine department, as well as the Munroe-Meyer Institute, allied health, public health, and numerous clinics and services for families and children. UNMC faculty conduct applied clinical research based on a wide range of patient care services, such as the Pediatric Feeding Disorders Program, the Center for Autism Spectrum Disorders, and the Pediatric Motion Analysis Laboratory. A new Center for Child and Family Health in the College of Public Health has been developed to concentrate on mental and physical health issues, and the Department of Pediatrics' Section on Child Health Policy is nationally known for its promotion of maternal and child health policy.

## **University of Nebraska at Omaha**

Among the relevant programs at UNO are the Speech-Language and Hearing Clinic and the Play Assessment and Intervention Lab. Further, the Nebraska Biomechanics Core Facility has a focus on infant posture and movement research; the Center for Public Affairs conducts research on local population changes, including births and migration; and the School of Social Work focuses on children and families. UNO's urban mission is supported by the Metropolitan Omaha Education Consortium (MOEC), whose membership is composed of all school districts implementing Omaha's Building Bright Futures initiative. Established in 1988, MOEC is the longest continually functioning cooperative consortium between school districts and a higher education institution in the nation. UNO's Child Care Center also was the first such center in Nebraska to be accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children.

## **University of Nebraska at Kearney**

The UNK College of Education provides preparation of early childhood teachers and houses a Department of Communication Disorders that provides direct services to children through speech and language clinics on campus and in the community. The College of Education also has an innovative early childhood educators professional development research grant that uses online technology to make its educational programs easily accessible for people working in the field. UNK's Department of Counseling and School Psychology is one of only a few nationwide to provide infant-toddler training for early childhood educators.

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