

# People, Programs and Points of Excellence (P<sup>3</sup>E)

## Report for January 31, 2025

The People, Programs and Points of Excellence (P3E) is a biweekly update from across all four campuses of the University of Nebraska System leaders that focuses on the best work happening across the University of Nebraska and allows us to recognize and lift up the outstanding efforts of our faculty, staff and students.

### University of Nebraska at Kearney

#### **1. UNK Rural Immersion Program Inspires Students to Pursue Health Care Careers in Small Communities**

The University of Nebraska at Kearney's Rural Immersion Program connects students with rural hospitals, giving them firsthand experience in health care careers. Launched in January 2024, the program has hosted 10 students at hospitals in McCook, Sidney, and Cozad, with future placements scheduled in York and Albion. Through four-day immersive visits, participants explore various aspects of rural health care, including administration, radiology, physical therapy, and nursing. The program highlights the personal and professional impact health care professionals can have in small communities, encouraging students to consider long-term careers in rural Nebraska. By exposing students to diverse roles and creating strong community connections, the Rural Immersion Program addresses workforce shortages and ensures continued access to quality health care in underserved regions.

**Related Media Item:** <https://unknews.unk.edu/2025/01/22/we-want-to-be-part-of-the-solution-unk-program-promotes-health-care-opportunities-in-rural-communities/>

#### **2. UNK scholarship program paves path to impactful careers in public administration**

The Nebraska Good Life Opportunities Program, a partnership between the University of Nebraska at Kearney (UNK) and the University of Nebraska at Omaha (UNO), provides a full-tuition scholarship for students pursuing careers in public administration. Participants also receive guaranteed admission to UNO's Master of Public Administration program, as well as unique experiences such as field studies in Washington, D.C., and the Southern U.S., internships, and professional development opportunities. The program aims to prepare students for high-demand, high-wage positions in government, nonprofit, and economic development sectors.

**Related Media Item:** <https://unknews.unk.edu/2025/01/30/unk-scholarship-program-paves-path-to-rewarding-careers-in-public-administration/>

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## **University of Nebraska–Lincoln**

### **1. Nebraska U programs earn top spots for online master’s degrees**

Three University of Nebraska–Lincoln colleges—College of Business, College of Engineering and College of Education and Human Sciences—have earned national recognition, with their online master’s degree programs ranked among the best in the 2025 U.S. News and World Report rankings.

- No. 4 in Best Online Master’s in Engineering Programs for Veterans;
- No. 5 in Overall Best Online Master’s in Engineering Programs;
- No. 11 (tie) in Best Online Master’s in Engineering Management Programs (specialty ranking based on peer responses);
- No. 22 in Best Online Master of Business Administration Programs for Veterans;
- No. 29 (tie) in Best Online Master of Business Administration;
- No. 35 (tie) in Best Online Master’s in Business Programs (excluding MBA); and
- No. 97 (tie) in Best Online Master’s in Education Programs.

**Related Media Item:** <https://news.unl.edu/article/nebraska-u-programs-earn-top-spots-for-online-masters-degrees>

### **2. Nebraska-based global center to drive bioeconomy solutions for future of food**

An international research project led by the University of Nebraska–Lincoln aims to transform the future of food by driving sustainable, resilient solutions, while positioning Nebraska as a national leader in the bioeconomy sector, which encompasses many industries that use biological resources for creating products and services.

**Related Media Item:** <https://news.unl.edu/article/nebraska-based-global-center-to-drive-bioeconomy-solutions-for-future-of-food>

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## **University of Nebraska Medical Center**

### **1. Clinical trial shows promise**

An innovative clinical trial taking place at Children's Nebraska through the Child Health Research Institute has seen record enrollment. This study evaluating the efficacy of migraine medication in adolescents has had a major impact of patients facing recurrent migraines, offering them hope in the face of uncertain prognosis.

The clinical trial reached an enrollment of 19 participants, far-exceeding the planned recruitment goal for our site and placing us in the top-5 of sites nationally. Additionally, we are connecting with individuals in rural areas interested in joining the study, which adds to the diversity of participants.

**Related Media Item:** <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/chri-connects-patients-national-studies-q5suc/>

## 2. UNMC scientists lead study of disease transmission in packing plants

A recent publication by UNMC researchers assesses the transmission risk of respiratory diseases – such as COVID-19, influenza, and common colds – in meat processing facilities, using air sampling to identify markers of respiratory transmission in both production areas and common areas where workers are in close proximity.

**Related Media Item:** <https://www.unmc.edu/newsroom/2025/01/14/unmc-research-assesses-viral-respiratory-risk-at-meatpacking-plants/>

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## University of Nebraska at Omaha

### 1. Omaha's Growing Black Squirrel Population Becomes National Focus

As part of his mammalogy class, Dr. James Wilson engages students in an annual census that delves into the genetics and ecology of the growing black squirrel population. This hands-on fieldwork has gained national attention and become a cornerstone of wildlife science at UNO.

**Related Media Item:**

- **Flatwater Free Press:** <https://flatwaterfreepress.org/black-red-or-dead-how-omaha-became-a-hub-for-black-squirrel-scholarship/>
- **US News:** <https://www.usnews.com/news/best-states/nebraska/articles/2024-11-14/black-red-or-dead-how-omaha-became-a-hub-for-black-squirrel-scholarship>
- **AP News:** <https://apnews.com/us-news/animals-omaha-squirrels-general-news-73e0f72079da68adbf302ee98e790c14>

### 2. UNO study focuses on impacts of body language for child prosthetic care

The University of Nebraska Omaha's Department of Biomechanics is advancing prosthetic care for children through innovative research and 3D printing technology. The team, led by Associate Professor Jorge Zuniga, creates affordable, customizable prosthetics for around \$50 compared to traditional costs of \$8,000 to \$12,000. Graduate Assistant Kaitlyn Fraser is spearheading research to better understand how children use prosthetics, aiming to enhance their experience through improved care and assessment methods.

**Related Media Item:** <https://www.wowt.com/2025/01/24/uno-study-focuses-impacts-body-language-child-prosthetic-care/>

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## **Agriculture and Natural Resources**

### **1. UNL launching Master Irrigator program**

The University of Nebraska–Lincoln is launching the Nebraska Master Irrigator program to help growers stay at the forefront of irrigation innovation and conservation. Beginning in February, design summits will introduce the program and allow farmers to shape its direction.

This initiative aims to provide Nebraska growers with locally relevant insights from industry leaders, policy experts, and researchers. Sessions will feature resources from UNL’s TAPS program, the USDA NRCS, and Nebraska’s Natural Resources Districts, followed by discussions to refine the program. The program targets experienced irrigators looking to integrate cutting-edge technologies, conservation strategies, and precision agriculture into their operations.

Nebraska, the nation’s leader in irrigated cropland acres, already has highly skilled producers. However, growers have expressed a desire for more peer collaboration and access to the latest advancements in water management and irrigation technology. The Master Irrigator program will address these needs while aligning with Gov. Jim Pillen’s bioeconomy initiative to enhance agricultural efficiency and sustainability.

The program will highlight Nebraska’s most innovative producers and foster a community-driven approach to irrigation excellence. By focusing on precision ag tools, regenerative practices, and return on investment, it aims to position Nebraska as a global leader in water and irrigation management.

Public meetings will be held statewide in February and March. More details and registration are available at [go.unl.edu/master\\_irrigator](https://go.unl.edu/master_irrigator).

**Related Media Item:** [https://theindependent.com/agriculture/master-irrigator-program-aims-to-equip-growers-to-lead-irrigation-innovation/article\\_4fe93354-e036-11ef-92d5-5b9abd341a32.html](https://theindependent.com/agriculture/master-irrigator-program-aims-to-equip-growers-to-lead-irrigation-innovation/article_4fe93354-e036-11ef-92d5-5b9abd341a32.html)

### **2. Financing program helps students turn big ideas into thriving businesses**

Abby Miller, a recent University of Nebraska–Lincoln graduate, turned her passion for bringing people together into a thriving business with the support of the Engler Agribusiness Entrepreneurship Program. Growing up in Mead, Nebraska, Miller transformed a 1950s Chevrolet into a mobile tap truck, Pat on Tap, serving drinks at events across eastern Nebraska.

With mentorship and financial backing from the Engler Enterprise Financing Program, she secured a \$25,000 low-interest loan, allowing her to expand her business beyond what she imagined. At just 23, she now has a growing fleet and aims to expand across Nebraska and the Midwest.

The Engler financing program provides students like Miller with hands-on experience in business management and loan acquisition. With support from Union Bank and Trust and Farm Credit Services of America, it offers accessible funding to young entrepreneurs who might otherwise struggle to secure traditional loans.

Miller’s success demonstrates the program’s impact on young Nebraskans, empowering them to build sustainable businesses that strengthen their communities. As the program grows, philanthropic support is needed to expand funding opportunities for student entrepreneurs.

**Related Media Item:**

- **Nebraska Today:** <https://news.unl.edu/article/partnership-launches-engler-enterprise-financing-program>
  - **Rural Radio:** <https://ruralradio.com/khyy/news/new-loan-program-helps-nebraska-student-entrepreneurs-turn-business-into-ideas/>
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## **University of Nebraska Foundation**

### **1. Show your Husker hearts during Glow Big Red, Feb. 12-13**

Husker Nation has an opportunity to show its love for the University of Nebraska–Lincoln during Glow Big Red, Feb. 12-13.

Glow Big Red — 24 Hours of Husker Giving is the university’s annual day of giving. During the event, Huskers from around the world will come together to raise money for critical causes and needs that touch every part of the university, including student scholarships, colleges, programs, student organizations and Husker Athletics.

Glow Big Red will start at noon CST Feb. 12 and continue through noon CST Feb. 13, with the campus lit up in red to celebrate the seventh annual giving day. This year’s goal is to receive 5,500 gifts.

In 2024, the Husker community raised \$823,041 to expand opportunities for UNL students. Glow Big Red started in 2019 in recognition of the university’s 150th anniversary.

**Related Media Item:**

- **Glow Big Red:** [glowbigred.unl.edu](http://glowbigred.unl.edu)
- **NU Foundation news release:** <https://nufoundation.org/show-your-husker-hearts-during-glow-big-red-feb-12-13/>

### **2. Revamped UNMC lab named for alumna, benefactor Connie Ryan**

A 3,000-square-foot newly renovated, remodeled and expanded clinical research laboratory has been named for benefactor and UNMC alumna Connie Ryan. Ryan is the former CEO of Streck Inc. In addition to her business success, she is known as a passionate community advocate.

The Constance M. Ryan Wellness INnovation (WIN) Laboratory at UNMC was officially dedicated Dec. 10. Located on the lower level of the Student Life Center, the Ryan WIN lab is bringing researchers, clinicians and patients together to discover ways in which exercise and nutrition can impact the prevention and management of chronic diseases and cancer. The UNMC College of Allied Health Professions was a driving force in the lab’s rebirth, with the support of the Office of the Chancellor and in collaboration with the UNMC Office of the Vice Chancellor for Research.

**Related Media Item:** <https://www.unmc.edu/newsroom/2025/01/20/revamped-lab-dedicated-as-a-win-for-researchers-and-patients/>

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## **Buffett Early Childhood Institute**

### **Buffett Institute Earns Seven Awards for its Communications Achievements**

The Institute's Communications team is proud to share the people and stories behind the Institute's work, and those efforts were rewarded in December 2024 with seven awards from the Nebraska chapter of the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA).

The PRSA Nebraska Paper Anvil Awards program is an annual competition that recognizes programs and projects demonstrating excellence in the public relations profession.

Public outreach and communications are critical to building awareness and understanding of the Institute's research and programs, allowing us to share what we learn about early childhood development and education with colleagues and partners across the state and nation.

The Buffett Institute and the We Care for Kids/Por todos los niños campaign received recognitions in the following categories:

- Award of Excellence in the Events & Observances category for the 2023 Thriving Children, Families, and Communities Conference (highest score)
- Award of Excellence in the Websites and Smartphone/Tablet Applications category (highest score)
- Award of Excellence in the Public Service category for the We Care for Kids survey
- Award of Excellence in the Integrated Communications category for the Institute's new website launch campaign
- Award of Merit in the Blogs category for the Early Years Matter blog
- Award of Merit in the Community Relations category for the We Care for Kids/Por todos los niños campaign
- Award of Merit in the Social Media category

#### **Related Media Item:**

- **Blog post:** <https://buffettinstitute.nebraska.edu/blog/2025/01/institute-receives-seven-awards-recognizing-communications-and-outreach-work>
  - **PRSA press release:** [https://prsanebraska.org/downloads/2024\\_prsa\\_nebraska\\_paper\\_anvil\\_award\\_winners\\_91\\_.docx](https://prsanebraska.org/downloads/2024_prsa_nebraska_paper_anvil_award_winners_91_.docx)
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## **Daugherty Water for Food Global Institute**

### **Registration now open for the 2025 Water for Food Global Conference**

The Daugherty Water for Food Global Institute is preparing to welcome nearly 400 attendees from all over the world for its signature Water for Food Global Conference April 28-May 2, 2025.

With a theme of A Resilient Future: Water and Food for All, the Water for Food Global Conference tackles the critical question of how to ensure everyone has long-term availability of clean water and nutritious food, convening global experts to explore innovative solutions and build a more resilient tomorrow.

Experts and practitioners in global food and water security will share research results, case studies and perspectives on how to achieve improved water use in agriculture and increase productivity at a variety of scales. In addition to engaging educational sessions, the conference also includes field visits and research site tours throughout Nebraska so attendees can meet local growers and researchers to experience the knowledge firsthand.

**Related Media Item:** <https://waterforfood.nebraska.edu/explore-our-conferences/2025-water-for-food-global-conference>

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## **National Strategic Research Institute**

### **NSRI publishes "For NU" newsletter**

In the January 2025 "For NU" newsletter, published by the National Strategic Research Institute (NSRI) at the University of Nebraska, Maj. Gen., USAF (Ret.) Rick Evans, executive director, states: "The National Strategic Research Institute at the University of Nebraska is proud to join you on the odyssey to extraordinary. As you pursue your strategic planning initiatives to meet the lofty goals of the NU system, your campus and all combined initiatives, I want you to know that NSRI, as NU's DOD-designated University Affiliated Research Center, remains ready to collaborate." He also shares three ways that University faculty can leverage the UARC.

Several human interest features are highlighted in this month's newsletter. NSRI Fellows Dr. Nicole Buan, Dr. Paul Denton and Dr. Deanna House all share their capabilities and career paths, including how they can contribute to national security.

"My NSRI colleagues and I have been discussing how we might recommend revisions to biosafety practices at the national level," Dr. Buan explained. "Bringing forth a sustainable bioeconomy will require engineering organisms, and we want to do that in a safe and secure way. It's important that practitioners are involved in these discussions so we can develop policies and procedures that don't impede research but provide assurance to those not involved that it's safe, so it can be widely adopted."

In terms of DOD insights, NSRI shares the USSTRATCOM Commander's 2025 Vision and Intent Focus Areas and insights from the recent DTRA Conference hosted in December.

Featured announcements include the UNL contract through NSRI for developing AI for USSTRATCOM, the 2024 NSRI biennial report and the 2024 NSRI campus impact reports.

The institute also reports impacts for students, including \$200,000 paid to strategic deterrence interns since 2018, \$1 million paid to students on direct-funded government projects since July 2021 and 58,000+ hours of total student research since 2018.

**Related Media Item:** [bit.ly/ForNUJan2025](https://bit.ly/ForNUJan2025)