

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

## Report for May 23, 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. Homegrown Talent: UNK, KPS award teaching scholarships to Kearney High grads**

UNK and Kearney Public Schools (KPS) awarded the Kearney Teachers Tomorrow (KTOM) scholarships to Hadley Clark and Sarah Dahlke, both Kearney High graduates pursuing education degrees at UNK. The renewable scholarship package exceeds \$14,000 annually, including a guaranteed teaching position with KPS after graduation.

The KTOM program, launched in response to the teacher shortage, offers professional development, retirement eligibility, and financial support to future educators committed to serving the Kearney community.

**Related Media Item:** <https://unknews.unk.edu/2025/05/19/homegrown-talent-unk-kps-award-teaching-scholarships-to-kearney-high-grads/>

#### **2. Carnegie Hall performance an ‘amazing’ experience for UNK choir members**

Thirty-two UNK choir students recently traveled to New York City to perform at the iconic Carnegie Hall alongside the New England Symphonic Ensemble. The May 11 performance included the world premiere of “Xantolo” by Mexican composer Julio Morales and a rendition of “Mass” by Steve Dobrogosz.

The trip, led by UNK professor John Petzet, also included sightseeing, Broadway shows, and cultural experiences that strengthened student bonds and highlighted the strength of UNK’s music program.

**Related Media Item:** <https://unknews.unk.edu/2025/05/18/carnegie-hall-performance-an-amazing-experience-for-unk-choir-members/>

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## **University of Nebraska–Lincoln**

### **1. Science Olympiad National Tournament Draws 2,000-plus to Nebraska U**

More than 2,000 students, representing 120 teams from across the United States, participated in the 41st Annual Science Olympiad National Tournament at the University of Nebraska–Lincoln May 23-24.

The competition included rigorous knowledge-based, lab and engineering events in science, technology, engineering and math. Among the participants is a global ambassador team from Tokyo, Japan.

**Related Media Item:** <https://news.unl.edu/article/science-olympiad-national-tournament-to-draw-2000-plus-to-nebraska-u>

### **2. 3,593 Huskers receive degrees in May ceremonies**

The University of Nebraska–Lincoln conferred 3,683 degrees during commencement exercises May 3, 16 and 17.

The degrees were earned by 3,593 graduates from 57 countries, 46 U.S. states and 250-plus Nebraska communities.

**Related Media Item:** <https://news.unl.edu/article/3593-huskers-receive-degrees-in-may-ceremonies>

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## **University of Nebraska Medical Center**

### **1. Commencement ceremonies across Nebraska a success**

UNMC had nearly 1,000 spring graduates across its five campuses in early May. Individuals from every college, including allied health, dentistry, medicine, nursing, pharmacy, public health and graduate studies, received degrees ranging from certificates to bachelors to masters to doctorates.

**Related Media Item:** <https://www.unmc.edu/newsroom/2025/05/13/commencement/>

### **2. UNMC student honored as student pharmacist of the year**

College of Pharmacy student Lydia Fritsche, PharmD (who graduated this May), was honored as 2025 Good Government Student Pharmacist-of-the-Year by the American Pharmacists Association. This national honor “recognizes a student pharmacist who actively promotes the value of advocating for the profession and organizes student pharmacist grassroots activity within his or her chapter,” according to APhA.

**Related Media Item:** <https://www.unmc.edu/newsroom/2025/05/20/lydia-fritsche-pharmd-honored-as-student-pharmacist-of-the-year/>

## **University of Nebraska at Omaha**

### **1. Science, Spanish, Service — and a Future in Medicine**

Tai Prauner, an honors student at the University of Nebraska at Omaha, balances a dual academic focus in molecular and biomedical biology and Spanish for health sciences. Her college experience bridges advanced epigenetics research with bilingual community outreach, reflecting her passion for both science and equitable healthcare. Prauner's achievements earned her the prestigious Goldwater Scholarship in 2024, recognizing her as one of the nation's top STEM students. As she graduates, she credits her growth to the supportive UNO community and encourages fellow students to stay curious, compassionate, and committed to making a difference.

**Related Media Item:** <https://www.unomaha.edu/college-of-arts-and-sciences/news/2025/05/science-service-future-in-medicine.php>

### **2. Boxing champ Terence Crawford tells Omaha graduates to work hard and keep fighting for success**

At the University of Nebraska at Omaha's commencement, four-division world boxing champion Terence "Bud" Crawford urged graduates to stay resilient, work hard, and keep setting new goals. Drawing from his own journey from a troubled youth in north Omaha to international boxing success, Crawford emphasized perseverance in the face of adversity. He challenged graduates to embrace their inner fighter, never settle, and inspire others by staying grounded and driven.

**Related Media Item:** <https://www.foxsports.com/articles/boxing/boxing-champ-terence-crawford-tells-omaha-graduates-to-work-hard-and-keep-fighting-for-success>

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## **Agriculture and Natural Resources**

### **1. Nebraska program to offer management training for small meat processors**

The University of Nebraska—Lincoln is playing a pivotal role in strengthening Nebraska's agricultural sector through its 2025 Small Meat Processor Management Training Program. Offered by Nebraska Extension, the week-long program—held Sept. 7–13 on East Campus—aims to empower small meat processors with essential business and industry skills.

Developed by the university's Center for Agricultural Profitability and Meat Science program, in collaboration with the College of Business and Nebraska Manufacturing Extension Partnership, the course includes expert-led sessions on financial management, human resources, regulatory compliance, processing practices, and more.

Open to a wide range of meat processing operations, the program features virtual pre- and post-sessions, HACCP certification training, and a unique plant tour across eastern Nebraska, fostering idea exchange and innovation. By blending academic insight with practical exposure, the University of Nebraska underscores its commitment to supporting local businesses and advancing the ag industry across the state. Applications are due June 7.

**Related Media Item:**

- Nebraska Today: <https://news.unl.edu/article/nebraska-program-offers-management-training-for-small-meat-processors>
- Nebraska Ag Connection: <https://nebraskaagconnection.com/news/nebraska-offers-training-for-meat-processors>

## **2. Students explore agriculture and annual AgSplosion Field Day**

At the annual AgSplosion Field Day, held April 29 at the Panhandle Research Extension and Education Center in Scottsbluff, the University of Nebraska's Extension program played a central role in educating over 700 second graders about the origins of their food.

Organized by Nebraska Extension staff, the interactive 4-H Ag Literacy event spanned six days and reached 22 schools across the Panhandle, with engaging, hands-on stations that immersed students in Nebraska's top industry—agriculture.

Through imaginative activities like pretending to be a kernel of corn sprouting under sunlight, and grinding wheat into flour, students connected classroom concepts to real-world food production. The university's commitment to community outreach ensures children gain foundational knowledge about agriculture—critical in a country where less than two percent of the population works in farming or ranching.

The event underscored the importance of early education in agriculture to preserve its value for future generations. Teachers praised the program's ability to transform abstract science lessons into tangible learning experiences.

By fostering curiosity and pride in food production, AgSplosion helps young learners understand not only where their food comes from but also the technological and environmental efforts involved—thanks in large part to the university's leadership and dedication to agricultural literacy.

**Related Media Item:** <https://preec.unl.edu/news/students-explore-agriculture-annual-agsplosion-field-day/>

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## **University of Nebraska Foundation**

### **Lozier Foundation Invests in Literacy by Creating UNO Distinguished Chair**

The Lozier Foundation has made a leadership gift to establish a distinguished chair of literacy at the University of Nebraska at Omaha. The gift also will create an endowed fund for graduate student support. The investment will support UNO's literacy education programs, positioning the university as a leader in the field.

**Related Media Item:** <https://nufoundation.org/lozier-foundation-invests-in-literacy-by-creating-uno-distinguished-chair/>

## **Buffett Early Childhood Institute**

### **Buffett Institute Report Highlights Need for Tax Deduction Reform for Early Educators**

New policy research from the Institute highlights an opportunity for state or federal lawmakers to amend the tax code and allow early childhood educators to be eligible for the Educator Expense Deduction.

The brief, co-written by Buffett Institute Executive Director Walter Gilliam, received national media attention during federal tax filing season and drew focus to the issue as federal legislators debate tax policy on Capitol Hill.

Early Learning Nation—a leading digital platform sharing early childhood news—spotlighted Gilliam’s policy recommendations and highlighted the story of a local PreK teacher from Ralston Public Schools. The teacher shared that enacting this policy change could help retain and recruit early educators. The piece was picked up by other media outlets, including Yahoo! News and The 74.

Under the Education Expense Deduction (EED), K-12 teachers can deduct up to \$300 in classroom expenses, such as art supplies, books, and snacks, from their federal taxes. But early educators can’t—they’re not eligible for the same income tax deduction.

The brief from Gilliam and Ayse Cobanoglu from the Tobin Center for Economic Policy at Yale University recommends fixing this tax policy imbalance. Employee turnover and low pay are ongoing challenges in the early childhood field, and this relatively low-cost policy change could help workforce retention efforts.

Gilliam and Cobanoglu surveyed 25,000 early educators across the country and found roughly 90% incurred work-related expenses that would have been eligible under the EED.

**Related Media Item:** [https://buffettinstitute.nebraska.edu/-/media/projects/buffett-nucleus/resources/policy-briefs/early-childhood-teacher-expense-deduction-research-to-policy-brief\\_digital.pdf](https://buffettinstitute.nebraska.edu/-/media/projects/buffett-nucleus/resources/policy-briefs/early-childhood-teacher-expense-deduction-research-to-policy-brief_digital.pdf)

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## **Daugherty Water for Food Global Institute**

### **2025 Water for Food Global Conference focused on resiliency in water and food security**

The 2025 Water for Food Global Conference, held in Lincoln, Nebraska, brought together over 350 experts from 23 countries to address the critical link between water and food security. Hosted by the Daugherty Water for Food Global Institute, the conference featured discussions on innovative solutions for sustainable water management in agriculture, emphasizing the often-overlooked connection between irrigation and nutrition. Speakers highlighted research on water use efficiency, successful farming practices, and policy frameworks, aiming to foster collaborations and actionable strategies for a food-secure future. The conference also showcased Nebraska outside of the conference room to the global audience by hosting field tours of local farms, Nebraska Natural Resources Districts, and research facilities, with the help of Nebraska commodity boards.

**Related Media Item:** <https://waterforfood.nebraska.edu/news-and-events/news/2025/05/2025-water-for-food-global-conference-focused-on-resiliency-in-water-and-food-security>

## **National Strategic Research Institute**

### **NSRI leverages NU biosecurity, supply chain resilience expertise for critical disease research**

NSRI is publishing a series of three articles to highlight NU contributions to and capabilities for food, agriculture & environment security. The first article in the series focuses on disease research.

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Recent and developing events have demonstrated an increasing need for robust disease surveillance, development of effective vaccines and strategies to ensure supply chain resilience.

Surges in avian flu in the U.S and African swine fever and foot-and-mouth disease (FMD) around the world have heightened public awareness of how a major outbreak in animal disease can cause wide-ranging harm. National security leaders and international animal health organizations are closely monitoring the outbreaks.

"Agricultural security is national security," said Meghan Jackson, director for food, agriculture and environment security for the National Strategic Research Institute (NSRI) at the University of Nebraska and the Nebraska Institute of Agricultural and Natural Resources (IANR). "From ensuring food supply resilience to protecting against biological threats to our crops and livestock, agricultural research directly supports America's strategic interests.

"NSRI and the University of Nebraska System (NU) bring together diverse disciplines—from housing both the state's veterinary and plant diagnostic labs to state-of-the-art data science research and everything in between. We are creating the innovative solutions our federal partners need to safeguard America's agricultural systems against emerging threats."

**Related Media Item:** <https://nsri.nebraska.edu/news/news-releases/2025/05/nsri-leverages-nu-biosecurity-supply-chain-resilience-expertise-for-critical-disease-research>