

People, Programs and Points of Excellence (P³E)

Report for October 25, 2024

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. University of Nebraska initiates national search for next UNK chancellor

Summary

The University of Nebraska has launched a national search to find the next chancellor for the University of Nebraska at Kearney (UNK), announced by President Jeffrey P. Gold, M.D. The search committee, chaired by David Jackson, interim executive vice president and provost of the NU System, includes representatives from across the university's campuses and Kearney community members. The process will involve public listening sessions this fall to gather input from the UNK community, with assistance from the executive search firm CarterBaldwin.

Related Media Item: <https://unknews.unk.edu/2024/10/03/university-of-nebraska-moves-forward-with-search-for-next-unk-chancellor/>

2. UNK's Summer Student Research Program enriches educational experiences with hands-on research

Summary

The University of Nebraska at Kearney (UNK) enhances student learning through the Summer Student Research Program (SSRP), which offers undergraduates hands-on experience in a variety of research fields. The program, alongside the Undergraduate Research Fellows (URF), allows students to work closely with faculty mentors, developing both academic and practical skills in real-world contexts. Students like Emma Dowhower and Noelle Abels conduct research ranging from biodiversity preservation at the Willa Cather Memorial Prairie to cognitive health studies in older adults, funded through UNK's commitment to undergraduate research. SSRP participants receive stipends and financial support to present their work at professional conferences, creating opportunities that equip students with teamwork, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills essential for future careers.

Related Media Item: <https://unknews.unk.edu/2024/10/25/enhancing-education-undergraduate-research-opens-new-doors-for-unk-students/>

University of Nebraska–Lincoln

1. 168 Huskers ranked among the world's top researchers

Summary

The University of Nebraska–Lincoln is home to 168 Huskers featured in the 2024 list of the world's most influential researchers.

The Stanford/Elsevier Top 2% Scientists List is a comprehensive analysis of all peer-reviewed papers across scientific disciplines. It measures the significance of the research, including how often each study is cited in the work of other scientists. The publication is the definitive list of research that has made the most significant impact across each field of study.

Related Media Item: <https://news.unl.edu/article/168-huskers-ranked-among-the-worlds-top-researchers>

2. Forbes ranks UNL among state's best places to work

Summary

The University of Nebraska–Lincoln is the best workplace in the city and top education employer in the Cornhusker State, reports the 2024 rankings from Forbes and Statista.

Released in August, Forbes' sixth annual list of America's Best Employers by State ranked Nebraska's flagship, land-grant university as the No. 4 overall workplace in the state — up three spots from No. 7 in 2023.

Related Media Item: <https://news.unl.edu/article/forbes-ranks-nebraska-u-among-states-best-places-to-work>

University of Nebraska Medical Center

1. uBEATS enrollment surpasses 30,400 students

Summary

The uBEATS program (UNMC's free online science and health science modules) has seen significant reach and impact growth since its 2020 launch. Designed for middle and high school students, uBEATS offers over 90 e-learning modules, covering topics like careers in health care, pharmacology, and public health. It now provides digital badges for module completion, fostering "micro-credentialing."

Related Media Item: <https://www.unmc.edu/newsroom/2024/10/15/unmcs-ubeats-leads-the-way-as-a-health-science-resource/>

2. UNMC provides services at an unexpected place - the zoo

Summary

Walker Thomas teamed with a group from the UNMC Department of Anesthesiology and the Henry Doorly Zoo to provide echocardiograms to two gorillas for the zoo's participation in the Great Apes Heart Project.

Related Media Item: <https://www.unmc.edu/newsroom/2024/09/25/omahas-great-apes-in-caring-hands-2/>

University of Nebraska at Omaha

1. \$1.5 Million in UNO Projects to Strengthen Omaha Community

Summary

The University of Nebraska at Omaha (UNO) has allocated \$1.5 million in initial funding from the \$19 million Weitz Innovation and Excellence Fund to support selected projects that align with the university's strategic goals. These projects span key areas, including inclusive education, community engagement, and workforce development, and aim to drive positive impact on campus and within the Omaha community. The funding marks UNO's commitment to fostering innovation, with plans for future funding rounds to support additional proposals.

Related Media Item: <https://www.unomaha.edu/academic-affairs/news/2024/10/weitz-innovation-and-excellence-announcement-fall2024.php>

2. UNO's Drone Program Secures NSF Grant to Boost Drone Technology for Tribal Communities

Summary

The University of Nebraska at Omaha (UNO) has taken another step forward in drone technology education and research with the recent awarding of a \$75,000 grant from the National Science Foundation (NSF). The grant will fund a project aimed at enhancing community resilience in underserved tribal areas, with a focus on mitigating wind hazards such as tornadoes and straight-line winds. This initiative is part of UNO's Unmanned Aerial Systems (UAS) program, launched in 2017 by the Aviation Institute, preparing students for a future where drones play a key role in various industries, from agriculture to public safety.

Related Media Item: <https://www.unomaha.edu/college-of-public-affairs-and-community-service/news/unos-drone-program-secures-nsf-grant-to-boost-drone-technology-for-tribal-communities.php>

Agriculture and Natural Resources

1. Nebraska hosts pioneers neutron monitoring conference

Summary

Nebraska is home to one of just three high-powered neutron monitors in the United States; these tools are used, among other things, to accurately measure soil moisture across both large and small scales and are thus invaluable to precise irrigation management.

On Oct. 14-16, UNL hosted the Coordinated Cosmic-Ray Observation System (CCROS) conference to assess the wealth of scientific opportunities presented by ground-based neutron monitoring across both low and high-energy spectrums. The conference also presented a rare chance to unite diverse scientific disciplines, including hydrology, atmospheric science, and space weather, to understand how this technology could be used further. Conference participants are working toward identifying how these fields can collectively benefit from future investments in a coordinated global neutron monitoring network. Nebraska is emerging as a leading voice in this conversation.

Related Media Item: VC Boehm recorded his KRVN spot about this; story aired on Saturday and will be published on our website later on this week.

2. Nebraska Extension receives \$2M grant to boost Indigenous food sovereignty

Summary

A Husker-led project aims to reconnect Indigenous youth and their communities with traditional foods and agricultural practices through a blend of Indigenous techniques and modern technologies.

A team led by Bradley Barker, Nebraska Extension specialist in 4-H and youth development, has been awarded a nearly \$2 million grant from the National Science Foundation for the project, which will establish teaching farms at the University of Nebraska–Lincoln and in the Navajo communities of Red Mesa and Red Valley, Arizona. The farms will provide hands-on learning experiences shaped by the youth themselves, guided by tribal elders and supported by experts from multiple universities.

The project, which began Sept. 1, will span three years.

The project seeks to empower Indigenous youth, ages 10 to 18, by helping them explore and strengthen their connection to traditional ways of understanding and interacting with the land. Participants will gain valuable skills for future careers in STEM while preserving their cultural heritage. The teaching farms will be equipped with tools such as seeds, soil, microscopes, sensors and structures such as high tunnels to enhance the youth's learning experience.

Related Media Item: <https://news.unl.edu/article/nebraska-extension-receives-2m-grant-to-boost-indigenous-food-sovereignty>

Buffett Early Childhood Institute

Buffett Early Childhood Institute to Expand Research Capabilities with Acquisition of National Workforce Registry Alliance (NWRA)

Summary

The Buffett Early Childhood Institute at the University of Nebraska announced on October 16 that it will acquire the National Workforce Registry Alliance (NWRA), an organization that supports 46 statewide early childhood workforce registries with 2.8 million members. This will allow the Buffett Institute to grow its research capabilities and national reach, while giving the NWRA greater stability and access to the Institute and University of Nebraska System's research, operational, and communications expertise.

The NWRA is the largest repository of data regarding the qualifications, compensation, and well-being of the nation's early childhood workforce. This partnership offers the university truly unparalleled capacity to conduct research to inform state and national policy regarding child care access, affordability, and quality.

This move is also cost-neutral to the Institute—the NWRA operates on a balanced budget and will increase the Institute's ability to attract external funding.

Related Media Item:

- **BECI News** - <https://buffettinstitute.nebraska.edu/news-and-events/news/2024/10/buffett-institute-to-expand-research-capabilities-with-national-workforce-registry-alliance-merger>
- **Omaha World-Herald**: https://omaha.com/life-entertainment/local/buffett-early-childhood-merger-will-improve-research-possibilities-short-takes/article_5cc496e6-8c9d-11ef-ae85-af5e61d5c6f8.html?utm_medium=social&utm_source=twitter_OWHnews

Daugherty Water for Food Global Institute

New research explores how future climate change can affect the corn production system in Nebraska

Summary

New research led by DWFI's Ivo Goncalves explores the critical role of irrigation in sustaining crop yields amidst shifting climate conditions in Nebraska. Published in the International Journal of Plant Production and in collaboration with NASA and ESALQ at the University of São Paulo, the findings show that irrigation is essential to ensure consistent, high crop yields as temperatures and weather patterns change. There is a pressing need to develop new crop varieties that can adjust to altered growing cycles, helping farmers continue to achieve high yields. The publication also emphasized that innovation both in water management and plant breeding is crucial for food security. The publication reiterates the University of Nebraska and DWFI's critical role in advancing producer resilience in a changing climate.

Related Media Item: <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s42106-024-00310-6#citeas>

National Strategic Research Institute

NSRI Publishes 2024 Conference Proceedings

Summary

The National Strategic Research Institute (NSRI) at the University of Nebraska has published proceedings for the 2024 NSRI Fellows Conference, hosted in April of this year. The proceedings, an internal document for fellows, NSRI staff and NU administrators, provides a robust summary of the presentations, panels, discussions and demonstrations that were activated by the nearly 160 fellows. This year's event aimed to increase the number of fellows participants and government participants, and, largely thanks to the efforts of new working groups, that goal was met. The conference drew experts from government, military, academia and private industry, truly representing the arc of cooperation necessary to work effectively in NSRI's mission space. Topics covered a wide range of issues and opportunities, and more importantly, the conference created an environment for incubating new ideas and collaborations.

Related Media Item: <https://nsri.nebraska.edu/proceedings24>