

People, Programs and Points of Excellence (P³E)

Report for August 1, 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 student explores impact of rural health care through immersive experience

UNK sophomore Benjamin VanDiest, a pre-physician assistant student, participated in the Rural Immersion Program in McCook, gaining firsthand insight into rural health care delivery and reaffirming his goal of serving Nebraska communities. Through the Kearney Health Opportunities Program, he shadowed professionals at Community Hospital and explored various departments and hospital operations, building relationships and professional readiness.

Related Media Item: <https://unknews.unk.edu/2025/07/21/unk-student-explores-impact-of-rural-health-care-through-immersive-experience/>

2. Microcredentials for \$15: UNK Advance makes professional development easy and affordable

UNK Advance is a new noncredit platform offering affordable microcredential courses (starting at \$15) to help Nebraskans boost skills in high-demand areas. With 50+ flexible, self-paced online courses led by faculty and experts, the initiative supports career readiness in areas like health care, AI, HR, and leadership. The program aligns with workforce needs and is expanding to reach more learners across the state.

Related Media Item:

- UNK News: <https://unknews.unk.edu/2025/07/31/microcredentials-for-15-unk-advance-makes-professional-development-easy-and-affordable/>
 - Central Nebraska Today: <https://www.centralnebraskatoday.com/2025/08/01/unk-advance-makes-professional-development-easy-and-affordable/>
 - Nebraska TV: <https://nebraska.tv/newsletter-daily/university-of-nebraska-at-kearney-launches-affordable-microcredential-courses#>
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University of Nebraska–Lincoln

1. Open house to debut Huskers' new state-of-the-art music building

The University of Nebraska–Lincoln's Glenn Korff School of Music will host an open house for its new building at 10th and Q streets, 4 to 6:30 p.m. Aug. 22. The event will be followed by the Cornhusker Marching Band's annual exhibition at 7 p.m. in Memorial Stadium.

The 103,000-square-foot, state-of-the-art facility officially opened in May and will host classes for the first time this fall.

Related Media Item:

- Nebraska Today: <https://news.unl.edu/article/open-house-to-debut-huskers-new-state-of-the-art-music-building>
- KLIN: <https://klin.com/2025/07/28/open-house-set-for-unls-new-state-of-the-art-music-building/>
- Nebraska TV: <https://nebraska.tv/news/local/unl-unveils-new-music-building-with-open-house>

2. NASA grant helps Eriksen spread love for science

Sophomore Anastasia Eriksen's passion for science has earned her a grant through NASA's National Space Grant College and Fellowship Project. These grants are awarded to students around the country who, like Eriksen, are eager to share their love for science with their broader communities. The grant is funding Eriksen's internship at Branched Oak Observatory this summer, where she educates visitors on astronomy and conducts research at the facility.

Related Media Item: <https://news.unl.edu/article/nasa-grant-helps-eriksen-spread-love-for-science>

University of Nebraska Medical Center

1. Dr. Phil Smith leaves national, international legacy

Colleagues and university leaders celebrate the life of Phil Smith, MD, who spearheaded the creation of the Nebraska Biocontainment Unit and led the medical center's response to during the Ebola crisis of 2014. Infectious disease and the biocontainment unit are among UNMC's most publicized and celebrated areas. Dr. Smith is known nationally for his work in these areas.

Related Media Item: <https://www.unmc.edu/newsroom/2025/07/25/remembering-phil-smith-md-the-father-of-biopreparedness/>

2. UNMC's uBEATS Earns Instructure Academic Excellence Award

uBEATS was recently honored by Instructure (maker of Canvas LMS) in the inaugural Academic Excellence Awards, recognizing its innovative approach to online science and health education. Led by Peggy Moore, uBEATS received first place in the Transformative Program category, reaching over 95,000 learners across the U.S. and offering free, self-paced modules that inspire future healthcare professionals.

This national recognition underscores uBEATS' commitment to accessibility, impact and educational excellence—demonstrating how thoughtful design and collaboration can drive meaningful learning outcomes.

Related Media Item: <https://www.instructure.com/press-release/instructure-celebratesglobal-educators-driving-student-success-inaugural-2025>

University of Nebraska at Omaha

1. The Future of Work Symposium: The Work Revolution

The 2025 Future of Work Symposium, Redesigning Careers with an Entrepreneurial Approach, will explore how professionals across industries are shaping careers that align with their skills, values, and ambitions. Through conversations on freelancing, gig work, corporate innovation, and self-employment, participants will learn how to future-proof their careers by thinking entrepreneurially, embracing technology, and adapting to shifts like automation, AI, and the creator economy.

Hosted by the UNO Division of Innovative and Learning-Centric Initiatives, the event takes place Sept. 17, 2025, at the Barbara Weitz Community Engagement Center.

Related Media Item: <https://events.unomaha.edu/event/future-of-work-september-2025>

2. UNO leading new study into improving how teams assist victims of child sexual exploitation

Project Harmony, a Nebraska-based child advocacy organization, uses a multidisciplinary team (MDT) of social workers, police, and medical providers to coordinate care for victims of child abuse and sexual exploitation. Recognizing that some states lack MDT requirements, leading to inconsistent care, the University of Nebraska at Omaha is leading a nationwide study to evaluate how MDTs operate, identify system breakdowns, and develop a best-practices guidebook.

The research, conducted with two partner universities, will include a systematic review and a national survey, with findings expected in 2028.

Related Media Item: <https://www.wowt.com/2025/07/11/uno-leading-new-study-into-improving-how-teams-assist-victims-child-sexual-exploitation/>

Agriculture and Natural Resources

1. University of Nebraska researchers at forefront to address agriculture-related cyber vulnerabilities

A dynamic partnership between the Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources (IANR) and the National Strategic Research Institute (NSRI) is leading innovative efforts to protect American agriculture from growing cybersecurity threats. With precision agriculture increasingly reliant on digital tools, NU researchers are developing solutions to secure farm operations, equipment, and data.

Key projects include the Security Testbed for Agricultural Vehicles (STAVE), the Agricultural Security Operations Center (AgSOC), and the National Agricultural Producers Data Cooperative (NAPDC). These initiatives combine agricultural science with cybersecurity expertise from across NU's campuses to assess vulnerabilities, create secure data frameworks, and train producers.

Notably, the university has pioneered cybersecurity curricula for Native American farmers and conducted impact analyses of potential cyberattacks on farming systems. This multidisciplinary, producer-focused work not only strengthens national food security but also positions IANR and NSRI as national leaders in ag cybersecurity research, education, and workforce development.

Related Media Item: <https://ianrnews.unl.edu/article/university-of-nebraska-researchers-at-forefront-to-address-agriculture-related-cyber>

2. Grocery industry summit to focus on future of local stores

The University of Nebraska–Lincoln, through its Cooperative Development Center, is playing a key role in convening the 2025 Grocery Industry Summit on Aug. 21 in Kearney. In partnership with the Nebraska Grocery Industry Association, the university is bringing together store owners, vendors, wholesalers, policymakers, and community leaders from across Nebraska to address the challenges facing grocery businesses—especially in rural communities.

By hosting this event, the university is helping foster collaboration, innovation, and knowledge-sharing among industry stakeholders. Sessions will focus on critical topics like ownership transition, regulatory issues, cooperative business models, and technology solutions, such as cashier-less checkout systems.

The summit aims to strengthen rural food access and sustainability by connecting grocers with resources and strategies that support long-term viability.

Related Media Item: <https://ianrnews.unl.edu/article/grocery-industry-summit-focuses-on-the-future-of-local-stores>

University of Nebraska Foundation

1. McCaffreys' Gift Opens Doors for Generations of Student Workers

University of Nebraska–Lincoln alumna Cindy McCaffrey and her husband, Mick, have made a \$4 million gift to establish a permanent endowment to support student workers in the College of Journalism and Mass Communications.

The McCaffreys' gift supports Only in Nebraska: A Campaign for Our University's Future. The campaign's top priority is student access and success to ensure a University of Nebraska education is affordable and achievable for every student.

Related Media Item: <https://nufoundation.org/mccaffreys-gift-opens-doors-for-generations-of-student-workers/>

2. Maureen and Nick Borman Create Scholarship for Omaha Hockey's Right Defenseman Position

Omaha Athletics announced a new scholarship to support the Maverick Hockey program. Maverick supporters Maureen "Mo" and Nick Borman of Omaha made a gift commitment to establish the Borman Family Scholarship to be awarded to the team's right defenseman. This is the third position-specific scholarship to be created by donors for the Omaha Hockey program. Scholarships are a top priority of the Only in Nebraska campaign.

Related Media Item: <https://nufoundation.org/maureen-and-nick-borman-create-scholarship-for-omaha-hockeys-right-defenseman/>

Buffett Early Childhood Institute

Buffett Institute Shares Impact, Key University and State Partnerships with National Board of Advisors

The Buffett Institute's Board of Advisors met in Omaha July 22-23 to reflect on the successes of the past year, learn more about the Institute's current and upcoming projects, and weigh in on future goals, including the Institute's strategic planning process.

The nine-member board is a group of nationally renowned early childhood experts who inform and support the Institute's work. They meet annually with the Institute's executive director and senior staff to offer their insights and recommendations.

A dinner on July 22 at the Wigton Heritage Center on the University of Nebraska Medical Center campus highlighted key Institute partnerships with University of Nebraska campuses, the Learning Community of Douglas and Sarpy Counties, and more. Among the attendees were university leaders, student regents, and a Buffett Institute Graduate Scholar. Speakers included Ken Bayles, vice chancellor for research at UNMC; Károly Mirnics, dean and director, Munroe-Meyer Institute at UNMC; and Matt Hammons, assistant vice president for external relations and director of federal relations at the University of Nebraska System. They highlighted the Institute's policy and research work that is informing policymakers at the state and national levels and the ability of the Institute to collaborate with faculty, staff, and students across NU campuses.

Related Media Item:

- LinkedIn Post: <https://www.linkedin.com/feed/update/urn:li:activity:7356053410892206081>
 - Board of Advisors information: <https://buffettinstitute.nebraska.edu/about-us/board-of-advisors>
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Daugherty Water for Food Global Institute

IWMI and DWFI partner on Cambridge Sustainability Commission on Water for Food Futures

DWFI has partnered with the International Water Management Institute (IWMI) on the Cambridge Sustainability Commission on Water for Food Futures (CWFF). This commission, supported by Cambridge University Press, aims to address the critical global challenge of balancing water and food security. Agriculture uses 70% of global freshwater and a growing population demands more food with less reliable water availability.

Kicking off their collaboration at the 2025 Water for Food Global Conference, IWMI and DWFI will leverage their combined expertise to critically examine existing water management approaches in food systems, identify limitations, and highlight innovations and policy directions. The findings, which will be published in Cambridge University Press's Global Sustainability journal in 2027, will contribute vital research to global understanding and catalyze action for a more secure future for water and food systems worldwide.

This high-profile commission positions the University of Nebraska at the forefront of tackling one of the world's most critical challenges: balancing water and food security.

Related Media Item: <http://go.unl.edu/cwff>

National Strategic Research Institute

NSRI NCR facility hosts DOD, USG, NU leaders & researchers

Since January, the National Strategic Research Institute (NSRI) at the University of Nebraska has welcomed more than 80 government guests and University of Nebraska (NU) researchers to its National Capital Region (NCR) Laboratory & Conference Center for events, workshops, meetings and program reviews.

NSRI also recently launched construction of a 15,000-square-foot expansion to the facility to build out a chemical wet lab, analytical chemistry laboratory and a rapid prototyping engineering space. Completion is anticipated in fall 2025.

The facility is conveniently located approximately five miles from Fort Meade, 20 miles from the Pentagon and 30 miles from the headquarters of the Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA). Since its establishment by NU in 2016, the facility has featured state-of-the-art collaboration technology and multiple meeting rooms for government and university use. It has also offered a 4,300-square-foot flex space, which is often used for scenario-based exercises, tabletop exercises, work group discussions, laboratory trainings and programs and technology reviews and demonstrations. In total, 16 NSRI staff are currently based out of the facility to serve U.S. Department of Defense and other federal government sponsors throughout the region.