

People, Programs and Points of Excellence (P³E)

Report for August 15, 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 Political Science Students Gain Real-World Government Experience Through Prestigious Internships

UNK political science students Sam Schroeder, Connie Gassaway, and Alex Abels spent their summers immersed in public service and policymaking at the state and national level. Their internships with Gov. Jim Pillen, U.S. Rep. Adrian Smith, and U.S. Sen. Deb Fischer provided valuable hands-on experience in government operations and allowed them to explore career paths in law, public administration, and advocacy.

“There is a ton of value in an internship like this,” said junior Alex Abels, who interned in Sen. Fischer’s D.C. office. “Not only did I learn about the federal government, but I also learned about working in a professional office setting and met many different people.”

Related Media Item: <https://unknews.unk.edu/2025/07/17/unk-political-science-students-gain-experience-through-summer-internships>

2. UNK’s Accelerated Athletic Training Program Launches Graduate Toward Future in Health Care

Ethan Twohig, a Holdrege native, is one of eight graduates from the Master of Athletic Training (MAT) program this summer. Thanks to UNK’s accelerated pathway, he earned both his bachelor’s and master’s degrees in just five years. His hands-on clinical experiences – from working with UNK athletics to assisting at Hastings College – prepared him for acceptance into the UNMC physical therapy program and a future serving patients across Nebraska.

“UNK is a little bit smaller, which allows you a lot of experiences that I don’t think you’d get at a bigger school,” Twohig said. “The athletes and faculty trust us and let us go for it.”

Related Media Item: <https://unknews.unk.edu/2025/07/18/ethan-twohig-mat-program-helped-me-get-comfortable-being-uncomfortable>

University of Nebraska–Lincoln

1. Tinker, tailor, solder, pry: Kiewit's Garage lets students innovate

Located on two levels of the College of Engineering's newest academic building, the Garage features 25,000 square feet of prototyping and design space for students and capstone projects. With access to multiple 3D printers, laser cutters and soldering irons, it's a point of pride for engineering students where everything's accessible and innovation is encouraged.

Related Media Item: <https://news.unl.edu/article/tinker-tailor-solder-pry-kiewits-garage-lets-students-innovate>

2. UNL grants 500-plus degrees in August Commencement ceremony

The University of Nebraska–Lincoln conferred more than 500 degrees during a combined graduate and undergraduate commencement ceremony Aug. 16. The University has awarded more than 327,000 degrees in its history.

Related Media Item: <https://news.unl.edu/article/hard-work-pays-off-for-august-grads>

University of Nebraska Medical Center

1. Dr. Kaleb Michaud is a top researcher, patient and self-advocate

Kaleb Michaud, PhD, professor of rheumatology, spoke to a national audience about his journey with rheumatoid arthritis and how it influenced his life and career, and now shares his story with UNMC.

Related Media Item: <https://www.unmc.edu/newsroom/2025/07/18/unmc-connect-magazine-progress-through-pain/>

2. Research breakthrough leads to new MS treatments

A patient at Nebraska Medicine receives a first-of-its-kind therapy using CAR T-cells from a healthy donor that are genetically modified to target and destroy specific immune cells that contribute to the autoimmune attack in MS. It's an approach previously used by Nebraska Medicine and UNMC hematologists to treat blood cancers.

Related Media Item: <https://www.unmc.edu/newsroom/2025/08/06/nebraska-medicine-patient-is-first-to-receive-new-ms-therapy/>

University of Nebraska at Omaha

1. Degrees of UNO alums living in Omaha area boosted economy by \$2.4B last year, report says

A new report highlights the significant economic and social impact of University of Nebraska at Omaha (UNO) graduates on the Omaha metro area. About 67% of UNO bachelor's degree holders stay in Nebraska at least five years after graduation, contributing to a total estimated \$2.4 billion economic impact in 2024. The report, commissioned by the UNO Alumni Association, also found that alumni spending supported over 12,000 jobs and generated nearly \$1 billion in tax revenue. The findings showcase UNO's role in reversing "brain drain" and strengthening the city's workforce, economy, and community.

Related Media Item: <https://nebraskaexaminer.com/2025/07/30/degrees-of-uno-alums-living-in-omaha-area-boosted-local-economy-by-2-4b-last-year-report-says/>

2. UNO Sees Significant Summer Enrollment Growth in 2025

Summer 2025 enrollment at the University of Nebraska at Omaha (UNO) grew by 5.8%, reflecting a steady upward trend in student engagement and credit hours. The increase is driven by expanded summer course offerings, flexible delivery options, and student support that help learners stay on track toward graduation. University leaders credit faculty and staff for maintaining a vibrant, year-round academic environment that supports student success.

Related Media Item: <https://www.unomaha.edu/news/2025/08/unomaha-sees-significant-summer-enrollment-growth-in-2025.php>

Agriculture and Natural Resources

1. Nebraska Veterinary Diagnostic Center receives governor's award

The Nebraska Veterinary Diagnostic Center, part of UNL's School of Veterinary Medicine and Biomedical Sciences, received the Governor's Excellence in Ag Partnership Award for its critical role in supporting agriculture, food safety, and animal and human health. Gov. Jim Pillen presented the award at the 2025 Governor's Summit, praising the lab's importance in detecting and addressing animal diseases. The 65,000-square-foot facility processes 300,000 samples annually, providing rapid results for veterinarians and stakeholders. Accredited and nationally recognized, the lab collaborates with state and federal partners, ensuring readiness for emerging threats while advancing veterinary education, research, and Nebraska's agricultural security.

Related Media Item: <https://news.unl.edu/article/nebraska-veterinary-diagnostic-center-receives-governors-award>

2. U.S. Secretary of Agriculture visits UNL's Eastern Nebraska Research, Extension and Education Center

The U.S. Secretary of Ag Brooke Rollins visited Nebraska on Saturday, Aug. 9 with a stop at the University of Nebraska Eastern Nebraska Research, Extension, and Education Center. U.S. Sen. Deb Fischer, R-Neb. extended the invitation for Rollins to visit Nebraska and led the delegation that included Nebraska U.S. Reps. Don Bacon, Mike Flood, and Adrian Smith.

Nebraska commodity leadership, as well as farmers and ranchers joined in on a round table discussion. Key topics during the visit included trade and tariffs, agricultural challenges and risks, and the progress being made in the sector. The delegation also discussed the farm bill and the importance of continued federal investment in agricultural research, particularly at land-grant universities like UNL.

Related Media Item: <https://instituteofagriculturenaturalresources.exposure.co/us-secretary-of-agriculture-rollins-visits-enreecnbspnbsp>

Buffett Early Childhood Institute

Buffett Institute Releases National Economics and Child Care Report; Contributors Include UNL Economists

Twenty national early childhood experts and economists met in Omaha in October 2024 to discuss child care costs, regulations, and policies like paid parental leave. Those conversations informed a recently released report from the Buffett Early Childhood Institute and Child Care Aware of America, "Economics & Child Care: Where Are We Now and Where Do We Go?" Child Care Aware is the nation's largest voice for child care access, quality, and safety.

Roundtable attendees included leading economists, labor market experts, and child care policy analysts from Federal Reserve banks, higher education institutions like Notre Dame and the University of Chicago, and think tanks across the country. Among them were the University of Nebraska-Lincoln's Brenden Timpe (assistant professor, economics, Nebraska College of Business) and Rebecca Jack (economics Ph.D. candidate).

The report found:

- Traditional child care affordability metrics are misleading. The commonly cited "7% of income" benchmark doesn't reflect real-world costs or family budgets.
- Investment strategies must address supply and demand. The report rejects the idea that loosening regulations (like raising child-to-staff ratios) will solve the crisis, arguing instead for investment strategies that grow available slots and help parents find and afford child care.
- To adequately project appropriate funding levels, policymakers also need to better understand the current child care funding landscape. While federal investments are relatively clear, the levels of state and community funding are less well known. Furthermore, program-level funding is not reported in any consistent manner.

Related Media Items:

- BECI Blog Post: <https://buffettinstitute.nebraska.edu/blog/2025/07/economics-and-child-care-working-to-build-a-high-quality-child-care-system>
- Report: <https://www.childcareaware.org/economics-and-child-care/>

Daugherty Water for Food Global Institute

DWFI welcomes eleven new supported students in 2025-2026 academic year

Since it was initiated in 2014, the Daugherty Water for Food Global Institute's student support program has made more than 150 awards to DWFI Faculty Fellows supporting postdoctoral, graduate and undergraduate students on all four University of Nebraska campuses and invested \$4.8 million, most of which has been matched one-to-one by faculty. The awards provide stipends to students working on projects that contribute to the institute's mission to have a lasting impact on achieving more food security with less pressure on scarce water resources. These students join the 22 returning students who will continue their research and receive DWFI funding, bringing the total number of DWFI supported students to 33 total for the 2025-2026 academic year.

Related Media Item: <https://waterforfood.nebraska.edu/-/media/projects/dwfi/documents/resources/student-support/student-support-2025.pdf>

National Strategic Research Institute

Capabilities Spotlight: Multiomics Mass Spectrometry Core

The potential threat of unknown or unexpected chemical or biological agents, whether weaponized or naturally occurring, is one of the most concerning defense problems the U.S. faces. Even known agents can present an immense threat to the safety and security of the Nation and its warfighters.

To understand how to potentially prevent these agents from causing harm, it is essential to understand exactly how various chemical and biological agents can affect the human body at the subcellular level, including changes in proteins and metabolites.

The Multiomics Mass Spectrometry Core facility at the University of Nebraska Medical Center (UNMC) is uniquely equipped to advance this understanding. It is home to over \$10M in state-of-the-art robotics equipment and mass spectrometry instrumentation that are used by some of the most talented researchers in the field who execute highly optimized and automated processes to obtain fast, accurate answers.

"Leveraging omics is a key part to any new drug development project for the Department of Defense (DOD)," said Dr. Terry Thiem, director for medical countermeasures at the National Strategic Research Institute at the University of Nebraska. "The information proteomics provides helps uncover post-translational modifications to proteins, which is key to deciphering disease mechanisms and mechanisms of action for drug development. Metabolomics is equally valuable to drug development when assessing drug metabolism and toxicity as well as identifying biomarkers associated with diseases."

Related Media Item: <https://nsri.nebraska.edu/news/news-releases/2025/08/capabilities-spotlight-multiomics-mass-spectrometry-core>