

People, Programs and Points of Excellence (P³E)

Report for October 10, 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 Office of the President

1. Op-Ed: Water science partnerships strengthen state's ag and environment

In his October 2025 op-ed, President Jeffrey Gold highlights how the University of Nebraska is putting its land-grant mission into action through ambitious, collaborative water science initiatives. The NU Water Center and the Water Sciences Laboratory work in tight partnership with producers, natural resources districts, communities, and students to advance water research, education, and outreach. From monitoring groundwater flows and nitrate movement to testing domestic wells in rural areas, the university's scientists provide critical data and tools that help Nebraskans make more informed water-management decisions. Innovative programs like the newly launched Master Irrigator training and the long-running Know Your Well curriculum further empower farmers and high school students to lead in water stewardship. Through these efforts, NU not only supports Nebraska agriculture's productivity and resilience, but also strengthens water quality, community health, and environmental sustainability for future generations.

Related Media Item: <https://nebraska.edu/president/speeches-communications/op-ed/2025/10/water-science-partnerships-strengthen-states-ag-and-environment>

2. "Heart to Heart" Podcast Series with President Gold features UNMC Student Regent Brock Calamari

In the latest episode of the University of Nebraska's "Heart to Heart" podcast, President Jeffrey Gold interviews Brock Calamari, a fourth-year medical student at UNMC and one of NU's four student regents. Originally from Illinois, Calamari earned his undergraduate degree in forensic biology at UNL. At UNMC he's served as a College of Medicine senator, student body president, and now uses his regent role to help channel student perspectives into policy. His interest in medicine was sparked by shadowing at a coroner's office, which revealed the close ties between healthcare, public safety, and public policy. Calamari believes leadership means stepping forward to solve issues collaboratively—and he encourages other students to get involved, stressing that advocating for student concerns "isn't as daunting as it seems." Dr. Gold praises his advocacy and leadership, and reminds listeners that "Heart to Heart" episodes are released monthly on platforms like SoundCloud, Apple Podcasts, and Spotify.

Related Media Item: <https://nebraska.edu/news-and-events/news/2025/10/heart-to-heart-podcast-series-features-unmc-student-regent-brock-calamari>

University of Nebraska at Kearney

1. Loper Spotlight: Jazmynne Fangmeyer gains hands-on experience in early childhood education

Jazmynne Fangmeyer, a senior from Deshler, is preparing for a career shaping young lives through UNK's Early Childhood Inclusive Education program. Originally an elementary education major, she discovered her passion for early learning and has spent four years gaining real-world experience at UNK's Plambeck Early Childhood Education Center. Working with children from six weeks to six years old, Fangmeyer advanced from student worker to student teacher assistant, developing skills in classroom management, communication and inclusive learning. She credits the program's focus on supporting all children—including those with special needs—for strengthening her commitment to early education. After graduation, Fangmeyer plans to teach in rural Nebraska, with the long-term goal of becoming a kindergarten teacher.

Related Media Item: <https://unknews.unk.edu/2025/10/01/loper-spotlight-jazmynne-fangmeyer-gains-hands-on-experience-in-early-childhood-education/>

2. UNK expands advising and student support; Loper 101 helps first-year students start strong

UNK is enhancing student success through the Student Advisement and Success Improvement Project, a campuswide initiative that strengthens academic advising and first-year experiences. The effort includes comprehensive adviser training, better access to planning tools, and additional professional advisers dedicated to transfer and at-risk students. A key success is Loper 101, a first-year seminar now enrolling more than 800 students, co-taught by faculty and staff to build academic, career and life skills. Students like Rubi McCracken, a freshman social work major, say the course eases the transition to college by fostering engagement and belonging. Led by Nita Unruh and Aaron Estes with support from Julie Shaffer and Kelly Bartling, the project aligns advising, general education and mentoring efforts across campus to ensure every student has access to the guidance and resources needed to thrive.

Related Media Item: <https://unknews.unk.edu/2025/10/07/unk-expands-advising-support-loper-101-helps-first-year-students-start-strong/>

University of Nebraska–Lincoln

1. University of Nebraska–Lincoln's six-year graduation rate reaches all-time high

The six-year graduation rate at Nebraska's flagship university has reached a historic high of 67%, with 71.4% of 2024–25 grads finishing in four years or less — an 18% increase over the past decade. First-year retention remains strong at 85.7%, the second-highest in 10 years. These milestones reflect focused efforts across advising, planning and the Husker Student POWER framework.

Related Media Item: <https://news.unl.edu/article/universitys-six-year-graduation-rate-reaches-all-time-high>

2. Project expands access to no-cost course materials, saving Huskers millions

The University of Nebraska–Lincoln libraries’ innovative course materials program is dramatically expanding access to affordable textbooks and resources, saving Huskers more than \$3 million to date. A recent pilot involving 27 courses across six colleges showed that most classes could reduce costs by switching to library-supported or open educational resources. By simplifying the search for no-cost or low-cost materials, the program is helping faculty create more accessible learning experiences — and with strong interest from instructors, the University Libraries are poised to scale this effort even further in 2026.

Related Media Item: <https://news.unl.edu/article/libraries-pilot-expands-access-to-no-cost-course-materials-saving-huskers-millions>

University of Nebraska Medical Center

1. Regents approve second design phase for Project Health

The University of Nebraska Board of Regents approved the second design phase for Project Health, a transformational academic health care facility that will be based on the Omaha campus of UNMC and its primary clinical partner, Nebraska Medicine.

Related Media Item: <https://www.unmc.edu/newsroom/2025/10/03/board-of-regents-approves-second-design-phase-for-project-health/>

2. UNMC leaders discuss defense collaborations at regents meeting

UNMC Interim Chancellor H. Dele Davies, MD, and John Lowe, PhD, director of the UNMC Global Center for Health Security, provided updates to the NU Board of Regents on the many partnerships between the U.S. armed services and UNMC. UNMC partners with the Department of Defense to train military physicians, physician assistants and health care leaders through programs that span Nebraska communities and national service. Additionally, UNMC has ongoing partnerships to advance research, partnerships with the Veterans Affairs, the Infectious Disease Air Transport (IDAT) program, C-STARS Omaha and more.

Related Media Item: <https://www.unmc.edu/newsroom/2025/10/03/unmc-leaders-discuss-defense-collaborations-at-regents-meeting/>

University of Nebraska at Omaha

1. UNO’s OMA x AI Conference Brings AI to All of Omaha

The University of Nebraska at Omaha (UNO), in partnership with KANEKO, hosted the OMA x AI Conference, an interactive event designed to make artificial intelligence accessible to all skill levels. Supported by the Greater Omaha Chamber and the City of Omaha, the conference featured hands-on sessions, discussions, and a student competition highlighting real-world AI applications. Building on the event’s momentum, UNO continues to expand AI education through flexible microcredentials that help learners upskill for the future workforce.

Related Media Items:

- UNO News: <https://www.unomaha.edu/news/2025/10/snapshots-unos-oma-x-ai-conference-brings-ai-to-all-of-omaha.php>
- KETV: <https://www.ketv.com/article/omaha-leaders-push-ai-at-uno-conference/68888440>

2. UNO Honors Outstanding Dual Enrollment Instructors Across Omaha Metro

The University of Nebraska at Omaha (UNO) honored eleven outstanding high school instructors through its 2025 Dual Enrollment Teaching Awards, recognizing their exceptional commitment to student success and college readiness. The awards celebrate educators who help students earn college credit while still in high school, giving them a valuable head start toward their degrees. This year's honorees represent schools across the Omaha metro and a range of disciplines, all demonstrating excellence in teaching and strong alignment with UNO's academic standards.

Related Media Items:

- UNO News: <https://www.unomaha.edu/news/2025/10/uno-honors-outstanding-dual-enrollment-instructors-across-omaha-metro.php>
- DC Post Gazette: <https://www.dcpstgazette.com/articles/bennington-high-teachers-honored-for-excellence-in-dual-enrollment-program/>

Agriculture and Natural Resources

1. 'Drought Download' video series visualizes U.S. Drought Monitor

A new video series from the National Drought Mitigation Center at the University of Nebraska–Lincoln helps viewers better understand weekly changes in drought conditions across the U.S. The “Drought Download,” released each Thursday, visually and narratively explains the latest U.S. Drought Monitor update—adding valuable context about precipitation, temperature and weather patterns that shape drought trends. Led by climatologist Lindsay Johnson and communications specialist Emily Case-Buskirk, the short videos make drought data more accessible to a broad audience, helping people “connect the dots” between conditions on the map and the real-world factors driving them.

Related Media Items: <https://ianrnews.unl.edu/article/drought-download-video-series-visualizes-us-drought-monitor>

2. Nebraska LEAD Program and Kimmel Foundation partner to launch new seminar in Nebraska City

The Nebraska LEAD (Leadership Education/Action Development) Program, a two-year leadership initiative for emerging agricultural leaders, will launch its first Resilient Rural Systems seminar in Nebraska City this December. Made possible through a new partnership with the Richard P. and Laurine Kimmel Charitable Foundation, the seminar will highlight the innovation and entrepreneurial spirit of southeastern Nebraska agriculture—expanding on the program's traditional focus on row crops and livestock.

Supported by IANR and the Kimmel Foundation's Catalyst Grants, the event will expose Fellows to alternative agricultural systems and community strategies that reflect the creativity and resilience driving Nebraska's rural future.

Related Media Items: <https://ianrnews.unl.edu/article/nebraska-lead-program-and-kimmel-foundation-partner-to-launch-new-seminar-in-nebraska-city>

University of Nebraska Foundation

Wear Black, Give Back Raises Over \$1.4 million to Support UNO

Maverick supporters rallied behind University of Nebraska at Omaha students during the sixth annual Wear Black, Give Back, raising a record \$1,402,216. It was the first time UNO's fundraising campaign has surpassed \$1 million.

Wear Black, Give Back began at noon Oct. 8 and concluded at noon Oct. 9. Over 24 hours, supporters made 6,726 gifts — exceeding the campaign's goal of 6,500 gifts. The achievement unlocked a \$350,000 matching gift from an anonymous donor to support UNO scholarships.

Related Media Items: <https://nufoundation.org/wear-black-give-back-raises-over-1-4-million-to-support-uno/>

Buffett Early Childhood Institute

Buffett Institute Launches New Child Care Data, Interactive Map That Reveals 4.2 Million Children Nationwide Lack Access to Child Care, Costing U.S. Economy up to \$329 Billion

The Buffett Early Childhood Institute recently unveiled childcaregap.org, which analyzes the gap between the supply of legally operating child care programs and the potential need, demonstrating how child care shortages stall economic growth.

This interactive map is the most comprehensive child care supply data collected to date, and is the first to use a new, distance-based methodology to quantify the child care gap by factoring in the actual distance between existing child care spots and the homes of the children and families that need care. It reveals that there are potentially 4.2 million children without access to child care.

Key findings:

- Communities across the country struggle with gaps in service, but rural communities struggle most. The national child care gap is 28% or 4.2 million children. Urban areas have a child care gap of 27%, whereas rural areas have a gap of 32%. Custer County in Nebraska, for example, has a gap of 60.7%.
- A loss of Head Start services would widen the gap in both rural and urban communities. The gap would increase by 17.9% in rural areas and 14.7 % in urban areas.
- For every child care slot parents need but cannot access, the economy loses between \$52,000 and \$79,000 each year, stemming from reduced workforce participation, lower productivity, decreased household earnings, impact on business earnings, and tax losses.

The site allows users to search child care data by state, county, congressional district, state senate district, and by rural or urban designation, giving policymakers on the local, state, and federal levels a detailed snapshot of the child care needs in their communities at levels never before seen.

This initiative, which has attracted attention from Nebraska media and national early childhood organizations, is a collaboration between the Institute, Child Care Aware of America, and the Bipartisan Policy Center. The work is led by Linda Smith, the Institute's director of policy.

Related Media Items:

- Gap Map Tool: <https://childcaregap.org/>
- WOWT: <https://www.wowt.com/2025/09/10/report-thousands-omaha-children-without-access-child-care-resources/>
- Omaha World-Herald: https://omaha.com/life-entertainment/local/article_2bdc75e9-1a02-4210-a6fa-ee929281c77f.html

Daugherty Water for Food Global Institute

DWFI brings agriculture to the conversation at World Water Week 2025

The Daugherty Water for Food Global Institute (DWFI) actively participated in World Water Week 2025, successfully centering agriculture within the global water conversation. DWFI representatives contributed to key sessions and engaged with partners, notably promoting their new partnership with the International Water Management Institute (IWMI) on the Commission on Water for Food Futures (CWFF). DWFI also co-hosted The Nature Hub, which showcased innovative, nature-based solutions alongside partners like The Nature Conservancy and World Wildlife Fund. This collaborative space highlighted how protecting and restoring natural water systems, coupled with sustainable agriculture, can improve water security and build resilience. DWFI's overall involvement was designed to bridge the water and agriculture sectors, bringing its expertise to the global dialogue to ensure that sustainable food production remains a fundamental part of worldwide water security discussions.

Related Media Item: <https://waterforfood.nebraska.edu/news-and-events/events/2025/08/world-water-week>

National Strategic Research Institute

NSRI celebrates 13 years of excellence

In 2012, the National Strategic Research Institute was established with a single, clear purpose: to protect those who protect us all. We are proud to reflect on how far we've come and the impact we've made in such a short time, advancing critical research for strategic deterrence and countering weapons of mass destruction.

Thanks to sponsorship from United States Strategic Command and affiliation with the University of Nebraska System, NSRI has built lasting partnerships with federal agencies, defense organizations and academic institutions. But beyond the statistics, we are most proud of the talented researchers, students and staff who make our mission possible every day.

By the numbers:

1 of only 15 DOD-designated University Affiliated Research Centers

\$326+ million in all-time award value

195 awarded projects

50+ customers served

4 University of Nebraska campuses contributing capabilities, leading researchers and passionate students

We look forward to the next chapter of innovation, collaboration and service for our Nation's security. Thank you to everyone who has been part of this incredible journey.

Related Media Item: <https://www.linkedin.com/feed/update/urn:li:activity:7378775709969928192>