

People, Programs and Points of Excellence (P³E)

Report for August 14, 2026

The People, Programs and Points of Excellence (P3E) is a biweekly update from across all four campuses of the University of Nebraska System 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. NSF awards \$10 million to Nebraska EPSCoR for statewide STEM support

The University of Nebraska's Established Program to Stimulate Competitive Research, known as EPSCoR, has received a four-year, \$10 million award from the U.S. National Science Foundation. The grant will help strengthen statewide research partnerships, expand science, technology, engineering and math opportunities and support innovation across Nebraska.

Related Media Item: <https://nebraska.edu/news-and-events/news/2026/07/nsf-awards-10-million-to-nebraska-epscor>

2. University of Nebraska System announces 2026 President's Excellence Award recipients

The annual, system-wide President's Excellence Awards celebrate individuals and teams whose contributions have strengthened student success, advanced innovation and discovery, and benefited communities across Nebraska and beyond.

Related Media Item: <https://nebraska.edu/news-and-events/news/2026/08/university-of-nebraska-system-announces-2026-presidents-excellence-award-recipients>

University of Nebraska at Kearney

1. Startup Studio helps UNK students turn their passions into professions

UNK's Startup Studio gives students from any major hands-on experience turning business ideas and personal passions into viable ventures. The yearlong program, offered through the Center for Entrepreneurship and Rural Development, connects students with entrepreneurs across Nebraska through business visits, startup events, individualized mentorship and one-on-one support as they develop their own business plans.

Students are already putting that experience into action: senior Fallon Wells won UNK's Big Idea pitch competition and plans to return to Central City to take over and expand a local flower shop, while Kailynn Rodewald is growing her Sweet & Sassy bakery business with plans for a future storefront in North Platte. The program helps students build the practical skills, professional networks and confidence needed to pursue business ownership after graduation.

Related Media Item: <https://unknews.unk.edu/2026/03/30/startup-studio-helps-unk-students-turn-their-passions-into-professions/>

2. Homegrown Care: UNK experience leads Elly Piper to next step at UNMC in Kearney

UNK graduate Elly Piper is continuing her path toward becoming a rural physician as a member of the first class of UNMC medical students training in Kearney. The Norfolk native graduated summa cum laude with a biology degree and health science emphasis after preparing for medical school through the Kearney Health Opportunities Program, faculty mentorship, clinical work as a phlebotomist and a medical outreach trip to Peru.

She also developed as a leader through the Honors Program, Residence Life and numerous campus and community activities, earning the UNK Alumni Association's Outstanding Senior Award. Piper will now build on those experiences at the new Health Science Education Center II, with plans to ultimately practice medicine and serve rural Nebraska communities.

Related Media Item: <https://unknews.unk.edu/2026/05/06/homegrown-care-unk-experience-leads-elly-piper-to-next-step-at-unmc-in-kearney/>

University of Nebraska–Lincoln

1. Huskers' ASSIST program envisions stronger communities

Architecture, planning, landscape architecture and interior design are vital to the future of Nebraska's smaller communities, yet those communities often have the least access to professional design services. The University of Nebraska–Lincoln College of Architecture's ASSIST Program, a community-focused design studio, helps students recognize that ambitious and meaningful design practice is possible throughout the state—not just in our larger cities—and helps Nebraska towns frame challenges and explore opportunities through design.

Related Media Item: <https://news.unl.edu/article/huskers-collaborate-with-axtell-to-envision-stronger-community>

2. University of Nebraska–Lincoln grants 604 degrees in August ceremony

The University of Nebraska–Lincoln conferred 604 degrees during its Aug. 15 commencement ceremony, celebrating graduates from across the globe. The ceremony also honored alumna and trailblazer Louise Pound with a posthumous doctorate and sending graduates into careers ranging from education to professional golf.

Related Media Item: <https://news.unl.edu/article/simple-lessons-sheridan-tells-graduates-to-listen-be-kind-share>

3. NIMBUS Lab selected for Air Force-funded drone research

The project pairs the NIMBUS Lab with Reach Power, a California-based company developing wireless power-beaming technology. Researchers will investigate how wireless power could enable small unmanned aircraft to remain in position for extended periods without the need for battery swaps or frequent recovery.

Related Media Item: <https://news.unl.edu/article/nimbus-lab-selected-for-air-force-funded-drone-research>

University of Nebraska Medical Center

1. Trailblazing a decade of CAR T-cell therapy

Nebraska Medicine and UNMC marked 10 years of life-saving innovation and extraordinary care through CAR T-cell therapy, a groundbreaking form of cellular therapy that has transformed treatment for many patients. More than 300 patients, caregivers, clinicians, researchers, donors and supporters gathered Aug. 7 to recognize the teams and partnerships that built the program and its continued work to advance the next generation of gene and cellular therapies.

Related Media Item: <https://www.unmc.edu/newsroom/2026/08/11/trailblazing-a-decade-of-car-t-cell-therapy/>

2. Pharmacy set to launch extended PharmD program

Beginning in 2027, UNMC's College of Pharmacy will become just the second public university in the nation to offer an extended PharmD program, giving students the option to complete the degree over six years rather than the traditional four. The new pathway is designed to make pharmacy education more accessible to working adults by reducing the annual course load and cost while maintaining a path to the same PharmD degree.

Related Media Item: <https://www.unmc.edu/newsroom/2026/08/05/pharmacy-set-to-launch-extended-pharmd-program/>

University of Nebraska at Omaha

1. UNO Secures \$8M NSF Award to Establish Nebraska Center for 3D Innovation (NE3D)

UNO is establishing the Nebraska Center for 3D Innovation (NE3D), a statewide research hub focused on advancing 3D-printed healthcare technologies, following an \$8 million National Science Foundation E-RISE award. Led by Jorge Zuniga, Ph.D., NE3D brings together researchers, clinicians, educators, students and industry partners across Nebraska to advance 3D-printed prosthetics, antimicrobial materials and patient-specific anatomical models. The center will also strengthen Nebraska's STEM workforce through interdisciplinary research, education and workforce development opportunities.

Related Media Items: <https://www.unomaha.edu/news/uno-secures-8m-nsf-award-to-establish-nebraska-center-for-3d-innovation.php>

2. UNO Pioneers Flexible Graduate Pathway Program for Working Adults in Nebraska

UNO launched Maverick Flex Path, a fully online, competency-based education model that allows graduate students to progress at their own pace while demonstrating mastery of workforce-aligned skills. Beginning with the Graduate Certificate in Executive Business in Fall 2026, the model offers working professionals flexible start dates, personalized faculty support and flat-rate tuition, with additional education programs planned for 2027.

Related Media Item: <https://www.unomaha.edu/news/uno-pioneers-flexible-graduate-pathway-program-for-working-adults-in-nebraska.php>

Agriculture and Natural Resources

1. Ties between Canadian startup, Nebraska U lead to new tech facility in Seward

PTx Trimble's new engineering facility in Seward is the result of a nearly decade-long partnership with the University of Nebraska–Lincoln. UNL proved pivotal in attracting the Canadian company to Nebraska, offering the engineering talent, agricultural expertise and research infrastructure needed to build an autonomous farming technology ecosystem. Through faculty such as Santosh Pitla, Nebraska Innovation Campus, Industry Relations and Career Services, UNL connected PTx with research, facilities and a pipeline of skilled graduates. Today, the Seward center is staffed largely by Husker alumni and researchers developing technologies such as OutRun, which converts existing tractors into autonomous machines—demonstrating how university-industry partnerships can drive innovation, workforce development and economic growth in Nebraska.

Related Media Items:

- News Release: <https://news.unl.edu/article/ties-between-canadian-startup-nebraska-u-lead-to-new-tech-facility-in-seward>
- The Central City RN: <https://www.republicannonpareil.com/news/international-ties-lead-new-tech-facility>

2. Nebraska LEAD Program Announces Class 45 Fellows

The University of Nebraska–Lincoln's Nebraska Leadership Education/Action Development (LEAD) Program has selected 29 agricultural leaders from across the state as Fellows of Nebraska LEAD Class 45. Beginning in September, Fellows will participate in a two-year leadership development experience featuring in-state seminars and national and international study opportunities. The program is designed to strengthen leadership skills, broaden understanding of agricultural issues and prepare participants to serve their communities and industries. Now in its 45th year, the UNL program brings together Fellows from diverse agricultural backgrounds to learn from one another, build relationships and prepare for the challenges and opportunities facing Nebraska agriculture.

Related Media Item:

- News Release: <https://ianrnews.unl.edu/article/nebraska-lead-program-announces-class-45-fellows>
 - Rural Radio Network: <https://ruralradio.com/krvn/news/nebraska-lead-program-selects-29-fellows-for-class-45/>
 - Columbus Telegram: https://columbustelegram.com/news/local/article_70e0b64d-1cda-4cb0-8ea6-7723f19e5c3a.html
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University of Nebraska Foundation

Donors Invest \$67.5 Million in Omaha Athletics

Two projects, a \$55 million training center and a \$12.5 million baseball and softball clubhouse make up a \$67.5 million investment in athletics at the University of Nebraska at Omaha. All privately funded, the facilities are part of the third phase of the campus master plan. The University of Nebraska Board of Regents recently approved the naming of the training center in honor of Regent Emeritus Howard L. Hawks, who passed away in 2024.

The Hawks Family is among a group of donors, all of whom generously funded these facilities. Support for students is the top priority of Only in Nebraska: A Campaign for Our University's Future.

The Howard L. Hawks Training Center will house modern competition and practice courts, community event areas and student-athlete support services, including academics, strength and performance, nutrition, mental health, locker rooms and lounges for select sport programs to support a holistic student-athlete experience at UNO.

Related Media Item: <https://www.unomaha.edu/news/2025/12/regents-approve-67.5m-privately-funded-capital-projects-at-uno-for-omaha-athletics.php>

Buffett Early Childhood Institute

Buffett Institute Hosts National Board of Advisors for Annual Meeting, Community Reception

The Buffett Early Childhood Institute welcomed our Board of Advisors to Omaha Aug. 5-7. The Advisors, seven nationally renowned early childhood experts, help inform and support the Institute's work. At the meeting, the Advisors met with staff, reviewed emerging Institute priorities, learned about the University of Nebraska System's "odyssey to extraordinary" strategic plan and key pillars from President Jeffrey P. Gold, M.D., and provided strategic guidance.

On Aug. 6, the Institute hosted a community reception on the University of Nebraska Medical Center campus for Advisors, where they met with university, city, and community leaders. Speakers included President Gold, University of Nebraska at Omaha Chancellor Joanne Li, and City of Omaha Mayor John Ewing. These conversations highlighted how the Institute collaborates with partners across the city, state, and country to improve the lives of children and families.

The Institute also shared a video about its Community Chairs and honored the late UNO Community Chair and Professor Debora Wisneski, who died of cancer in June.

Related Media Items:

- Board of Advisors Website: <https://buffettinstitute.nebraska.edu/about-us/board-of-advisors>
 - LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/feed/update/urn:li:activity:7493366103100952576>
 - Community Chair video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kZZd3psV9Zw>
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Daugherty Water for Food Global Institute

Nebraska expertise supports Ukraine's irrigation restoration efforts

A delegation of Ukrainian agricultural leaders and water managers recently visited Nebraska to explore the state's world-class irrigation technologies and management strategies. Hosted by the Daugherty Water for Food Global Institute at the University of Nebraska, this visit facilitated connections between Nebraska's agricultural industry and Ukrainian stakeholders, highlighting how shared expertise in precision agriculture can support Ukraine's efforts to modernize infrastructure and restore irrigation capacity in the face of ongoing wartime challenges. This partnership underscores DWFI's vital role of cross-border collaboration in strengthening food security and building long-term agricultural resilience.

Related Media Item: <https://waterforfood.nebraska.edu/news-and-events/news/2026/08/nebraska-expertise-supports-ukraines-irrigation-restoration-efforts>

National Strategic Research Institute

NSRI advances Nebraska national security research at two major defense conferences

The National Strategic Research Institute (NSRI) at the University of Nebraska showcased Nebraska research, technology and expertise at two major U.S. Department of War (DOW) conferences last week: the U.S. Strategic Command (USSTRATCOM) Deterrence Symposium and the Military Health System Research Symposium (MHSRS). Together, the conferences brought together leaders, researchers, military practitioners and industry partners focused on some of the nation's most consequential defense challenges — from strategic deterrence and nuclear policy to military medicine and readiness.

As the DOW-designated University Affiliated Research Center (UARC) sponsored by USSTRATCOM, NSRI connects Nebraska researchers and students with federal defense and national security missions. Its presence at both conferences demonstrated the breadth of University of Nebraska capabilities and the System's ability to connect university expertise directly with federal defense priorities.

The Deterrence Symposium is a national forum focused on the evolving strategic security environment and the role of deterrence in maintaining U.S. and allied security. The event brings together senior military leaders, government officials, academics and industry experts to examine strategic deterrence challenges and opportunities. NSRI exhibited and presented research supporting USSTRATCOM's strategic deterrence mission. Featured work included: Locating Non-Cooperative Emitters Using Software-Defined Radio Networks Strategic Mission Planning and Executive System: Database Modernization NSRI's participation provided an opportunity to engage directly with strategic deterrence leaders and demonstrate how the institute and University of Nebraska can support work advancing understanding of the U.S. nuclear posture, limited nuclear conflict, and the effects of foreign nuclear capabilities and intentions. NSRI's strategic deterrence capabilities span nuclear education and policy, escalation dynamics, decision support and tabletop exercises; nuclear security, nonproliferation and detection technologies; survivability, NC3 and electromagnetic spectrum operations; advanced materials and manufacturing; and arms control, verification and diplomatic engagement.

At MHSRS 2026, NSRI and University of Nebraska researchers showcased technologies and research addressing CBRNE threats, medical readiness and warfighter performance. The exhibit featured: Prophylactic treatment for acute radiation syndrome SWaP-optimized radiation detection electronics Real-world knee monitoring for warfighter readiness Real-time gait intelligence for soldier readiness Resistance-proof therapeutics designed to return warfighters to duty faster US-MRA™ Medical Readiness Atlas, a national CBRNE healthcare workforce

intelligence system Beyond the featured technologies, NSRI connects DOW partners with broad University of Nebraska capabilities across the medical CBRNE mission. These include disaster medicine and global health security; high-consequence pathogen management, response and training; vaccine, therapeutic and diagnostic discovery and development; and military health, human performance and rehabilitation. Together, these multidisciplinary capabilities enable NSRI and university researchers to address complex threats across the full continuum — from preparedness and prevention to detection, treatment, recovery and warfighter readiness. NSRI's participation at both conferences highlighted a distinctive strength of the University of Nebraska: the ability to bring together multidisciplinary research expertise and connect it directly to high-priority national security missions.

Related Media Items:

- <https://www.linkedin.com/feed/update/urn:li:activity:7490853280768696320>
- <https://www.linkedin.com/feed/update/urn:li:activity:7490499253983875073>