

People, Programs and Points of Excellence (P³E) Report for August 28, 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. President Gold joined by UNL Interim Chancellor Ankerson on "Shaping the Future"

Our newest "Shaping the Future" episode features a conversation between President Gold and Katherine S. Ankerson, interim chancellor at the University of Nebraska–Lincoln. They discuss Interim Chancellor Ankerson's journey to Nebraska, the launch of UNL's "Our Bold Path Forward" strategic framework and what's to come as goals and priorities are set.

Related Media Item: <https://youtu.be/uV2wm8-t12Y>

2. Nebraska aims to reclaim We Give Blood title, generate 20,000 lifesaving donations

On the heels of the American Red Cross declaring a national blood crisis and the Nebraska Community Blood Bank reporting its lowest blood supply since the COVID-19 pandemic, the University of Nebraska System is calling on Nebraskans everywhere to help save lives and bring the We Give Blood championship back to Nebraska.

Related Media Item: <https://nebraska.edu/news-and-events/news/2026/08/nebraska-aims-to-reclaim-we-give-blood-title>

University of Nebraska at Kearney

1. Loper Flight Academy launches new era for UNK Aviation

UNK officially launched the Loper Flight Academy, a fully university-owned and operated flight-training program designed to strengthen student opportunities and respond to growing aviation workforce needs. By moving away from a contracted flight school, UNK now oversees flight operations, employs its own instructors and leases a fleet of seven new Tecnam P-Mentor aircraft, providing greater control over training, safety, scheduling and costs.

The new model allows revenue from flight operations to remain within the program and be reinvested in students, with the potential to reduce training costs and expand resources as enrollment and aircraft usage grow. Offering both Part 61 and Part 141 training, the academy will serve UNK aviation students as well as community members seeking pilot certification, expanding access to flight training across central and western Nebraska.

Related Media Item: <https://unknews.unk.edu/2026/08/20/loper-flight-academy-launches-new-era-for-unk-aviation/>

2. UNK students provide care, gain perspective during medical outreach trip to Peru

A group of 23 UNK students traveled to Peru for a two-week medical outreach experience that combined hands-on patient care with cultural learning. Working alongside local physicians and pharmacists, the students helped operate mobile clinics in Cusco and surrounding rural communities, providing free care and medication to more than 600 patients while gaining experience taking vital signs, observing consultations and assisting with medications.

Organized through UNK's chapter of VAW Global Health Alliances, the trip exposed students to challenges surrounding healthcare access in underserved communities and helped them develop skills in communication, leadership, empathy and patient care. Living with host families and experiencing Peruvian culture also gave students a broader perspective they can carry into future careers in medicine and allied health professions.

Related Media Item: <https://unknews.unk.edu/2026/07/17/unk-students-provide-care-gain-perspective-during-medical-outreach-trip-to-peru/>

University of Nebraska–Lincoln

1. CAPS earns international accreditation for student mental health care

The Counseling and Psychological Services team has earned full accreditation from the International Association of Counseling Services, recognizing the center's commitment to high standards of clinical care and its ongoing efforts to expand access to mental health support for students.

Related Media Item: <https://news.unl.edu/article/caps-earns-international-accreditation-for-student-mental-health-care>

2. Grant expands Nebraska U's 9/11 remembrance into a month of service

Nebraska is building on its longstanding Sept. 11 tradition of service with a month of expanded opportunities for faculty, staff and students. Supported by a \$10,000 grant, the effort brings together campus remembrance activities, volunteer projects and new ways to serve the Lincoln community.

Related Media Item: <https://news.unl.edu/article/grant-expands-nebraska-us-911-remembrance-into-a-month-of-service>

University of Nebraska Medical Center

1. UNMC urgent care dental clinic serves need, saves costs

The UNMC College of Dentistry has opened a new urgent care dental clinic in Lincoln to provide treatment for patients with urgent dental needs, while also giving residents and fourth-year dental students valuable clinical experience. The clinic offers an alternative to hospital emergency departments, which generally cannot provide definitive dental treatment and averaged nearly \$3,200 per dental patient visit in Nebraska in 2023. Supported by federal Rural Health Transformation Program funding as well as alumni and industry partners, the clinic is part of the college's broader effort to improve access to dental care across Nebraska.

Related Media Item: <https://www.unmc.edu/newsroom/2026/08/17/unmc-urgent-care-dental-clinic-serves-need-saves-costs/>

2. Grant will aid in 'decoding' AI, computation for investigators

UNMC faculty Dr. Andrew Dudley and Dr. Jordan Rowley received a five-year, \$3.3 million T32 grant from the National Institute of General Medical Sciences to establish new graduate training program called DECODE, Developing Experts in Computation, 'Omics and Data Exploration. The program (the first UNMC T32 open to first- and second-year graduate students) will train emerging scientists to ethically and effectively use AI tools for coding, data analysis and visualization, and preparation of research reports while strengthening critical thinking, leadership and interdisciplinary research skills.

Related Media Item: <https://www.unmc.edu/newsroom/2026/08/18/grant-will-aid-in-decoding-ai-computation-for-investigators/>

University of Nebraska at Omaha

1. UNO and Fiserv Celebrate Opening of Maverick Headshot Studio

The University of Nebraska at Omaha (UNO) and Fiserv celebrated the opening of the new Maverick Headshot Studio in Mammel Hall, providing students with access to professional headshots to support career readiness, networking, internships and future employment opportunities. The studio reflects the strong partnership between UNO and Fiserv and their shared commitment to student success, workforce development and preparing the next generation of Nebraska talent.

Related Media Item: <https://www.unomaha.edu/news/university-of-nebraska-at-omaha-and-fiserv-celebrate-opening-of-maverick-headshot-studio.php>

2. UNO introduces aviation living community for students

The University of Nebraska at Omaha is welcoming 48 aviation majors into a new living-learning community for the 2026–27 academic year. The community is designed to help students build academic and social connections, strengthen their sense of belonging, and support their transition into the university environment.

Related Media Item: <https://www.ketv.com/article/uno-aviation-living-community-for-students/73480304>

Agriculture and Natural Resources

1. Benny Mote inducted into the Nebraska Pork Producers Hall of Fame

University of Nebraska–Lincoln associate professor and Extension swine specialist Benny Mote has been inducted into the 2026 Nebraska Pork Producers Association Hall of Fame, recognizing his outstanding contributions to the state's pork industry. Through his research and Extension work, Mote has helped producers improve productivity, animal care, biosecurity and disease preparedness while translating university research into practical, on-farm solutions. He has also led producer education, strengthened partnerships with the Nebraska Pork Producers Association, and inspired future agricultural leaders through youth programs such as Nebraska 4-H Farrowed & Owned.

Related Media Items:

- News Release: <https://ianrnews.unl.edu/article/benny-mote-inducted-into-the-nebraska-pork-producers-association-hall-of-fame>
- Pork Business: <https://www.porkbusiness.com/news/unl-swine-specialist-benny-mote-wins-nebraska-pork-hall-fame-award>

2. Seed Industry Scholars Program Cultivates the Next Generation of Seed Industry Leaders

To address a growing shortage of trained seed industry professionals, the University of Nebraska–Lincoln has launched the Seed Industry Scholars program, combining specialized seed science coursework, internships, scholarships and hands-on industry experiences. Developed through collaboration with faculty, the Nebraska Crop Improvement Association and industry partners, the program prepares students for careers spanning plant breeding, seed production, sales and logistics. Participants gain firsthand experience through internships and field tours while building connections with industry leaders. University leaders hope to expand the program into a seed science minor, strengthening the talent pipeline for one of agriculture's most essential industries.

Related Media Item:

- News Release: <https://ianrnews.unl.edu/article/how-nebraska-is-training-agronomists-to-meet-seed-industry-demand-0>
- The Central City RN: <https://www.republicannonpareil.com/news/how-state-training-agronomists-meet-demand>

University of Nebraska Foundation

University of Nebraska surpasses \$500 million in private support

The University of Nebraska Foundation has announced record private support for the University of Nebraska, with \$532.8 million in new funds committed in the fiscal year ending June 30, 2026. This is the first time annual fundraising has exceeded \$500 million. During the fiscal year, 58,433 donors made a gift to support the University of Nebraska. Gifts were made to support all campuses: the University of Nebraska at Kearney, University of Nebraska–Lincoln, University of Nebraska Medical Center and its clinical partner, Nebraska Medicine, University of Nebraska at Omaha and Nebraska College of Technical Agriculture in Curtis.

Almost all gifts received, 99%, were restricted to a specific university purpose. That means private support cannot be used to make up for losses in state funding. The University of Nebraska remains dependent on its critical partnership with the State of Nebraska, which is its largest source of funding.

Related Media Item: <https://nufoundation.org/university-of-nebraska-surpasses-500-million-in-private-support/>

Buffett Early Childhood Institute

Buffett Institute Funds Research for Three Ph.D. Students from UNMC, UNL With Graduate Scholars Program

The Buffett Early Childhood Institute will fund the early childhood research of three doctoral students from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and the University of Nebraska Medical Center through the 2026–27 Graduate Scholars program. The Buffett Institute has invested more than \$800,000 through the Graduate Scholars program, now in its 11th year, to fund ambitious research projects by Ph.D. students from University of Nebraska campuses. The program awards one-year fellowships worth up to \$25,000 to a maximum of four NU doctoral students every year. Fifteen students—a new record—applied for the 2026–27 cohort.

The 2026-27 Scholars are:

- Marisol Loza Hernandez, University of Nebraska Medical Center
 - Project Title: A Community-Based Group Training Program for Spanish-Speaking Caregivers of Young Children With Autism: An Evaluation of Effectiveness and Acceptability
 - Mentor: Mary Halbur
- Rebecca Jack, University of Nebraska-Lincoln
 - Project Title: Afterschool Care and Maternal Labor Force Participation
 - Mentor: Brenden Timpe
- Paige Wernick, UNL
 - Project Title: The Work of Teaching Toddlers: Pedagogical Reasoning in Classroom Practice
 - Mentor: Amy Napoli

The Graduate Scholars program offers students the opportunity to network with and learn from Institute experts and university leaders across the early childhood field. It is led by Alexandra Daro, the Buffett Institute's director of applied research.

Related Media Items: <https://buffettinstitute.nebraska.edu/news-and-events/news/2026/07/buffett-institute-names-three-graduate-scholars>

Daugherty Water for Food Global Institute

Exploring new connections between farmers and science – Nebraska Master Irrigator

Nebraska Master Irrigator is an innovative program that builds trust in new agricultural technologies through game-based and peer-learning experiences. By providing farmers with locally relevant insights and data-driven tools, the initiative—supported by the expertise of DWF/NWC educators—helps them evaluate irrigation and nitrogen decisions in real-world simulations.

With over 158 participants managing more than 350,000 acres in 2026, the program has demonstrated significant impact, with participants reporting increased confidence in adopting sustainable practices that improve both farm profitability and water stewardship. This story is particularly timely as the program prepares to launch new on-demand, mobile-friendly online courses later in 2026, offering busy producers an accessible way to engage with these resources throughout the growing season.

Related Media Item: <https://waterforfood.nebraska.edu/news-and-events/news/2026/08/exploring-new-connections-between-farmers-and-science-nebraska-master-irrigator>

National Strategic Research Institute

DHA, AFRRRI leaders tour NU, NSRI defense-ready research enterprise

Senior leaders from the Defense Health Agency (DHA) and the Armed Forces Radiobiology Research Institute (AFRRRI) recently visited the University of Nebraska System (NU) for a two-day engagement focused on strengthening national defense medical capabilities and accelerating solutions for warfighter protection. As one of only 15 Department of War (DOW) University Affiliated Research Centers (UARCs), the National Strategic Research Institute (NSRI) at the University of Nebraska led the engagement, ensuring the visit aligned with DHA and AFRRRI mission needs and demonstrating NSRI's unique role in connecting operational priorities with NU's scientific expertise and research infrastructure. DHA, AFRRRI, NSRI and NU are collaborating on development of a first-of-its-kind prophylactic treatment to protect U.S. troops from acute radiation syndrome (ARS). This project has received more than \$35 million in funding from DHA since 2017, including a \$24.5 million contract in 2023 for the current phase. The team's progress toward FDA-aligned evaluation represents one of the most advanced national efforts to counter radiological threats.

"We were pleased to see and discuss the state-of-the-art capabilities at each of the University of Nebraska campuses we visited," said Dr. Martin LaFrance, DHA research portfolio manager. "The diverse capabilities and partnerships with other organizations provide a strong foundation that we hope will lead to FDA-approved military health readiness solutions for acute radiation syndrome."

Related Media Item: <https://nsri.nebraska.edu/news/news-releases/2026/8/dha-afrrri-leaders-tour-nu-nsri-defenseready-research-enterprise>