

People, Programs and Points of Excellence (P³E)

Report for June 19, 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. Board of Regents advance Nebraska Medicine governance transition during June meeting

At its June 18th meeting, the University of Nebraska Board of Regents unanimously approved a resolution stating the university's intent to work with the Omaha Community Foundation with the goal of admitting the foundation as a governing member of Nebraska Medicine.

Related Media Item: <https://nebraska.edu/news-and-events/news/2026/06/board-of-regents-advance-nebraska-medicine-governance-transition-during-june-meeting>

2. President Gold joins Huskers Radio Network's Jessica Coody on Sports Nightly

President Gold joined Jessica Coody on a recent Huskers Radio Network Sports Nightly broadcast to reflect on the university's momentum this spring—in both academics and athletics—and talk about plans for the future.

Related Media Item: <https://youtu.be/SBPkF9YmQ6I>

University of Nebraska at Kearney

1. UNK joins national program sending student research to space

The University of Nebraska at Kearney has been selected to participate in the Student Spaceflight Experiments Program (SSEP), a nationally recognized STEM initiative that allows students to design research experiments for the International Space Station. Through a campuswide competition, UNK students will develop proposals for microgravity research, with one project ultimately selected to fly aboard a SpaceX mission in spring 2027 and be conducted by astronauts in orbit.

Students will gain hands-on experience with the scientific research process, from proposal development and peer review to data analysis and presentation. The opportunity also includes involvement from UNK Art and Design students, who will create mission patch designs for the flight.

Related Media Item: <https://unknews.unk.edu/2026/06/09/unk-joins-national-program-sending-student-research-to-space/>

2. More than a game: UNK students give back through Buddy Bowling, TOPSoccer programs

University of Nebraska at Kearney students are making a meaningful impact through Buddy Bowling and TOPSoccer, two programs that connect student volunteers with children and adults who have disabilities. Organized through UNK's physical education and recreation programs, the initiatives provide opportunities for participants to build confidence, develop social connections and enjoy recreational activities in a supportive environment.

For UNK students, the programs offer valuable hands-on experience working with individuals of varying abilities while reinforcing lessons in leadership, communication and service. The relationships formed often extend beyond the activities themselves, creating lasting benefits for both participants and volunteers.

Related Media Item: <https://unknews.unk.edu/2026/04/07/more-than-a-game-unk-students-give-back-through-buddy-bowling-topsoccer-programs/>

University of Nebraska–Lincoln

1. Edgeworks digitizes Nebraska's I-80 sculpture garden for America 250

As part of the national America 250 celebrations, the Johnny Carson Center for Emerging Media Arts, through its research and emerging media production team Edgeworks, has digitized and 3D-scanned each of the sculptures included in Nebraska's Interstate 80 Bicentennial Sculpture Project in collaboration with the Nebraska Arts Council.

Related Media Item: <https://news.unl.edu/article/edgeworks-digitizes-nebraskas-i-80-sculpture-garden-for-america-250-0>

2. Poust helps identify new species of feathered dinosaur

Ashley Poust's path to a career in paleontology began unexpectedly in an undergraduate geology course and has since led him from Montana field sites to an international team that identified the feathered dinosaur *Jianchangmaensis*. Now at Nebraska U, he mentors students in field and research opportunities designed to broaden access to scientific discovery and hands-on fossil work.

Related Media Item: <https://news.unl.edu/article/poust-helps-identify-new-species-of-feathered-dinosaur>

University of Nebraska Medical Center

1. A 33-ton delivery changing the future of cancer care

The Fred & Pamela Buffett Cancer Center reached a major milestone with the arrival of Nebraska's first proton therapy system. Expected to begin treating patients in spring 2027, the technology will deliver highly targeted radiation while limiting exposure to surrounding healthy tissue, expanding treatment options for patients across Nebraska and the region.

Related Media Item: <https://www.unmc.edu/newsroom/2026/06/10/a-17-ton-delivery-changing-the-future-of-cancer-care/>

2. New therapeutic created at UNMC moves closer to clinic

A therapeutic molecule developed in the College of Pharmacy by Corey Hopkins, PhD, is moving closer to clinical trials after Goldenrod Therapeutics secured \$6.5 million in seed funding. The molecule, known as 11h, is designed to reduce brain inflammation while improving brain uptake and limiting the severe side effects associated with existing treatments.

UNeMed helped establish the startup and created the licensing framework for the molecule, which targets PDE4 — a protein involved in chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, rheumatoid arthritis, inflammatory bowel disease, drug addiction, schizophrenia, Alzheimer's disease, multiple sclerosis, ALS, Batten disease and other inflammatory and neurological conditions.

Related Media Item: <https://www.unmc.edu/newsroom/2026/06/09/dr-hopkins-molecule-moves-closer-to-clinic/>

University of Nebraska at Omaha

1. UNO AI-CCORE Opens, Kicks Off with First Mav AI Day

University of Nebraska at Omaha hosted its first Mav AI Day to launch the AI-CCORE center, bringing together experts, students, and community members to explore how artificial intelligence is being used across industries. The event featured talks, demonstrations, and networking that highlighted AI applications in fields like healthcare and finance, along with an emphasis on responsible, human-centered use.

AI-CCORE will serve as a hub for education, research, and outreach aimed at improving AI literacy and preparing the workforce for an AI-driven future.

Related Media Item: <https://www.unomaha.edu/news/2026/06/uno-ai-ccore-opens-kicks-off-with-inaugural-mav-ai-day.php>

2. UNO Pitching Lab brings baseball technology to fans at baseball village

At Omaha Baseball Village during the Men's College World Series, the University of Nebraska Omaha's Sports Medicine and Biomechanics Lab offered fans a hands-on pitching experience using radar and advanced tracking technology. The system measures more than pitch speed, analyzing spin rate, movement, and other mechanics to

better understand performance and reduce injury risk. Researchers say the same tools used in the pop-up are part of UNO's lab, where they help athletes refine technique and improve safety.

Related Media Item: <https://www.ketv.com/article/uno-pitching-lab-brings-baseball-technology-to-fans-at-baseball-village/71595325>

Agriculture and Natural Resources

1. Nebraska U pioneers breakthrough swine vaccine innovation

A University of Nebraska–Lincoln research team has developed a promising new swine influenza vaccine platform that could significantly strengthen disease protection for Nebraska's \$5 billion, 3.6 million-head pork industry. Reported in NPJ Vaccines, the approach uses lipid nanoparticles to deliver DNA vaccines, producing strong immune responses within one to two weeks after a single dose. Unlike some conventional swine flu vaccines, the new method prevented respiratory complications and can be updated rapidly as viruses evolve.

Led by Husker researchers and collaborators, the technology offers a low-cost, adaptable solution to emerging disease threats and positions UNL at the forefront of livestock vaccine innovation with potential applications across multiple animal species.

Related Media Items:

- News Release: <https://ianrnews.unl.edu/article/nebraska-u-pioneers-breakthrough-swine-vaccine-innovation>
- The Pig Site: <https://www.thepigsite.com/news/2026/06/nebraska-researchers-develop-low-cost-swine-flu-vaccine>
- The Fence Post: <https://www.thefencepost.com/news/nebraska-u-pioneers-breakthrough-swine-vaccine-innovation/>

2. Sandhills rancher's stewardship shaped by Nebraska U research, extension

Homer Buell's ranching career was profoundly shaped by the University of Nebraska–Lincoln. After returning to his family's Sandhills ranch, he initially focused on cattle but, through decades of engagement with UNL research, Extension programs and producer networks, learned to prioritize grassland stewardship and long-term sustainability.

Beginning in the 1970s and '80s, Buell worked closely with university researchers, participated in the inaugural Nebraska Ranch Practicum, and adopted data-driven grazing management practices informed by UNL research. He credits the university's land-grant mission, Extension educators and research partnerships with helping him improve ranch management, economics and conservation. Today, his experiences are contributing to new UNL research on grazing systems and ranch decision-making.

Related Media Item: <https://ianrnews.unl.edu/article/sandhills-ranchers-stewardship-shaped-by-nebraska-u-research-extension>

University of Nebraska Foundation

UNO's first presidential chair working to improve statewide literacy

Jennifer Lemke, Ed.D., is the inaugural recipient of the University of Nebraska at Omaha's first presidential chair. To support UNO's literacy education efforts, the Lozier Foundation made a gift through the University of Nebraska Foundation to establish the Lozier Endowed Presidential Chair of Literacy. Lemke's appointment is pending formal approval by the University of Nebraska. She serves as director of the Nebraska Early Literacy Workshop, which was formed to provide K-3 teachers with professional development in the science of reading — that is, evidence-based early literacy instruction.

Lemke is also helping guide the development of the Midwest Literacy Collective, a new statewide initiative launched by the Lozier Foundation. Its mission is to serve as a trusted hub for evidence-based resources to advance literacy for all learners in Nebraska, from birth to adulthood.

Related Media Item: <https://nufoundation.org/unos-first-presidential-chair-working-to-improve-statewide-literacy/>

Buffett Early Childhood Institute

Buffett Institute Executive Director Opens Nebraska Young Child Institute in Kearney

Buffett Institute Executive Director Walter Gilliam delivered opening remarks on June 16 at the Nebraska Young Child Institute (NYCI) event in Kearney. The Buffett Institute was also a co-sponsor of the biennial event, a statewide, multidisciplinary conference focusing on improving outcomes for young children. The NYCI attracts hundreds of attendees from fields including higher education, child care, child welfare, mental health, and more.

In his remarks, Gilliam invoked the long history of child care in America, including child care centers established during World War II to serve the needs of women working to support the war effort. He also discussed the need to enact policies that recognize the value of early educators, pointing to the bipartisan Supporting Early-Childhood Educators' Deductions (SEED) Act.

The SEED Act would extend the federal Educator Expense Deduction to include early educators, allowing them to deduct up to \$350 in qualifying expenses. The Buffett Institute has published a research-to-policy brief, statement, and op-ed on early educator tax reform.

Related Media Items:

- LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/feed/update/urn:li:activity:7472704724979351553>
 - SEED Act resources: <https://buffettinstitute.nebraska.edu/policy-research/federal-seed-act>
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Daugherty Water for Food Global Institute

Inside classrooms, Nebraska students learn the importance of groundwater with Know Your Well Program

The Nebraska Water Center's Know Your Well program, run through the Daugherty Water for Food Global Institute, gives Nebraska high schoolers hands-on experience studying groundwater by having them sample and test local domestic wells, then compare their classroom results against professional analysis from UNL's Water Sciences Lab. The program began in 2017 with funding from the Nebraska Environmental Trust and has grown from one-year projects into a recurring program teachers return to year after year.

A recent grant from the Nebraska Department of Water, Environment, and Energy and the EPA has funded new teacher and regional-leader guides that make it easier for schools and partners like local Natural Resources Districts to implement the curriculum, with regional leaders providing locally based expertise and support to both students and well owners.

Educators and regional partners report that the program's strength lies in connecting students directly with their own communities, building real-world science skills while raising awareness among well owners — some of whom don't otherwise realize their groundwater could carry elevated nitrates or other pollutants. The initiative continues to expand its reach across Nebraska classrooms and regional partners statewide.

Related Media Item: <https://waterforfood.nebraska.edu/news-and-events/news/2026/06/inside-classrooms-nebraska-students-learn-the-importance-of-groundwater-with-know-your-well-program>

National Strategic Research Institute

NSRI, NU address national security implications of agricultural chemicals and pollutants

Agricultural chemical products such as fertilizers are key to ensuring the abundance of American agriculture, but they come with a plot twist: They can also sometimes have unintended consequences. New research in detecting and mitigating unplanned impacts from chemicals and microbial pathogens is helping improve the safety and well-being of all Americans. In February 2026, an executive order designated elemental phosphorus and glyphosate — irreplaceable components of herbicides and defense technologies — as critical assets to national security. Not long after, the war in Iran disrupted delivery of essential fertilizer. These events underscore the importance of managing agricultural chemical supply chains and pathogens to ensure the security, safety and well-being of America and its service members.

“In recent years, both as a society and within the ag industry, we have begun to dive deeper into the intersection of traditional national security and agricultural interests, particularly in the overlap of chemical use, supply chains and health impacts,” said Meghan Jackson, director of the food, agriculture and environment security (FAES) focus area, a strategic partnership between the National Strategic Research Institute (NSRI), the University of Nebraska–Lincoln (UNL) and the Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources (IANR). “We all depend on a successful and healthy American agricultural system. Disruptions to that critical supply caused by chemical interactions or pathogens can have downstream effects. Nebraska researchers are making substantial impacts across all these areas, building on more than a century of commitment to advancing agriculture.”

NSRI is one of only 15 University Affiliated Research Centers (UARCs) in the country designated by the U.S. Department of War (DOW). The institute provides perspective and clarity regarding the evolving national security

concerns of federal government stakeholders. NSRI partners with IANR to leverage 150 years of experience in agricultural research and a deep commitment to producers and consumers for research and development that matters to the DOW and beyond.

“NSRI staff bring deep knowledge on challenges facing agricultural production and maintain strong connections with federal partners,” said Dr. Xu Li, Dale Jacobson and Debra Leigh Professor of Environmental Engineering at UNL. “NSRI helps UNL researchers frame research questions that address national security issues across agriculture and the environment, and it facilitates connections to potential funding.”

With additional partners, NSRI and IANR train military and civilian responders to mitigate the impacts of biological pathogens, develop new ways to detect and mitigate agricultural chemicals and invent nonchemical alternatives.

Related Media Item: <https://nsri.nebraska.edu/news/news-releases/2026/06/nsri-nu-address-national-security-implications-of-agricultural-chemicals-and-pollutants>