

People, Programs and Points of Excellence (P³E)

Report for June 5, 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 at Kearney

1. UNK junior Godiva Kekeh leads through service, sets sights on law career

University of Nebraska at Kearney junior Godiva Kekeh of Bennington is pursuing a future in the legal profession while building an impressive record of leadership, service and academic achievement. A political science major, she serves as a student leader in the Black Student Union and vice president of the Upsilon Eta Upsilon Honor Society for Black Excellence while also working with the Midlands African Chamber in Omaha. Through these experiences, Kekeh has developed a passion for advocacy, leadership and community engagement. Her long-term goal is to attend law school and become a judge, using the law to make a meaningful difference in the lives of others.

Related Media Item: <https://unknews.unk.edu/2026/04/20/loper-spotlight-unk-junior-godiva-kekeh-leads-through-service-sets-sights-on-law-career/>

2. UNK junior Carter Moss is an EMT, biomedical researcher and future physician

University of Nebraska at Kearney junior Carter Moss is gaining real-world health care experience while preparing for a career in medicine. A molecular biology major from Plattsmouth and member of the Kearney Health Opportunities Program, Moss works as an EMT with Midwest Medical Transport in Kearney, conducts biomedical research focused on antibiotic-resistant infections and serves in campus leadership roles. His combination of patient care, research and academic achievement has strengthened his commitment to rural medicine and serving underserved communities. Moss plans to continue his education through medical school and ultimately practice as a physician in Nebraska.

Related Media Item: <https://unknews.unk.edu/2026/03/17/unk-junior-carter-moss-is-an-emt-biomedical-researcher-and-future-physician/>

University of Nebraska–Lincoln

1. University efforts bolster Nebraska's community tree canopy

Nebraska communities are losing tree canopy at one of the highest rates in the nation, prompting University of Nebraska–Lincoln partners to help towns plan, plant and manage more resilient community forests. Through education, data and funding, they are replacing aging trees and preparing for future challenges.

Related Media Item: <https://news.unl.edu/article/university-efforts-bolster-nebraskas-community-tree-canopy>

2. 21 students selected for Nebraska Elite 11 Veterinarian Program cohort

Twenty-one students from across the Cornhusker State have been selected for the newest cohort of the Nebraska Elite 11 Veterinarian Program. A partnership between the university and State of Nebraska, the Elite 11 program aims to strengthen veterinary services in rural communities across the state.

Related Media Item: <https://news.unl.edu/article/21-students-selected-for-nebraska-elite-11-veterinarian-program-cohort>

University of Nebraska Medical Center

1. ‘EDGE in Action’ highlights district’s innovation taking shape

The EDGE District is more than a development project. It is a growing innovation platform adjacent to UNMC and Nebraska Medicine that is helping researchers, clinicians, entrepreneurs and industry partners translate ideas into real-world impact. This campaign highlights the innovators, organizations and partnerships helping share the district’s growing momentum. This will be a catalyst for UNMC growth.

Related Media Item: <https://www.unmc.edu/newsroom/2026/06/03/edge-in-action-highlights-districts-innovation-taking-shape/>

2. UNMC researchers identify new mechanism behind glaucoma

Iqbal Ahmad, PhD, professor in the UNMC Department of Ophthalmology and Visual Sciences, and his team have published a new study, identifying a biological mechanism that causes the optic nerve to degenerate independently of eye pressure, that could reshape how the medical community understands and treats normal tension glaucoma.

Related Media Item: <https://www.unmc.edu/newsroom/2026/05/18/unmc-researchers-identify-new-mechanism-behind-glaucoma-2/>

University of Nebraska at Omaha

1. NCITE Leads Congressional Workshop on “Jailbroken” AI Risks

The National Counterterrorism Innovation, Technology, and Education Center (NCITE) at (UNO) took to Capitol Hill, giving members of Congress a live look at how “jailbroken” AI can be exploited. The workshop and the related research received national news coverage from Politico and NPR.

Related Media Items:

- UNO News Release: <https://www.unomaha.edu/ncite/news/2026/04/jailbroken-ai-workshop-dc.php>
- Politico: <https://homeland.house.gov/2026/04/24/icymi-politico-house-lawmakers-get-a-chilling-demo-of-jailbroken-ai/>
- NPR: <https://www.npr.org/2026/05/31/nx-s1-5816391/ai-safety-concerns-danger-open-weight-models-risks>

2. Soldier, Mother, and Now a UNO Grad: Blanca Brownmiller’s Story of Persistence

After a decade of balancing military service, work, motherhood, and college coursework, Nebraska Army National Guard member Blanca Brownmiller graduated from UNO with a multidisciplinary degree in general science. Brownmiller, who immigrated to the U.S., earned her citizenship, served deployments including a year in Kuwait, and relied on UNO’s Military-Connected Resource Center to help transfer military credits and navigate her path to graduation. Now, she plans to attend Officer Candidate School, crediting persistence, strong family support, and UNO’s military-friendly environment for helping her achieve her long-awaited goal.

Related Media Item: <https://www.unomaha.edu/news/2026/05/soldier-mother-and-now-a-uno-grad-blanca-brownmillers-story-of-persistence.php>

Agriculture and Natural Resources

1. Arapahoe homecare cooperative now accepting clients

Recognizing a growing need for senior care after the 2021 closure of the Arapahoe Nursing Home, local residents partnered with the Nebraska Cooperative Development Center (NCDC), a program of Nebraska Extension at the University of Nebraska–Lincoln, to create the Republican River Valley Homecare Cooperative. The worker-owned cooperative provides non-medical homecare services that help older adults remain in their homes and communities longer. Nebraska Extension and NCDC played key roles by educating residents about the worker-cooperative model, connecting founders with grants, legal assistance, training opportunities, and national support networks, and providing coaching throughout the development process. The cooperative now serves clients across a 120-mile region while creating locally owned caregiving jobs.

Related Media Items:

- News Release: <https://news.unl.edu/article/arapahoe-homecare-cooperative-now-accepting-clients>
- Nebraska Public Media: <https://nebraskapublicmedia.org/en/news/news-articles/nebraskas-first-homecare-cooperative-helps-clients-stay-home-and-out-of-care-facilities/>

2. Leadership In Action: ALEC 102 Students Provide \$119K in Impact to Lincoln Community

This spring, 181 students in the University of Nebraska–Lincoln’s ALEC 102: Interpersonal Skills for Leadership course completed 3,738 hours of community service, generating an estimated \$119,474 in economic impact for Lincoln-area organizations. Partnering with 26 nonprofits, students applied leadership and interpersonal skills in real-world settings, supporting causes ranging from youth development to healthcare and animal welfare.

Community partners praised the students’ compassion, mentorship, and positive contributions. Through these experiences, students gained confidence, professional responsibility, and a deeper understanding of leadership through service. The course continues to connect classroom learning with meaningful community engagement each fall and spring semester.

Related Media Item: <https://ianrnews.unl.edu/article/leadership-in-action-alec-102-students-provide-119k-in-impact-to-lincoln-community>

University of Nebraska Foundation

1. University of Nebraska Foundation awards top service honors

The University of Nebraska Foundation has bestowed its 2026 service awards on three individuals who have dedicated themselves to advancing the University of Nebraska. The honorees are Brian and Carey Hamilton, co-chairs of the University of Nebraska at Kearney Campaign Committee for Only in Nebraska: A Campaign for Our University’s Future, and Clark Rosenlof, a longtime staff member of the University of Nebraska Foundation who retired in 2025.

The recipients were recognized during a celebration June 4 in Omaha. The Hamiltons received the Perry W. Branch Award for Distinguished Volunteer Service. Rosenlof received the Harlan J. Noddle Award for Distinguished Development Service.

Related Media Item: <https://nufoundation.org/university-of-nebraska-foundation-awards-top-service-honors/>

2. University of Nebraska Foundation celebrates 90 years of impact

The University of Nebraska Foundation is celebrating its 90th anniversary this year. The foundation was established on June 3, 1936, during the Great Depression, with one purpose: to raise private support to strengthen the University of Nebraska. That purpose has guided the foundation over the past nine decades, advancing students, faculty, research and facilities across the University of Nebraska System.

What started with a small group of committed leaders and a handful of gifts has grown into one of the nation’s leading university foundations. Today, the foundation manages assets of more than \$3.9 billion, an endowment ranked in the top 25 among public universities and more than 11,000 donor funds.

Related Media Item: <https://nufoundation.org/university-of-nebraska-foundation-celebrates-90-years-of-impact/>

Buffett Early Childhood Institute

New Video Highlights Campus-Buffett Institute Collaboration

A new video from the Buffett Early Childhood Institute highlights the powerful campus-community partnerships fostered through the Institute's Community Chairs program. Featuring interviews with campus leaders and the Institute's four Community Chairs, the video showcases how this collaboration advances research, training, and initiatives that support young children and families, while building a pipeline of highly prepared early childhood educators and researchers.

Across the NU campuses, Community Chairs collaborate with the Buffett Institute to deepen engagement in Nebraska and nationwide. Work focuses on infant mental health, community-engaged research, nature-based learning environments, play-based learning, and systems change. The chairs reflect each campus's strengths in early learning and development. In addition to fulfilling the traditional faculty roles of teaching, research, and service, Community Chairs provide campus leadership and are responsive to the local community.

The Community Chairs are:

- Julia Torquati, Community Chair in Infant and Child Mental Health, University of Nebraska–Lincoln
- Debora Wisneski, John T. Langan Community Chair in Early Childhood Education, University of Nebraska at Omaha
- Paula Thompson, Cille and Ron Williams Community Chair for Early Childhood Education, University of Nebraska at Kearney
- Philip Lai, Cille and Ron Williams Community Chair for Early Childhood Education, UNK

Related Media Items:

- Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DOTDFEXUkmw&t=106s>
- BECI: <https://buffettinstitute.nebraska.edu/about-us/community-chairs>

Daugherty Water for Food Global Institute

Report examines water rights frameworks shaping agriculture on Tribal lands

A brief published by DWFI and the National Drought Mitigation Center explores how water rights frameworks shape agricultural opportunities on Tribal lands across the U.S. Co-authored by DWFI senior program managers Jude Cobbing and Renata Rimšaitė, the brief finds that while Tribes hold strong legal water rights, many remain unquantified—leaving communities navigating real barriers including aging infrastructure and limited capital.

The authors explore how negotiated settlements can help formalize entitlements and unlock federal funding, and highlight the traditional ecological knowledge and modern water management tools Tribes are applying to build agricultural resilience. The work reflects DWFI's commitment to research at the intersection of water policy, governance and food security and was supported in part by the USDA Office of the Chief Economist.

Related Media Item: <https://waterforfood.nebraska.edu/news-and-events/news/2026/05/report-examines-water-rights-frameworks-shaping-agriculture-on-tribal-lands>

National Strategic Research Institute

Capabilities Spotlight: NSRI National Capital Region Laboratory and Conference Center

The United States has entered a new era of defense — detection alone is no longer enough to address chemical and biological threats. Warfighters must act quickly and at scale in the face of challenges posed by bioconvergence, disruptive technologies, artificial intelligence (AI), shifting geopolitics and the democratization of technology, which gives destructive capabilities to more, and more varied, adversaries. Solutions supporting the nation's defense in this complex landscape lie in advanced, integrated technologies that are developed rapidly in secure, controlled research and development environments.

"The National Strategic Research Institute's (NSRI) chemical and biological defense program (CBDP) is uniquely positioned to solve the emerging challenges of national security and support the U.S. Department of War (DOW) in this new era of chemical and biological defense (CBD)," said Marty Sikes, associate executive director for CBD programs at the National Strategic Research Institute (NSRI) at the University of Nebraska (NU). "Because we have expertise, equipment, spaces and an efficient contracting mechanism with the government in place, we can quickly and efficiently solve problems and deliver solutions that meet the military's needs."

The NSRI National Capital Region (NCR) Laboratory and Conference Center is at the heart of the institute's chemical and biological defense programs. Opened in 2016 through NU investments, the facility extended and focused the impact of NU and NSRI chemical and biological defense capabilities by bringing capacity to the doorstep of national security agencies.

Located in Annapolis Junction, Maryland, NSRI NCR lies within driving distance of the Pentagon, Fort Meade, Fort Detrick, the Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA) headquarters and the office of the Capability Program Executive for Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear Defense. In total, 24 of NSRI's primary customers are located in the national capital region.

"This laboratory and conference center have become a key collaboration hub for defense partners," Sikes said. "It is a specialized facility equipped with unique capabilities required to conduct research, development, testing and evaluation to deliver on DOW needs, solving complex problems that apply directly to mission success and the safety of U.S. warfighters and U.S. citizens."

Related Media Item: <https://www.linkedin.com/feed/update/urn:li:activity:7465766856147062788>