

People, Programs and Points of Excellence (P^3E) Report for October 23, 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

President Gold joined by NU Foundation President & CEO Brian Hastings on "Heart to Heart" Podcast

On this episode, Dr. Gold is joined by Brian Hastings, president and CEO of the University of Nebraska Foundation. They discuss the history of the NU Foundation, give an update on the “Only in Nebraska” campaign, and talk about how the Foundation’s work supports areas and projects across the university that wouldn’t be possible with state-appropriated funds alone.

Related Media Item: https://youtu.be/1iytWnqlUXE

University of Nebraska at Kearney

1. UNK ranks No. 10 nationally among top 100 rural colleges

The University of Nebraska at Kearney ranks No. 10 nationally in Washington Monthly’s inaugural Top 100 Rural Colleges rankings, recognizing institutions for educational access, affordability, student outcomes and contributions to rural communities. UNK students represent 91 of Nebraska’s 93 counties, and 86% of its students are Nebraska residents. The rankings highlight UNK’s statewide impact, with 66% of graduates remaining in Nebraska and 42% earning degrees in fields identified as high demand in rural America. UNK also reported an annual net price of $14,307 and average annual graduate earnings of $56,647 four years after graduation, adjusted for local housing costs. The recognition reflects UNK’s commitment to preparing graduates for careers in health sciences, education, business, technology, aviation and other fields essential to Nebraska’s workforce and economy.

Related Media Item: https://unknews.unk.edu/2026/10/13/unk-ranks-no-10-nationally-among-top-100-rural-colleges/

2. Starting the conversation: UNK strengthens mental health resources for students

The University of Nebraska at Kearney is expanding mental health services and prevention efforts to support student well-being and academic success. During 2025-26, UNK Counseling served 307 students through 1,898 sessions, responding to growing mental health needs. Led by Director Kiphany Hof and Assistant Director Sally Wiarda, the office has introduced THRIVE, a suicide prevention training program that teaches students, faculty and staff to recognize warning signs, initiate supportive conversations and connect individuals with resources.

UNK also offers Togetherall, a free, 24/7 online mental health community with approximately 650 student participants, 61% of whom are not receiving other formal mental health support. Four licensed counselors provide individual and group counseling, crisis intervention and outreach services from the new Health Science Education Center II, with additional after-hours support available.

Related Media Item: https://unknews.unk.edu/2026/10/05/starting-the-conversation-unk-strengthens-mental-health-resources-for-students/

University of Nebraska–Lincoln

1. Husker Gaming Center to open in Nebraska Union

The University of Nebraska–Lincoln celebrated the opening of the Husker Gaming Center, a new space where students can connect through gaming and competition, on Oct. 22. Located in the Nebraska Union, the center features high-performance gaming PCs, console gaming, virtual reality experiences, a racing simulator and a dedicated Varsity Lounge for the Nebraska Esports program. The spaces accommodate both casual gaming and organized competition.

Related Media Item: https://news.unl.edu/article/husker-gaming-center-to-open-in-nebraska-union

2. Nebraska Entrepreneurship Center celebrates 40 years of turning ideas into action

For 40 years, the University of Nebraska–Lincoln Center for Entrepreneurship has helped students turn ideas into businesses and build relationships that support them long after graduation. Founded in 1986 and housed in the College of Business, the center was one of the nation's first dedicated entrepreneurship centers. Today, Nebraska ranks No. 35 globally and No. 1 in Nebraska on the Princeton Review and Entrepreneur magazine’s list of the Top 50 Undergraduate Entrepreneurship Programs.

Related Media Item: https://news.unl.edu/article/nebraska-entrepreneurship-center-celebrates-40-years-of-turning-ideas-into-action

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University of Nebraska Medical Center

1. Project Aims to Improve Nebraska Maternal, Neonatal Health Outcomes

Led by UNMC's Dr. Ann Anderson-Berry, the Nebraska Perinatal Quality Improvement Collaborative has received $2 million in first-year funding, with a potential $10 million over five years, to strengthen Nebraska's maternal and neonatal healthcare system. Working with rural hospitals and state partners, the initiative will assess resources

and staffing, improve emergency delivery readiness and establish more coordinated systems for transferring mothers and newborns to appropriate levels of care.

Related Media Item: https://www.unmc.edu/newsroom/2026/10/07/project-aims-to-improve-nebraska-maternal-neonatal-health-outcomes/

2. EMBRACE Program Builds Momentum in First Year

UNMC's EMBRACE program has expanded to 12 participating sites across Nebraska, helping rural hospitals access specialized maternal care, telehealth consultations and clinical training. With $1 million in funding from The Clarkson Institute and an additional $210,000 from the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services, the program is expanding its reach, including mobile obstetric simulation and ultrasound training delivered directly to rural healthcare professionals at no cost to their facilities. EMBRACE's work to strengthen access to specialized care and local clinical expertise complements work being done by NPQIC, which strengthens the hospital resources, readiness and coordination needed to support that care statewide.

Related Media Item: https://www.unmc.edu/newsroom/2026/10/21/embrace-program-builds-momentum-in-first-year/

University of Nebraska at Omaha

1. UNO Biomechanics and Kinesiology Doctoral Program Ranked in Nation's Top 10

UNO's joint Ph.D. program in Biomechanics and Health & Kinesiology ranked No. 10 nationally in the National Academy of Kinesiology's 2026 Doctoral Program Evaluation, climbing from No. 20 in the previous evaluation. The ranking recognizes the program's strength in research productivity, funding, student scholarship and support, and career outcomes, with UNO performing particularly well in federal and internal funding. This achievement highlights UNO's growing national research reputation and its commitment to interdisciplinary discovery and student success.

Related Media Item: https://www.unomaha.edu/news/2026/10/uno-biomechanics-and-kinesiology-doctoral-program-ranked-in-nations-top-10.php

2. DHS Science & Technology Leaders Visit NCITE to Strengthen Government, Academic, Industry Partnerships

DHS Under Secretary for Science and Technology Pedro M. Allende visited UNO's National Counterterrorism Innovation, Technology and Education Center (NCITE) to explore how university research can address emerging homeland security threats and translate into real-world solutions. NCITE researchers showcased work spanning artificial intelligence, agricultural security, drones and violent extremism, along with innovations including a patented suspicious activity reporting chatbot that increased tips by 857% in one year at an Ohio fusion center. The visit reinforced UNO's role as a national leader in connecting academia, government and industry to advance innovation and strengthen national security.

Related Media Item: https://www.unomaha.edu/ncite/news/2026/10/allende-visit.php

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Agriculture and Natural Resources

1. Husker Produce Farm harvests food, opportunity, community connections

The University of Nebraska–Lincoln's Husker Produce Farm is strengthening local food systems while providing students with hands-on agricultural experience. Supported by a $90,000 grant, the three-acre farm harvested approximately 15,000 pounds of produce across 15 crops during its first growing season. Fresh produce was distributed to campus dining services and community partners, including the Food Bank of Lincoln and Food Fort, helping increase access to nutritious food.

The farm also supports student learning and agricultural research. Long-term goals include producing 30,000 pounds of fresh produce annually, engaging 300 students each year and creating new market opportunities for Nebraska growers.

Related Media Item: https://ianrnews.unl.edu/article/husker-produce-farm-harvests-food-opportunity-community-connections

2. Spur Ventures strengthens Nebraska's ag tech ecosystem

Spur Ventures, a University of Nebraska–Lincoln initiative, is strengthening Nebraska's agricultural technology ecosystem by connecting producers, startups, investors, industry partners and students to accelerate innovation and bring new technologies to market. Through entrepreneurship education, partnerships and independent technology validation, Spur Ventures helps ensure emerging technologies address producers' real-world needs.

The initiative will host the AgConverge conference Nov. 17–18 in Grand Island, bringing together agricultural innovators, producers and industry leaders. Highlights include a Farm Tech Adoption Challenge, where producers will evaluate emerging technologies, student research competitions, networking opportunities and discussions on agricultural innovation. The conference aims to strengthen collaboration and accelerate adoption of practical agricultural technologies.

Related Media Item: https://ianrnews.unl.edu/article/spur-ventures-strengthens-nebraskas-ag-tech-ecosystem

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University of Nebraska Foundation

1. Hogans establish franchise leadership program at UNL

Paul and Lori Hogan, founders of Home Instead, are elevating franchise education at the University of Nebraska–Lincoln through a gift to the College of Business that establishes the Hogan Franchise Leadership Program. Open to students from all majors across the university, the program brings together franchise courses, experiential learning, internships, and the Husker Franchise Club. As part of the program, students will explore the franchise model, connect with franchise owners and industry professionals, and develop skills for business ownership and leadership.

Related Media Item: https://news.unl.edu/article/hogans-establish-franchise-leadership-program-at-nebraska

2. One Day for UNK to unite Loper community Nov. 12-13

The University of Nebraska at Kearney will host its 24-hour giving day, One Day for UNK, Nov. 12-13. The sixth annual giving day raises funds to support student scholarships, UNK's three colleges, Loper Athletics, the library and other campus priorities. Gifts can be made online at givingday.unk.edu. Every contribution of $5 or more counts toward this year's goal of 2,200 gifts. Alumni and donors have established more than $415,000 in challenges and matches to encourage others to give during One Day for UNK.

Related Media Item: https://nufoundation.org/one-day-for-unk-to-unite-loper-community-nov-12-13/

Buffett Early Childhood Institute

Buffett Institute Welcomes 2026-27 Graduate Scholars at Fall Reception

On Oct. 12, the Buffett Institute welcomed its 2026–27 Graduate Scholars—Marisol Loza Hernandez from the Munroe-Meyer Institute at the University of Nebraska Medical Center and Rebecca Jack and Paige Wernick from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln—their faculty mentors, and colleagues to a reception where they shared overviews of their Institute-funded research projects and answered questions from staff. The program awards one-year fellowships worth up to $25,000 to a maximum of four NU doctoral students every year and has invested more than $800,000 in NU doctoral student research since 2016. This year's research topics focus on group trainings for Spanish-speaking families caring for young children with autism, afterschool programs and their impact on mothers' employment, and how toddler teachers make in-the-moment decisions during classroom interactions.

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

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Daugherty Water for Food Global Institute

National Science Foundation and Nebraska Corn Board invest nearly $1 million in Nebraska research to pursue hidden nitrogen and new ways to reduce groundwater risk

New National Science Foundation (NSF) funding will help a UNL research team, led by Arindam Malakar, water research scientist at the Daugherty Water for Food Global Institute, investigate an understudied reservoir of organic nitrogen that may shape groundwater quality long after nitrogen management strategies are in place. A separate award from the Nebraska Corn Board will help them evaluate approaches that may proactively reduce nitrate risk before it reaches groundwater. Together, these complementary projects equip producers, water managers and policymakers with actionable science to reduce water treatment burdens and ensure long-term groundwater quality in Nebraska.

Related Media Item: https://waterforfood.nebraska.edu/news-and-events/news/2026/10/national-science-foundation-and-nebraska-corn-board-invest-nearly-1-million-in-nebraska-research-to-pursue-hidden-nitrogen-and-new-ways-to-reduce-groundwater-risk

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National Strategic Research Institute

Nebraska partners strengthen agricultural defense posture during NSRI preparedness exercise

Senior leaders, technical experts, and first response partners across the Midwest gathered at the University of Nebraska–Lincoln in May for AG Attacks at Dawn, a full-day tabletop exercise designed to pressure-test regional readiness for an intentional release of foot-and-mouth disease. Sponsored by the Nebraska Department of Agriculture and facilitated by the National Strategic Research Institute (NSRI) at the University of Nebraska, the exercise advanced a shared mission: protecting U.S. agricultural infrastructure, livestock health and the nation's food supply in the face of deliberate biological threats.

Related Media Item: https://nsri.nebraska.edu/news/news-releases/2026/10/nebraska-partners-strengthen-agricultural-defense-posture-during-nsri-preparedness-exercise