

# People, Programs and Points of Excellence (P<sup>3</sup>E) Report for October 9, 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 Water for Food Institute executive director on "Heart to Heart" Podcast**

On this episode, Dr. Gold is joined by Joe Sanders, executive director of the Daugherty Water for Food Global Institute at the University of Nebraska. They discuss Joe's vision for the institute, how the Institute is preparing farmers and ranchers for drought conditions and other important work happening statewide and internationally.

**Related Media Item:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OLg9AMDkJfA>

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## University of Nebraska at Kearney

### **1. Teaching From the Heart: UNK grad Cheyenne Fitzgerald creates a caring start for Bertrand preschoolers**

University of Nebraska at Kearney graduate Cheyenne Fitzgerald is making a difference in her hometown of Bertrand, where she teaches preschool at the same school she once attended. After earning two bachelor's degrees from UNK in 2021, Fitzgerald returned to complete a master's degree in curriculum and instruction with a concentration in early childhood education, finishing the program in just one year while teaching full time and raising two young children. She credits UNK's hands-on teacher education program and faculty mentorship for preparing her to create a nurturing, engaging classroom centered on relationships, play-based learning and student success. Now the first person in her immediate family to earn a master's degree, Fitzgerald is using her education to strengthen early childhood learning in rural Nebraska.

#### **Related Media Items:**

- News Release: <https://unknews.unk.edu/2026/08/03/teaching-from-the-heart-unk-grad-cheyenne-fitzgerald-creates-a-caring-start-for-bertrand-preschoolers/>
- Central Nebraska Today: <https://www.centralnebraskatoday.com/2026/08/03/unk-grad-cheyenne-fitzgerald-creates-a-caring-start-for-bertrand-preschoolers/>

## **2. 'It's what I want to do forever': UNK student Ryan Arbuthnot finds his future on the family ranch**

University of Nebraska at Kearney agribusiness student Ryan Arbuthnot is combining classroom learning with hands-on experience to build a sustainable future for his family's cattle operation near Sumner. The family ranch includes more than 400 head of cattle across 3,000 acres, with Arbuthnot managing his own herd of 70 cow-calf pairs and 15 replacement heifers. Through UNK's agribusiness program, he's developing skills in financial management, agricultural marketing, business planning and professional communication that directly support the operation.

Working with assistant professor Jody Herchenbach, Arbuthnot completed an entrepreneurship independent study focused on strengthening his ranching business, connecting with industry professionals and identifying opportunities for growth. He's also implementing rotational grazing practices to improve soil health and pasture sustainability while exploring ways to expand the family's beef production.

**Related Media Item:** <https://unknews.unk.edu/2026/09/02/its-what-i-want-to-do-forever-unk-student-ryan-arbuthnot-finds-his-future-on-the-family-ranch/>

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## **University of Nebraska–Lincoln**

### **1. New Westbrook presents opportunities for collaboration, innovation**

More than 200 people — faculty, administrators, staff, students and community members — gathered for the dedication of the university's new Westbrook Music Building on Oct. 1. The new home of the Glenn Korff School of Music is an \$81 million, 103,000-square-foot, state-of-the-art facility that replaces the former Westbrook, which opened in 1967.

**Related Media Item:** <https://news.unl.edu/article/new-westbrook-presents-opportunities-for-collaboration-innovation>

### **2. University Libraries make research, education more accessible, affordable**

University Libraries' open-access efforts are saving Nebraska researchers and students millions while expanding access to Husker scholarship. New data show open-access research receives more citations, while affordable course materials have saved students more than \$6 million since 2019.

**Related Media Item:** <https://news.unl.edu/article/university-libraries-make-research-education-more-accessible-affordable>

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## **University of Nebraska Medical Center**

### **1. UNMC takes steps to coordinate AI efforts across campus**

UNMC has taken another significant step in making artificial intelligence a campuswide strategic priority by creating its first associate vice chancellor position dedicated to healthcare AI and establishing a leadership

structure to coordinate AI efforts across education, research and clinical care. The work directly advances UNMC's strategic plan through developing an AI portfolio, pursuing national funding and partnerships, evaluating opportunities for an AI incubator, and continually assessing emerging technologies and their potential applications.

**Related Media Item:** <https://www.unmc.edu/newsroom/2026/10/06/dr-windle-to-assume-new-campus-leadership-role-in-ai/>

## **2. Inaugural UNL-UNMC Summit explores opportunities**

UNMC and UNL brought together 100 faculty and staff from both campuses, the University of Nebraska System and Nebraska Medicine for the inaugural UNL-UNMC Summit on Sept. 30. Building on the university's move to joint accreditation, participants identified opportunities to strengthen collaboration in education and research, expand student pathways, reduce administrative barriers and advance joint research initiatives.

**Related Media Item:** <https://www.unmc.edu/newsroom/2026/10/06/inaugural-unl-unmc-summit-explores-opportunities/>

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## **University of Nebraska at Omaha**

### **1. UNO Launches First International Degree Program in Ghana**

The University of Nebraska at Omaha has launched an international degree program, welcoming 33 students to the inaugural Ghana-based cohort of its Executive Master's in Business Administration through a partnership with Radford University College in Accra. The partnership expands UNO's global reach and creates new opportunities for academic collaboration, executive education, and stronger business and community connections between Omaha and Ghana.

**Related Media Item:** <https://www.unomaha.edu/news/2026/10/uno-launches-first-international-degree-program-in-ghana.php>

### **2. UNO Joins Business-Higher Education Forum**

The University of Nebraska at Omaha has joined the Business-Higher Education Forum (BHEF), a national network of leading businesses and universities working together to address workforce development challenges and prepare students for high-demand careers. Through this partnership, UNO will gain insight into emerging workforce trends, strengthen industry-aligned learning opportunities, and expand collaborations that connect students' education with employer needs.

**Related Media Item:** <https://www.unomaha.edu/news/2026/09/uno-joins-business-higher-education-forum.php>

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## **Agriculture and Natural Resources**

### **1. Researchers at University of Nebraska-Lincoln Part of Award-Winning Multistate Team Enhancing Reproductive Performance in Sheep and Cattle**

University of Nebraska–Lincoln researchers are part of an interdisciplinary team recognized with agInnovation’s 2026 Excellence in Multistate Research Award for work improving reproductive performance in cattle and sheep. UNL animal scientist Andrea Cupp has played a key role in research aimed at better understanding heifer puberty and reproductive efficiency. Working with USDA and university partners, Nebraska researchers are developing tools to identify heifers with genetically delayed puberty and shorter reproductive longevity, potentially saving producers \$2,500 per heifer in development costs. The broader project addresses reproductive inefficiencies that cost livestock producers billions annually, helping improve profitability, productivity and long-term industry sustainability.

**Related Media Item:** <https://ianrnews.unl.edu/article/researchers-at-university-of-nebraska-lincoln-part-of-award-winning-multistate-team>

### **2. Nebraska’s Tractor Test Lab has helped shape global ag for more than a century**

For more than a century, the Nebraska Tractor Test Laboratory at the University of Nebraska–Lincoln has helped producers make informed equipment purchases while shaping industry standards worldwide. Since 1920, the lab has tested more than 2,300 tractor models, providing independent, publicly available data on power, fuel efficiency, safety and performance. These findings help producers compare equipment, maximize efficiency and get the best return on their investments. The lab’s global impact is significant, with more than 373,000 report downloads in the past year alone. As tractor technology evolves, the lab continues to advance testing capabilities while providing hands-on engineering experience for UNL students.

**Related Media Item:** <https://news.unl.edu/article/nebrasikas-tractor-test-lab-has-helped-shape-global-ag-for-more-than-a-century>

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## **University of Nebraska Foundation**

### **1. Three University of Nebraska alumni elected to foundation board**

Three alumni have been elected to serve on the University of Nebraska Foundation Board of Directors: Deanna Armstrong, M.D., of Omaha, Greg Daake of Chicago and Brian Kaiser of Lincoln. Dr. Armstrong is a physician with more than 30 years of experience as a plastic surgeon. She earned a bachelor’s degree from the University of Nebraska–Lincoln in 1985 and a medical degree from the University of Nebraska Medical Center in 1989. Daake is the principal and creative director of Daake, a national design firm which he and his wife, Lisa Daake, founded in 2001. Daake earned a bachelor’s degree from the University of Nebraska at Kearney in 1996. Kaiser is the chief technology officer for Hudl, which he co-founded while a student at UNL’s Jeffrey S. Raikes School of Computer Science and Management. Kaiser graduated in 2006.

**Related Media Item:** <https://nufoundation.org/three-university-of-nebraska-alumni-elected-to-foundation-board/>

## **2. UNO Wear Black, Give Back Raises Record \$2.3 Million**

University of Nebraska at Omaha supporters stepped up in a big way during the 2026 Wear Black, Give Back, raising a record \$2,327,247. The 24-hour giving day, held Oct. 7-8, surpassed the event's goal of 7,000 gifts of \$5 or more, with 8,139 gifts. Because the gift goal was met, UNO alumnus John Morgan fulfilled his \$1 million challenge gift, which was included in the total raised. Gifts were made online at [givingday.unomaha.edu](https://givingday.unomaha.edu).

**Related Media Item:** <https://nufoundation.org/uno-wear-black-give-back-raises-record-2-3-million/>

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## **Buffett Early Childhood Institute**

### **National School Leaders Visit Omaha for Early Learning Cohort**

More than 30 superintendents and early learning leaders from across the country visited Omaha on Oct. 7–9 as part of an Early Learning Cohort site visit coordinated by AASA, the School Superintendents Association, with help from the Buffett Early Childhood Institute. The group visited Douglas County West Elementary to learn more about the Superintendents' Early Childhood Plan, the regional early learning initiative the Buffett Institute helps implement in collaboration with 11 school districts and the Learning Community of Douglas and Sarpy Counties. Buffett Institute Executive Director Walter Gilliam delivered a keynote presentation, and superintendents from DC West, Omaha, Papillion La Vista, and Millard participated in an early learning panel discussion.

**Related Media Item:** <https://buffettinstitute.nebraska.edu/blog/2026/07/what-happens-when-11-school-districts-decide-to-learn-together>

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## **Daugherty Water for Food Global Institute**

### **From reactive response to proactive resilience: Connecting drought, water and health**

Through active engagement at COP17 in Mongolia and World Water Week in Sweden, DWFI advanced international efforts to integrate public health into drought planning. Led by Jesse Bell, Director of the Water, Climate and Health Program at UNMC and DWFI, the institute demonstrated that drought consequences reach far beyond water scarcity, impacting food systems, wildfire risk, and public health.

DWFI championed moving away from the reactive 'hydro-illogical cycle' toward proactive preparedness through cross-sector partnerships linking health agencies, healthcare systems and water managers. DWFI also partnered with the UNCCD and Global Water Partnership to launch a global online course helping communities assess vulnerabilities and strengthen long-term resilience.

**Related Media Item:** <https://waterforfood.nebraska.edu/news-and-events/news/2026/09/from-reactive-response-to-proactive-resilience-connecting-drought-water-and-health>

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## **National Strategic Research Institute**

### **National security leaders, researchers connect priorities with capabilities at NSRI Research Showcase**

United States national security depends on maintaining technological advantage and harnessing the people and expertise required to meet evolving mission needs. That imperative framed a dialogue between U.S. Sen. Deb Fischer of Nebraska, U.S. Navy Adm. Rich Correll, commander of U.S. Strategic Command (USSTRATCOM), and University of Nebraska System President Dr. Jeffrey P. Gold during the National Strategic Research Institute (NSRI) Research Showcase on September 8 at the University of Nebraska–Lincoln. The dialogue was paired with an exhibition of 15 research displays, where speakers and federal, military, state and university leaders explored NSRI and University of Nebraska research spanning the institute’s research portfolio.

**Related Media Item:** <https://lnkd.in/p/gcn6C-4w>