

People, Programs and Points of Excellence (P³E)

Report for September 25, 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's Op-Ed in the Lincoln Journal Star: Joint accreditation opens new doors for Nebraska

In a new Lincoln Journal Star op-ed, President Gold outlines how the joint accreditation of UNL and UNMC gives Nebraska a stronger platform from which to serve students, attract talented faculty and staff, compete for investments and partnerships and address the state's most complex challenges.

Related Media Item: <https://nebraska.edu/president/speeches-communications/op-ed/2026/09/joint-accreditation-opens-new-doors-for-nebraska>

2. NU DEAL cohort announced for 2026-28

Sixteen University of Nebraska System colleagues have been selected to participate in a system-wide program that aims to develop the next generation of higher education leaders.

Related Media Item: <https://nebraska.edu/news-and-events/news/2026/09/nu-deal-cohort-announced-for-2026-28>

University of Nebraska at Kearney

1. A New Chapter: UNK partners with nonprofit to preserve legacy of Nebraska author Mari Sandoz

UNK is taking a central role in preserving and expanding access to the legacy of renowned Nebraska writer and historian Mari Sandoz through a new partnership with the Mari Sandoz Society. Significant portions of the society's archival collection – including correspondence, manuscripts, research materials, personal artifacts and books – have been transferred to Calvin T. Ryan Library, where they will be preserved and made accessible to students, scholars and the public.

The partnership positions UNK as a hub for research and scholarship related to Nebraska history, Great Plains culture and the American West, while creating hands-on opportunities for students in historical research, archival work and public scholarship. UNK also plans to host future conferences and scholarly gatherings as part of a broader network of partnerships dedicated to preserving and sharing Sandoz's work.

Related Media Item: <https://unknews.unk.edu/2026/06/30/a-new-chapter-unk-partners-with-nonprofit-to-preserve-legacy-of-nebraska-author-mari-sandoz/>

2. UNK Grow the Good Life Program connects education, industry to grow state's talent pipeline

UNK's College of Business and Technology is building a stronger pipeline from K-12 education to college and the workforce through its Grow the Good Life Workforce and Economic Development Program. Launched in response to employers' growing demand for skilled workers, the initiative connects UNK with businesses and K-12 schools through career exploration, internships, mentorship, classroom visits, mock interviews and other professional development opportunities. More than a dozen central Nebraska schools are already participating, along with employers such as Lutz and Pinnacle Bank, creating earlier connections between students and career opportunities available in Nebraska. With 12 of the college's 15 undergraduate programs reporting 100% job placement and an overall placement rate around 98%, the initiative is designed to build on UNK's strong career outcomes while encouraging more graduates to live and work in Nebraska.

Related Media Item: <https://unknews.unk.edu/2026/06/03/unk-program-connects-education-and-industry-to-grow-states-talent-pipeline/>

University of Nebraska–Lincoln

1. Czech president makes historic visit, recognizing long-standing relationship

Czech President Petr Pavel visited the University of Nebraska–Lincoln on Sept. 24 — a historic day highlighting more than a century of educational, cultural and familial ties between Nebraska and the European nation with which it shares deep historical connections.

Related Media Item: <https://news.unl.edu/article/czech-president-makes-historic-visit-recognizing-long-standing-relationship>

2. University receives \$5M grant to expand college access programs in Nebraska

The university has been awarded a \$5 million TRIO grant from the U.S. Department of Education to expand college access services for low-income and first-generation students across five Nebraska communities.

Related Media Item: <https://news.unl.edu/article/university-receives-5m-grant-to-expand-college-access-programs-in-nebraska>

University of Nebraska Medical Center

1. Great Plains IDeA-CTR-N gets five-year, \$25 million NIH grant

The Great Plains IDeA Clinical and Translational Research Network, headquartered at UNMC, has received more than \$25 million from the National Institutes of Health for its next five years of work. The award formally establishes it as an NIH-designated Clinical and Translational Research Network, expanding opportunities for coordinated, multisite translational science research, health system integration, and regional and national research partnerships.

Related Media Item: <https://www.unmc.edu/newsroom/2026/09/21/great-plains-idea-ctr-receives-more-than-25-million-nih-grant/>

2. UNMC breaks ground on Infectious Disease Air Transport training facility

UNMC broke ground on a first-in-the-nation, \$17.4 million Infectious Disease Air Transport training facility that will expand its longstanding partnership with the U.S. Air Force and other federal partners. The facility will house biocontainment transport modules and an aircraft fuselage, providing advanced training for military and civilian personnel in the safe transport and care of patients exposed to high-consequence infectious diseases. The event brought together senior military and government leaders, whose congressional support was instrumental in advancing the project; attendees also recognized the celebratory launch of UNMC's new Office for the Advancement of Military Medicine.

Related Media Item: <https://www.unmc.edu/newsroom/2026/09/14/unmc-breaks-ground-on-infectious-disease-air-transport-training-facility/>

University of Nebraska at Omaha

1. Does a Criminal Record Predict Future Crime Forever? A New Study of 16 Million People Says No

A new study by University of Nebraska Omaha researchers analyzing more than 16.5 million people over 40 years finds that the predictive value of a past criminal charge declines steadily over time and generally converges with the general population's risk level within about nine to ten years. The findings suggest criminal history should be treated as dynamic rather than permanent, with implications for risk assessment, probation and parole, and policies involving record sealing, expungement, employment and housing.

Related Media Item: <https://www.unomaha.edu/news/2026/09/does-a-criminal-record-predict-future-crime-forever-a-new-study-of-16-million-people-says-no.php>

2. \$1 Million Challenge Gift for Wear Black, Give Back

UNO alumnus John Morgan has announced a \$1 million challenge gift to support student scholarships during the university's seventh annual Wear Black, Give Back campaign. If the 24-hour giving day, held Oct. 7–8, reaches its goal of 7,000 gifts, Morgan will contribute the \$1 million gift—the largest challenge gift in the event's history.

Related Media Item: <https://www.unomaha.edu/news/2026/09/1-million-challenge-gift-for-wear-black-give-back.php>

Agriculture and Natural Resources

1. Nebraska Digital Ag Hub to develop solutions for state's ag producers

The Nebraska Digital Agriculture Hub, launched Sept. 15 at Husker Harvest Days, brings together university researchers, Extension professionals, producers, industry and government partners to develop and improve technologies that address real-world agricultural challenges. Building on more than 40 UNL digital agriculture programs, the hub will help producers evaluate and adopt emerging technologies, turn complex data into better decisions and improve productivity and resource management. It will also create new research, hands-on learning and credentialing opportunities. By using Nebraska farms as real-world testing grounds, the hub aims to accelerate innovation and strengthen the long-term competitiveness of Nebraska agriculture.

Related Media Items:

- Brownfield Ag News: <https://www.brownfieldagnews.com/news/unl-brings-new-digital-hub-to-provide-producers-additional-resources/>
- The Central City RN: <https://www.republicannonpareil.com/news/digital-ag-hub-develop-solutions-producers>
- Nebraska Ag Connection: <https://nebraskaagconnection.com/news/nebraska-digital-ag-hub-aims-to-transform-modern-farming>

2. Ribbon cutting marks mesonet progress, salutes stakeholders

The University of Nebraska–Lincoln celebrated the completion of 35 new Nebraska Mesonet weather stations on Sept. 23, expanding a statewide network that provides critical environmental data for agriculture, natural resources management, emergency preparedness and wildfire response. Funded by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the new stations filled significant coverage gaps, particularly in the Sandhills. Housed within UNL's Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources, the 104-station Mesonet reflects the university's statewide mission, providing trusted data that supports Nebraska producers, communities and public agencies while helping researchers develop and improve precision agriculture tools and other technologies.

Related Media Items:

- Nebraska Public Media: <https://nebraskapublicmedia.org/en/news/news-articles/an-infusion-of-army-corps-funding-helps-nebraskas-once-struggling-mesonet-network/>
- KOLN: <https://www.1011now.com/2026/09/24/new-weather-stations-aim-improve-forecasting-nebraska-farmers/>

University of Nebraska Foundation

UNO Hosts Groundbreaking for \$67.5 Million Athletics Project

The University of Nebraska at Omaha hosted a ceremonial groundbreaking Sept. 18 to celebrate a \$67.5 million investment in the future of Omaha Athletics, marking a major milestone in a transformational project. University and community leaders, donors, alumni and supporters gathered outside Baxter Arena to mark the start of construction on the \$55 million Howard L. Hawks Training Center and the \$12.5 million Maverick Park Clubhouse.

The privately funded project is part of the third phase of Omaha Athletics' Campus Masterplan and represents a \$67.5 million investment in the holistic student-athlete experience.

Related Media Item: <https://www.unomaha.edu/news/2026/09/uno-hosts-groundbreaking-for-67.5-million-athletics-project.php>

Buffett Early Childhood Institute

Buffett Early Childhood Institute Research, Policy Expertise Leads to Major Federal Policy Win

The Buffet Early Childhood Institute and Executive Director Walter Gilliam have led national research and policy efforts on early educator tax reform, culminating in the passage of a new law that will allow early educators to join K-12 teachers in deducting out-of-pocket classroom expenses from their taxes. Congress passed the bipartisan Supporting Early-Childhood Educators' Deductions (SEED) Act on Sept. 16. Starting in 2027, the bill will allow early educators to deduct up to \$350 in unreimbursed expenses they spend on classroom materials, supplies, and professional development. Early educators could collectively save approximately \$64 million to \$114 million annually in combined federal and state income taxes through the above-the-line educator expense deduction. Gilliam authored a 2025 research-to-policy brief with new data showing how much early educators spend on their classrooms, recommended that Congress amend the Internal Revenue Code to include them, and recently wrote an op-ed on the SEED Act published by the Nebraska Examiner.

Related Media Items:

- BECI: <https://buffettinstitute.nebraska.edu/news-and-events/news/2026/09/statement-on-the-passage-of-the-seed-act-including-early-educators-in-the-educator-expense-deduction>
 - Wall Street Journal: <https://www.wsj.com/livecoverage/stock-market-today-dow-sp-500-nasdaq-09-18-2026/card/preschool-teachers-and-child-care-workers-win-new-tax-break-HJsW3PSk1L2Ake3cjuQk>
 - Nebraska Examiner Op-Ed: <https://nebraskaexaminer.com/2026/09/17/walter-gilliam-early-educators-are-still-shut-out-of-a-basic-tax-break-the-seed-act-can-change-that/>
-

Daugherty Water for Food Global Institute

Water for people and progress: DWFI at World Water Week 2026

DWFI brought a strong agricultural voice to World Water Week 2026 in Stockholm, engaging in sessions and dialogues alongside global leaders, researchers and industry partners to tackle pressing water and food security challenges. Across the week, institute staff pushed for closer collaboration between the private sector, policymakers and farmers—arguing that lasting water security depends on connecting global strategy with on-the-ground irrigation practice. Topics ranged from the role of industry in water governance and the evolution of international water institutions, to farmer-centered approaches to drought and water scarcity and innovative financing models that expand irrigation access for smallholder farmers. Through it all, DWFI reinforced its core message: food production and agricultural water use must remain central to the global water conversation.

Related Media Item: <https://waterforfood.nebraska.edu/news-and-events/news/2026/09/water-for-people-and-progress-dwfi-at-world-water-week-2026>

National Strategic Research Institute

NSRI NCR Center hosts high-priority federal meetings, reviews through first half of 2026

The National Strategic Research Institute (NSRI) National Capital Region (NCR) Laboratory and Conference Center continues to advance how mission-focused partners evaluate emerging technologies, accelerate research and engage in strategic dialogue. Located in Annapolis Junction, Maryland — in proximity of Department of War and the broader U.S. Interagency sponsors — NSRI NCR offers a secure, convenient environment for workshops and technical meetings. Throughout early 2026, government sponsors and stakeholders convened at the facility to participate in a series of national defense technical meetings and capability demonstrations. Additionally, workshops were led by NSRI researchers to assist DOW stakeholders and end users with assessing tactics, techniques and procedures employing emerging technologies against rapidly growing threats. Across several sessions, government teams used the center to review current research, consider timelines for technology adoption and look at how different projects might support operational needs. These meetings helped clarify how early-stage ideas may evolve into useful tools and capabilities. NSRI NCR also brought together university researchers, national laboratories and other organizations for broader discussions about shared priorities in chemical, biological and emerging threat areas. Many expressed interest in continuing collaboration, pointing to NSRI's ability to convene diverse expertise and keep work moving in a coordinated direction. Together, these engagements show the continued value of the NSRI NCR. Trusted by government partners for sensitive work, the facility offers a rare environment where focused collaboration can happen quickly and securely.

Related Media Item: <https://nsri.nebraska.edu/news/news-releases/2026/09/nsri-ncr-center-hosts-highpriority-federal-meetings-reviews-through-first-half-of-2026>