

People, Programs and Points of Excellence (P³E) Report for March 27, 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. University of Nebraska System and Creighton University announce launch of Nebraska Leaders program

The University of Nebraska System and Creighton University announced the launch of the Nebraska Leaders Program, a first-of-its-kind statewide initiative designed to identify, develop, and retain Nebraska's most promising undergraduate talent.

Related Media Item: <https://nebraska.edu/news-and-events/news/2026/03/university-of-nebraska-system-and-creighton-university-announce-launch-of-nebraska-leaders-program>

2. President Gold discusses university's economic impact on KRVN "Question of the Week" segment

On an episode of KRVN's "University of Nebraska Question of the Week," President Gold shared information about the university's economic impact on the state—all in just 60 seconds.

Related Media Item: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WtiOgx4Ocjw>

University of Nebraska at Kearney

1. UNK student joins Rowe Sanctuary research protecting sandhill cranes

University of Nebraska at Kearney freshman Katie Arens is participating in research at Rowe Sanctuary focused on reducing sandhill crane collisions with power lines along the Platte River. The project is testing an avian collision avoidance system that uses ultraviolet light to make power lines more visible to birds flying at night. The research team monitors crane behavior and collisions along the river, collecting data to evaluate the effectiveness of the technology. Early studies showed the system was nearly 90% effective at reducing crane collisions, and researchers are now testing a newer, more cost-effective version. The project also has implications for protecting other species, including endangered whooping cranes that migrate through the Platte River corridor.

Related Media Item: <https://unknews.unk.edu/2026/03/18/unk-student-joins-rowe-sanctuary-research-protecting-sandhill-cranes/>

2. A Shared Calling: UNK alumni Matt and Shelby Shipp build their health care careers in Kearney

UNK alumni Matt and Shelby Shipp have built health care careers in Kearney, where Matt works as a physical therapist at New West Orthopaedic and Sports Rehabilitation and Shelby serves as a nurse practitioner at CHI Health Good Samaritan. Both credit their education at the University of Nebraska at Kearney for preparing them for professional programs and careers in health care. Matt earned his degree from UNK in 2012 before completing a Doctor of Physical Therapy degree at Creighton University, while Shelby earned a psychobiology degree from UNK in 2014 before completing nursing and nurse practitioner programs through the University of Nebraska Medical Center. The couple chose to build their careers in central Nebraska, where they serve patients from Kearney and surrounding rural communities.

Related Media Item: <https://unknews.unk.edu/2025/12/02/a-shared-calling-unk-alumni-matt-and-shelby-shipp-build-their-health-care-careers-in-kearney/>

University of Nebraska–Lincoln

1. Students embark on spring break to experience majestic crane migration

During the week of spring break, a group of Husker students and faculty traveled to central Nebraska to watch as hundreds of thousands of Sandhill cranes descended on the Platte River to rest and refuel during their yearly migration north. Click through to watch a video of their experience and see photos of the trip.

Related Media Item: <https://news.unl.edu/article/students-embark-on-spring-break-to-experience-majestic-crane-migration>

2. 4-H youth dig into robotics during FIRST Lego League Championship

More than 1,000 youth, coaches, families and volunteers filled the Cook Pavilion and Coliseum for the 17th annual championship, led by Nebraska 4-H. The event featured students in grades 4-8 who work in teams to solve robotics challenges using Lego Mindstorms technology.

Related Media Item: <https://news.unl.edu/article/4-h-youth-dig-into-robotics-during-first-lego-league-championship>

University of Nebraska Medical Center

1. Match Day marks milestone for UNMC med students

Match Day 2026 saw 124 UNMC College of Medicine students match into residency programs in 30 states, highlighting UNMC's role in preparing physicians to meet the workforce needs in Nebraska and the world. More than one-third matched in Nebraska, and 53% earned placements in primary care specialties.

Related Media Item: <https://www.unmc.edu/newsroom/2026/03/24/match-day-marks-milestone-for-unmc-med-students/>

2. New nursing scholarships offered to rural students

UNMC's College of Nursing will award 30 full scholarships over two years for students at the Scottsbluff, Kearney, and Norfolk campuses who commit to working in rural acute or long-term care after graduation. The Rural Nebraska Nursing Fellowship covers tuition, fees and books and includes a \$5,000 stipend, while preparing more nurses for communities with workforce shortages. It is funded by a \$3.9 million federal grant.

Related Media Item: <https://www.unmc.edu/newsroom/2026/03/05/unmc-to-offer-new-nursing-scholarships-at-scottsbluff-kearney-norfolk/>

University of Nebraska at Omaha

1. NCITE: UNO students play role in national security

Students at the University of Nebraska Omaha are supporting national security efforts through the Department of Homeland Security-funded National Counterterrorism Innovation, Technology, and Education Center (NCITE). Students from diverse majors are analyzing global terrorist threats, including Iran-sponsored activity involving drones, cyberattacks, and propaganda. The center's work connects overseas extremist activity to potential impacts in the United States, with some projects classified and others tracking trends such as court cases and emerging technologies.

Related Media Item: <https://www.wowt.com/2026/03/11/ncite-uno-students-play-role-national-security/>

2. CNN's Jake Tapper interviewed Seamus Hughes the author of Homegrown: ISIS in America

CNN's Jake Tapper interviewed NCITE Senior Research Faculty and Policy Associate Seamus Hughes in studio about a terror attack at Old Dominion University by a convicted ISIS supporter.

Related Media Item: <https://x.com/SeamusHughes/status/2033277564458815901?s=20>

Agriculture and Natural Resources

1. Nebraska FFA celebrates series of landmark achievements

FFA is rapidly expanding across Nebraska, with new chapters like Gibbon's creating opportunities for students to build confidence, leadership, and career skills. The University of Nebraska–Lincoln plays a central role in this growth through its Agricultural Leadership, Education and Communication (ALEC) department, which prepares and supports agricultural educators, develops training programs, and addresses teacher shortages. FFA, in turn, serves as a critical workforce pipeline, equipping students with real-world agricultural knowledge, communication

abilities, and career direction. Together, FFA and the university are strengthening Nebraska’s agricultural future by developing skilled, motivated individuals ready to meet industry needs.

Related Media Item: <https://news.unl.edu/article/nebraska-ffa-celebrates-series-of-landmark-achievements>

2. Sandhills Calving System continues to protect calf health, ranch profitability

The Sandhills Calving System emerged from a collaboration between Nebraska ranchers, a local veterinarian, and University of Nebraska–Lincoln researchers to address widespread calf scours. Instead of relying on treatment, the team developed a management-based solution that separated calves by age and moved pregnant cows to clean pastures, reducing disease transmission. University researchers played a central role by investigating the causes of outbreaks, applying epidemiological science, and validating the system through field research. Their work transformed a local experiment into a proven, research-backed strategy. Through extension programs and education, the university helped spread the practice nationwide, demonstrating how applied research can deliver practical, industry-changing solutions.

Related Media Items:

- IANR Press Release: <https://ianrnews.unl.edu/article/sandhills-calving-system-continues-to-protect-calf-health-ranch-profitability>
- Farms: <https://www.farms.com/news/sandhills-calving-system-continues-to-protect-calf-health-ranch-profitability-239758.aspx>
- Valentine News: <http://www.valentineneews.com/news/sandhills-calving-system-continues-protect-calf-health-ranch-profitability>

University of Nebraska Foundation

For the Greater Good returns April 22-23

For the Greater Good, a 24-hour online giving day to support the University of Nebraska Medical Center and Nebraska Medicine, will take place from noon to noon April 22-23. Gifts may be made online at greatergoodgivingday.org. For the Greater Good will bring together alumni, students, faculty, staff and grateful patients to raise support for scholarships, innovative programs, lifesaving research and compassionate care for patients and families. This year’s goal is to receive 2,300 gifts.

Related Media Item: <https://nufoundation.org/for-the-greater-good-returns-april-22-23/>

Buffett Early Childhood Institute

Buffett Early Childhood Institute continues to impact the next generation of early childhood researchers with recruitment of 11th cohort of Graduate Scholars

The Buffett Early Childhood Institute begins its search for the 11th cohort of Graduate Scholars, which will provide up to \$100,000 in 2026-27 to support the research of up to four advanced doctoral students within the university system

Since 2016, the Buffett Institute has invested \$750,000 through its Graduate Scholars program to support the early childhood research of 30 Ph.D. students from University of Nebraska campuses. The Institute has also provided Scholars the opportunity to network with and learn from experts and university leaders across the early childhood field.

The goal is to support high-quality research that impacts the early years of life, drawn from fields including health, education, social work, art, psychology, the neurosciences, and more. Multidisciplinary research and new methodologies are welcomed.

Related Media Items:

- BECI Blog Post: <https://buffettinstitute.nebraska.edu/blog/2026/03/meet-the-phd-students-advancing-early-childhood-research-through-the-graduate-scholars-program>
- Press Release: <https://buffettinstitute.nebraska.edu/news-and-events/news/2026/03/buffett-institute-seeks-next-generation-of-researchers>

Daugherty Water for Food Global Institute

New report examines not-for-profit financing of smallholder irrigation

In sub-Saharan Africa, smallholder farmers often face a "finance gap" that prevents them from investing in the irrigation tools needed to survive erratic weather and boost crop yields. While traditional banks often view these farmers as too risky, a new DWFI report highlights how not-for-profit financing models are stepping in to bridge the divide. By offering flexible loan terms, lower interest rates and integrated support services, these mission-driven organizations are helping farmers transition from rain-dependent subsistence to year-round commercial production, effectively turning irrigation into a tool for long-term economic resilience.

The report emphasizes that for these programs to be successful, they must look beyond just providing equipment. The most effective models combine affordable credit with technical training and market access, ensuring that farmers can actually profit from their increased yields to pay back their loans. As weather variability makes water management more critical than ever, these not-for-profit initiatives offer a scalable roadmap for investors and policymakers to make irrigation more accessible for millions of small-scale producers, fostering a more food- and water-secure future for the region.

Related Media Item: <https://waterforfood.nebraska.edu/news-and-events/news/2026/02/new-report-examines-not-for-profit-financing-of-smallholder-irrigation>

National Strategic Research Institute

University of Nebraska's NSRI awarded \$500 million contract to accelerate warfighter-ready solutions

The National Strategic Research Institute (NSRI) at the University of Nebraska (NU) has received a \$500 million indefinite delivery, indefinite quantity (IDIQ) contract from U.S. Strategic Command (USSTRATCOM) to deliver innovative research and development solutions that keep U.S. forces safe and maintain America's technological edge through rapid-response research capabilities.

With this contract, NSRI also retains its designation from the U.S. Department of War (DOW) as a University Affiliated Research Center (UARC), sponsored by USSTRATCOM and affiliated with NU. There are only 15 UARCs in the country.

While not a direct funding commitment, an IDIQ establishes that an organization has demonstrated capability and has been vetted, enabling government agencies to rapidly issue funded task orders for specific research without lengthy procurement processes.

"This IDIQ represents far more than a contracting mechanism — it's a vote of confidence in the institute's continued and future execution of critical research to meet national defense requirements," said Maj. Gen., USAF (Ret.) Rick Evans, NSRI executive director. "With emerging threats such as electromagnetic warfare and engineered pathogens evolving at an unprecedented pace, the DOW is accelerating critical research from concept to capability. This award expands the opportunity for NSRI and the University of Nebraska to meet the demand signal of the Department with proven flexibility, innovation and speed."

Related Media Item: <https://nsri.nebraska.edu/news/news-releases/2026/03/university-of-nebraskas-nsri-awarded-500-million-contract-to-accelerate-warfighter-ready-solutions>