

People, Programs and Points of Excellence (P³E) Report for February 13, 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 launches AI Institute to lead in ethical innovation, research and workforce development

The University of Nebraska has announced the launch of its Artificial Intelligence Institute. The NU AI Institute will be a major, system-wide initiative that positions Nebraska as a national leader in shaping the future of responsible, human-centered artificial intelligence.

Related Media Item: <https://nebraska.edu/news-and-events/news/2026/02/university-of-nebraska-launches-ai-institute>

2. President Gold appears on Huskers Radio Network Sports Nightly broadcast

President Gold joined Jessica Coody on a recent Huskers Radio Network Sports Nightly broadcast to talk about about Nebraska's bioeconomy and an upcoming Council on Competitiveness event in Omaha, NU's Presidential Scholars program, and other recent university achievements.

Related Media Item: <https://youtu.be/tFof2-KWB00>

University of Nebraska at Kearney

1. Building Biomedical Excellence: INBRE program supports faculty research, undergraduate experiences at UNK

The Nebraska INBRE program, funded by the National Institutes of Health and administered by the University of Nebraska Medical Center, has awarded more than \$7 million to UNK since 2001 to support biomedical research in the biology and chemistry departments. The statewide initiative strengthens faculty research, expands undergraduate lab experiences and connects students to Ph.D.-granting institutions across Nebraska.

Associate professor Joe Dolence leads INBRE-supported research examining how the immune system responds differently to peanut allergens in males and females, mentoring undergraduate researchers who regularly advance to graduate and professional programs. In chemistry, professor Kristy Kounovsky-Shafer's lab has developed a patented device to protect and concentrate DNA for sequencing, work that led to an additional \$300,000 NIH grant. Faculty leaders say INBRE enhances research infrastructure, provides critical funding and positions UNK as a hub for high-quality undergraduate biomedical research.

Related Media Item: <https://unknews.unk.edu/2025/11/10/building-biomedical-excellence-inbre-program-supports-faculty-research-undergraduate-experiences-at-unk/>

2. A Champion for Every Child: UNK senior Ariana Bishop supports students as a deaf educator

Recent UNK graduate Ariana Bishop is beginning her career as a teacher for students who are deaf or hard of hearing with Kearney Public Schools. A Kearney native, Bishop discovered her passion for deaf education during high school after working with students with hearing impairments and being mentored by DHH educator Nikki Garey.

Through UNK's elementary education program, Bishop gained extensive classroom experience, including student teaching at Park Elementary and serving as a paraeducator supporting DHH students. She strengthened her skills in lesson modification, classroom management and individualized support while participating in honors projects and professional development opportunities. Already working in the district, Bishop will serve students from birth to age 21 and plans to pursue a master's degree in deaf education.

Related Media Item: <https://unknews.unk.edu/2025/12/12/a-champion-for-every-child-unk-senior-ariana-bishop-supports-students-as-a-deaf-educator/>

University of Nebraska–Lincoln

1. Ramamurthy pursuing advanced speed, intelligence, efficiency of data networks

Husker computer scientist Byrav Ramamurthy is leading three projects focused on the same overarching challenge: managing and analyzing the massive volumes of data that flow through modern scientific and digital infrastructure.

Related Media Item: <https://news.unl.edu/article/ramamurthy-pursuing-advanced-speed-intelligence-efficiency-of-data-networks>

2. Libraries celebrate fifth anniversary of Dinsdale Family Learning Commons

During the week of Feb. 9-13 the Research Partnerships unit of the University Libraries invites members of the campus community to celebrate the fifth anniversary of the Dinsdale Family Learning Commons on East Campus by participating in a scavenger hunt in the Commons and attending the reception at the end of the week.

Related Media Item: <https://news.unl.edu/article/libraries-celebrate-fifth-anniversary-of-dinsdale-family-learning-commons>

University of Nebraska Medical Center

1. UNMC expands nursing partnership with UNO

The UNMC College of Nursing and the University of Nebraska at Omaha's College of Arts and Sciences will collaborate on an early admission pathway for pre-nursing students at UNO. In a memorandum of understanding, signed Jan. 15, the UNMC College of Nursing will provide information and advisement regarding admission to the college's Bachelor of Science in Nursing program to pre-nursing students at UNO. Students will receive guaranteed early admission into the BSN program, as long as they meet all nursing pre-requisite requirements and complete the UNMC College of Nursing's admission process.

Related Media Item: <https://www.unmc.edu/newsroom/2026/02/03/unmc-expands-nursing-partnership-with-uno/>

2. UNMC to assist with orangutan birth

Ann Anderson Berry, MD, PhD, CHRI's executive director and division chief of Neonatology at UNMC, will be part of a team assisting with the delivery of an orangutan baby at the Omaha Henry Doorly Zoo. It's a big moment for the zoo and for the critically endangered species.

Related Media Item: https://omaha.com/news/local/article_c86e0c0f-755e-43e2-b167-171c78fa9954.html

University of Nebraska at Omaha

1. Drones Are Everywhere. Hackers Are, Too. UNO is Working to Keep Nebraska's UAVs Safe

The National Science Foundation has awarded \$175,000 to the University of Nebraska at Omaha College of Information Science and Technology for a two-year project led by Assistant Professor Peng Jiang, Ph.D., to develop AI-driven protections against drone cyberattacks such as GPS spoofing. The project, MUSE, will create a GPS-independent navigation system that fuses data from multiple sensors to help drones operate safely in adversarial conditions, using UNO's new MM-AIR research testbed.

As drone use rapidly expands across agriculture, emergency response, and infrastructure monitoring, the research aims to strengthen the safety, reliability, and trustworthiness of UAV systems while providing hands-on training for students.

Related Media Items:

- News Release: <https://www.unomaha.edu/news/2026/02/drones-are-everywhere-hackers-are-too-uno-is-working-to-keep-nebraskas-uavs-safe.php>
- WOWT: <https://www.wowt.com/2026/02/06/uno-researchers-developing-drone-hacking-defenses-omaha/>

2. Managing Discomfort: How Student Workers Are Supporting UNO's Athletes

At the University of Nebraska at Omaha, supporting student-athletes goes far beyond game day through a holistic, 360-degree performance model that integrates strength and conditioning, sports medicine, nutrition, and mental

health services. Student workers and interns play a key role in delivering hands-on care while gaining real-world experience, collaborating with partners like the University of Nebraska Medical Center to support injury recovery and overall well-being. By prioritizing both performance and psychological safety, Omaha Athletics ensures athletes are cared for as whole individuals.

Related Media Item: <https://www.unomaha.edu/news/2026/02/managing-discomfort-how-student-workers-are-supporting-unos-athletes.php>

Agriculture and Natural Resources

1. Khalimonchuk expands work to decode mitochondrial failure behind major diseases

Backed by a renewed \$2 million NIH award, University of Nebraska–Lincoln biochemist Oleh Khalimonchuk is advancing critical research into mitochondrial failure, a root cause of more than 150 diseases including ALS, Parkinson’s and Alzheimer’s. His work focuses on decoding the basic biology of mitochondrial quality-control systems — knowledge essential for effective drug development and fewer treatment side effects. By studying key proteins such as OMA1 and Afg1, mitochondrial membrane architecture and heme biosynthesis, Khalimonchuk aims to clarify how cells respond to stress and aging. His research also fuels collaborations targeting triple-negative breast cancer and exploring mitochondrial proteins as promising new drug targets.

Related Media Item: <https://news.unl.edu/article/khalimonchuk-expands-work-to-decode-mitochondrial-failure-behind-major-diseases>

2. American Society of Animal Science salutes Desaulniers’ teaching excellence

Amy Desaulniers has been named the 2026 Outstanding Young Teacher by the American Society of Animal Science Midwest Section, recognizing her exceptional impact on students and agriculture. An associate professor in veterinary medicine and biomedical sciences, she blends evidence-based teaching with hands-on research training to engage learners at all levels. Through flipped classrooms, structured problem-solving, and experiential learning in reproductive physiology, she strengthens knowledge retention and real-world application. Her research on swine reproductive biology advances livestock fertility while informing human biomedical science. Beyond the classroom, her instructional leadership and commitment to teaching innovation continue to elevate educational excellence across her college and profession.

Related Media Item: <https://ianrnews.unl.edu/article/american-society-of-animal-science-salutes-desaulniers-teaching-excellence>

University of Nebraska Foundation

1. Glow Big Red Shatters Previous Record

Husker Nation shattered the previous Glow Big Red record, raising \$3,667,815 during the annual 24-hour event to support the University of Nebraska–Lincoln.

During the online giving event, 8,080 gifts were made to support priorities and causes across the university. The number of gifts and the amount raised both set records, exceeding the 2025 giving day totals: 7,241 gifts and \$1,022,896 raised.

Supporters representing each state made a gift during Glow Big Red. There were more than 200 causes to support across the university. Glow Big Red began at noon Feb. 11 and concluded at noon Feb. 12.

Related Media Item: <https://news.unl.edu/article/glow-big-red-raises-record-36-million-for-husker-students>

2. Lied Center Breaks Ground on ‘Building the Future’ Project

The Lied Center for Performing Arts at the University of Nebraska–Lincoln broke ground Feb. 10 on a \$35 million privately funded addition and renovation.

Recognized at the “Building the Future” groundbreaking ceremony were the generous benefactors supporting the project — Acklie Charitable Foundation, The Johnny Carson Foundation, Anabeth Hormel Cox, D F Dillon Foundation, Sid Dillon, Kelly and Virginia Holthus family, Glenn Korff Foundation, Doug and Vikki Kotil, NEBCO/Abel Foundation, Liana Sandin and The Pearle Francis Finigan Foundation, Rhonda Seacrest and Union Bank and Trust.

Located at 12th and Q streets, the Lied Center project will include an iconic new entrance along Q Street, as well as enhanced lobbies, a new studio theater and numerous other enhancements.

Related Media Item: <https://news.unl.edu/article/lie-center-breaks-ground-on-building-the-future-project>

Buffett Early Childhood Institute

Buffett Early Childhood Institute Publishes National Report on Innovative Child Care Funding Model

A new report from the Buffett Institute examines the Tri-Share child care funding model, in which the cost is shared among employers, the government, and families, and draws lessons learned for other states and communities considering this approach.

The report shares case studies from five states and cities—Michigan, Kentucky, Missouri, North Carolina, and Rapid City, South Dakota—already using Tri-Share models. It explains how cost-sharing can help families stay in the workforce and provide more predictable, stable payments to child care providers. And it shares what policymakers should consider when designing shared-cost child care strategies.

The report was cited in the Missouri Times and the Kentucky Chamber of Commerce’s Bottom Line News. Author Linda Smith, the Buffett Institute’s senior director of policy, also wrote a corresponding blog.

Related Media Items:

- Report: <https://buffettinstitute.nebraska.edu/policy-research/from-pilot-to-policy-lessons-learned-from-five-trishare-models>
- News Release: <https://buffettinstitute.nebraska.edu/blog/2026/01/why-tri-share-matters-what-we-can-learn-from-a-shared-responsibility-model-for-child-care>

Daugherty Water for Food Global Institute

African Union High-Level Panel Highlights Urgent Need for Investment in Agricultural Water Management

As the United Nations warns of a global “era of water bankruptcy,” the African Union (AU) is intensifying calls for action to strengthen water management in agriculture—a critical challenge as more than 300 million people across Africa face hunger.

At the 2026 Global Forum for Food and Agriculture in Berlin, DWFI Associate Director Nicole Lefore moderated a high-level panel focused on agricultural water development. Panelists from Botswana, Angola, Morocco, and the Pan-African Farmers Organization emphasized recurring drought, competition for scarce water supplies, and the need to strengthen irrigation access. Financing emerged as the central challenge, with speakers calling for increased public, private and farmer-led investment. The event underscored 2026 as the 'Year of Water' and contributed to momentum leading up to the UN Water Conference later in the year.

Related Media Item: <https://waterforfood.nebraska.edu/news-and-events/news/2026/02/african-union-high-level-panel-highlights-urgent-need-for-investment>

National Strategic Research Institute

NSRI JEMSO R&D refines space, streamlines operations

The National Strategic Research Institute (NSRI) at the University of Nebraska is leading several efforts for joint electromagnetic spectrum operations (JEMSO) to enhance maneuverability across the spectrum and help the U.S. Department of War (DOW) streamline defense operations.

Designated by the DOW as the University Affiliated Research Center for U.S. Strategic Command (USSTRATCOM), NSRI actively leverages its deep bench of experienced JEMSO leaders and academic experts to support the Command’s JEMSO mission — helping ensure growth and superiority of U.S. EMSO, a critical component for the Joint Military Force that transcends all physical domains.

Four projects were active throughout 2025, with one completed and three continuing into 2026. Total awarded funding for the four projects is more than \$3.3 million.

Get details at <https://nsri.nebraska.edu/news/news-releases/2026/01/nsri-jemso-rd-refines-space-streamlines-ops>

Related Media Item: <https://www.linkedin.com/feed/update/urn:li:activity:7424497031672553472>