

People, Programs and Points of Excellence (P³E) Report for January 30, 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 and Nebraska Chamber President/CEO Todd Bingham discuss Nebraska's workforce and economic future

The newest "Shaping the Future" episode features a conversation between President Gold and Todd Bingham, president and CEO of the Nebraska Chamber of Commerce and Industry. They discuss opportunities for economic growth in Nebraska, the University's role in workforce development and how partnerships are moving the state forward.

Related Media Item: <https://youtu.be/dTYyZxl4KLw>

2. "Heart to Heart" podcast features UNMC's Dr. Kyle Meyer, discussion on rural training programs

On a new episode of "Heart to Heart," President Gold is joined by Dr. Kyle Meyer, associate vice chancellor for health workforce initiatives at the University of Nebraska Medical Center. They discuss Nebraska's growing demand for health professionals, the impact of rural training programs and how collaboration across the university and our state can help ensure every Nebraskan has access to quality care—close to home.

Related Media Item: <https://soundcloud.com/heart-to-heart-nu/kyle-meyer>

University of Nebraska at Kearney

1. New UNK-CCC partnership streamlines path for future teachers

The University of Nebraska at Kearney and Central Community College have launched a 2+2 guided pathway that creates a clear, affordable route for future teachers to move from an associate degree to a bachelor's in education. Students complete their first 60 credit hours at CCC campuses in Columbus, Grand Island or Hastings before

transferring directly into UNK's teacher education programs, without losing credits or extending time to graduation.

The pathway prepares students for careers in early childhood, elementary, middle level and special education. Candace Walton, CCC vice president of innovation and instruction, said the partnership lowers cost and strengthens Nebraska's teacher pipeline. Jesslyn Hollar, chair of UNK's Department of Teacher Education, emphasized its focus on access and on-time graduation.

Related Media Item: <https://unknews.unk.edu/2026/01/13/new-unk-ccc-partnership-streamlines-path-for-future-teachers/>

2. Real Money, real decisions: UNK finance students manage \$400K investment portfolio

UNK finance students gain hands-on investment experience through the William L. Bauhard Student Managed Investment Fund, managing a real-money portfolio valued at approximately \$400,000. Launched in 2014 with an initial gift of \$100,000, the fund serves as a core experiential learning component in UNK's investments and portfolio management courses.

Students act as professional portfolio managers, researching companies, preparing equity reports and presenting stock pitches. All trades require a two-thirds class vote and faculty approval. Suzanne Hayes, finance professor and faculty adviser, said the fund's primary goal is education, emphasizing critical thinking, communication, ethics and accountability. The portfolio is benchmarked against the S&P 500 and diversified across roughly 60 holdings.

The program teaches ethical stewardship, with students preparing annual donor reports and thank-you letters. As the fund grows, Hayes hopes future earnings will support student scholarships.

Related Media Item: <https://unknews.unk.edu/2026/01/14/real-money-real-decisions-unk-finance-students-manage-400k-investment-portfolio/>

University of Nebraska–Lincoln

1. Schubert elected National Academy of Inventors Fellow

Mathias Schubert, J.A. Woollam Distinguished Professor of Engineering and one of the world's foremost innovators in the field of optical ellipsometry, has been elected to the 2025 class of National Academy of Inventors Fellows. He joins 13 University of Nebraska–Lincoln faculty as National Academy of Inventors Fellows. The honor recognizes researchers whose work has been translated into inventions and technologies with societal impact.

Related Media Item: <https://news.unl.edu/article/schubert-elected-national-academy-of-inventors-fellow>

2. Husker researchers make gains on developing synthetic 'muscle'

Husker researchers are continuing to make progress on developing a new synthetic material that behaves like biological muscle, an advancement that could provide a path to soft robotics, prosthetic devices and advanced human-machine interfaces.

Related Media Item: <https://news.unl.edu/article/husker-researchers-make-gains-on-developing-synthetic-muscle>

University of Nebraska Medical Center

1. Nursing climbs up rankings for its MSN program

In the U.S. News and World Report rankings of top online programs, the UNMC College of Nursing MSN program was ranked 41st among more than 200 programs nationwide.

The ranking represents an improvement of more than 30 spots. The upward trajectory not only highlights the college's commitment of tailoring education to the needs of future nursing leaders but also its dedication to an engaging learning environment.

Related Media Item: <https://www.unmc.edu/newsroom/2026/01/27/nursing-climbs-up-rankings-for-its-msn-program/>

2. New health education building opens doors at Kearney

Students, staff and faculty stepped inside the future of rural health care education Jan. 21 during a "first look" event at the new Health Science Education Center II on the University of Nebraska at Kearney campus.

The new facility will serve as a hub for cutting-edge health care training, featuring advanced simulation and clinical skills laboratories, technology-rich classrooms, and shared resources designed to support collaborative learning across disciplines.

Related Media Item: <https://www.unmc.edu/newsroom/2026/01/23/new-hsec-ii-facility-opens-doors-at-kearney/>

University of Nebraska at Omaha

1. UNO Online Master's in Criminal Justice Named Top 5 Nationally by U.S. News

The University of Nebraska at Omaha's online criminal justice master's program continues to earn national recognition, ranking No. 5 overall and No. 3 in the nation for veterans in the 2026 U.S. News & World Report Best Online Programs rankings. UNO improved one spot in both categories from 2025, reinforcing its momentum as a leader in online and veteran-focused education.

The rankings align with UNO's broader national standing, including being named a top five public university for veterans and No. 1 nationally by Military Times for traditional and online education.

Related Media Item: <https://www.unomaha.edu/news/2026/01/uno-online-masters-in-criminal-justice-named-top-5-nationally-by-us-news.php>

2. Mavs Give Back at MLK Day of Service

The University of Nebraska at Omaha community united for the MLK Day of Service, with students, faculty, and staff volunteering across Omaha to honor Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s legacy. Through hands-on projects, participants supported local partners, addressed community needs, and reflected the values of unity and civic responsibility. The event underscored UNO's enduring commitment to community engagement and its signature culture of service.

Related Media Item:

- UNO Exposure: <https://uno.exposure.co/mavs-give-back-at-mlk-day-of-service>
 - KMTV Channel 3: <https://www.3newsnow.com/central-omaha/its-foundational-to-everything-volunteers-pack-8-000-books-for-omaha-students-in-honor-of-mlk-day>
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Agriculture and Natural Resources

1. New Pilot, A Shared Mission: Extension and Cancer Prevention

Nebraska Extension's work is built on trust and strong community relationships, making it a powerful partner in addressing rural health disparities. Through a new pilot partnership with the Fred & Pamela Buffett Cancer Center, Assistant Extension Educator Ashley Ahrens will help expand cancer prevention and screening efforts across all 11 counties of the Nebraska Panhandle.

By embedding evidence-based cancer education into existing Extension programs and partnering with local healthcare providers, Extension serves as a trusted bridge between rural communities and life-saving resources. With rural Nebraskans facing higher cancer rates and limited access to care, this collaboration strengthens prevention, early detection, and long-term health outcomes.

Related Media Items: <https://ianrnews.unl.edu/article/new-pilot-a-shared-mission-extension-and-cancer-prevention>

2. National Academy of Sciences salutes Schnable for pioneering work

The National Academy of Sciences has awarded James Schnable, Nebraska Corn Presidential Chair and professor of agronomy and horticulture, the 2026 NAS Prize in Food and Agriculture Sciences, one of its highest honors. The award recognizes Schnable's transformative impact on plant science, particularly his pioneering work in plant genomics, quantitative genetics and phenotyping.

His research has accelerated the identification of gene functions, enabled the complete mapping of the corn genome and advanced development of the first digital twin of a cornfield. These innovations are helping create more resilient, resource-efficient crops, providing farmers with improved varieties that require less fertilizer, tolerate stress better and strengthen global food security.

Related Media Items: <https://ianrnews.unl.edu/article/national-academy-of-sciences-salutes-schnable-for-pioneering-work>

University of Nebraska Foundation

Husker Community Can Show Its Pride Through Glow Big Red

Husker Nation will unite Feb. 11-12 for the eighth annual Glow Big Red, a 24-hour celebration of giving to support the University of Nebraska–Lincoln. Glow Big Red brings together Huskers from around the world to raise money for critical causes and needs that touch every part of the university, including student scholarships, colleges, programs and Nebraska Athletics.

Glow Big Red will begin at noon CT Feb. 11 and continue through noon CT Feb. 12, with the campus lit up in red to celebrate the giving day. Learn more at glowbigred.unl.edu.

Related Media Items: <https://nufoundation.org/husker-community-can-show-its-pride-through-glow-big-red-feb-11-12/>

Buffett Early Childhood Institute

Buffett Early Childhood Institute Hosts Omaha Mayoral Briefing on Child Care, Poverty Elimination Plan

The Buffett Institute hosted Omaha Mayor John Ewing and members of his staff for a discussion on the Mayor’s Advisory Task Force for the Poverty Elimination Action Plan and the vital role child care plays in reducing poverty in our region.

Institute leaders and partners, including Renee Wessels, Amy Schmidtke, and University of Nebraska at Omaha colleagues Debora Wisneski and Laurel Sariscsany, are contributing expertise as members of the task force’s Early Childhood Working Group.

During the visit, the Institute’s Policy team, led by Senior Director of Policy Linda Smith, briefed the mayor’s team on Omaha’s child care landscape, highlighting regional needs and potential solutions to increase child care capacity.

The data shared drew on the Institute’s innovative, distance-based child care gap methodology, which factors in the actual distance between existing child care spots and the homes of the children who need care.

Related Media Items:

<https://www.facebook.com/BufettECI/posts/pfbid037K86tjGpgbgqJ65UK8TH1ViM6K3cDcRiY5JXBywstCHZVdaBKniktYcvY7g8SZ3gl>

Daugherty Water for Food Global Institute

DWFI Experts Publish in PLOS Water: Bridging the Global Climate Finance Gap through Local Governance

Following DWFI's seminar at the 2025 Stockholm World Water Week titled “Water for food in a changing climate: Pathways to adaptation and mitigation – System level policies and partnerships,” DWFI's Renata Rimšaitė and

Nicole Lefore both wrote opinion pieces published in the PLOS Water journal. Rimšaitė explores how water governance can better support resilient agricultural systems and Lefore explains that global climate goals, and even more so, climate finance mechanisms, prioritize mitigation, while farmers and governments tend to focus on adaptation to ensure food and nutritional security.

Related Media Item:

- News release: <https://waterforfood.nebraska.edu/news-and-events/news/2026/01/strengthening-water-governance-for-agricultural-resilience>
- Related news release: <https://waterforfood.nebraska.edu/news-and-events/news/2025/12/can-agricultural-water-management-support-both-adaptation-and-mitigation>

National Strategic Research Institute

NSRI welcomes former strategic deterrence interns as full-time research specialists

The National Strategic Research Institute (NSRI) at the University of Nebraska proudly announces the appointment of Grace Farson and Daniel Brinkman as research specialists for the institute's strategic deterrence and nuclear programs.

Both professionals distinguished themselves during NSRI's competitive internship program and now join the permanent NSRI team, advancing the Nation's strategic deterrence capabilities.

The transition from intern to full-time professional exemplifies NSRI's commitment to cultivating the next generation of national security leaders. Through its internship program focused on U.S. Strategic Command (USSTRATCOM) priorities and experiences, emerging professionals gain real-world exposure to critical national security challenges while working alongside distinguished military leaders, academic researchers and defense policy experts.

"Watching Grace and Dan evolve from eager interns into confident national security professionals has been one of the most rewarding aspects of my role here," said Adam Carlstrom, NSRI associate executive director. "Their dedication to understanding the complex threats facing our Nation — from escalation dynamics to nuclear command and control to electromagnetic spectrum operations and more — demonstrates the impact of our internship program. These young professionals represent the future of our strategic deterrence enterprise, and their fresh perspectives combined with the mentorship they've received here will prove invaluable as we confront tomorrow's threats."

Related Media Item: <https://www.linkedin.com/feed/update/urn:li:activity:7417976910468526080>