

# People, Programs and Points of Excellence (P<sup>3</sup>E) Report for March 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. NU President Gold, UNMC leaders, join national launch of medical school nutrition initiative**

University of Nebraska President Jeffrey P. Gold, MD, and University of Nebraska Medical Center College of Medicine Dean Bradley Britigan, MD, attended a March 5 news conference announcing the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' new pilot program expanding nutrition education in medical school curricula.

**Related Media Item:** <https://nebraska.edu/news-and-events/news/2026/03/nu-president-gold-unmc-leaders-join-national-launch-of-medical-school-nutrition-initiative>

### **2. University of Nebraska recognizes Presidential Scholars from Lincoln Public Schools**

The University of Nebraska and Lincoln Public Schools held a special event to recognize a group of exceptional Lincoln students who earned a perfect score of 36 on the ACT and have applied to the University of Nebraska.

**Related Media Item:** <https://nebraska.edu/news-and-events/news/2026/03/university-of-nebraska-recognizes-presidential-scholars-from-lincoln-public-schools>

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## University of Nebraska at Kearney

### **1. Paige Oltmans, John Placke selected to lead UNK student body**

Paige Oltmans of Davenport and John Placke of St. Libory were elected student body president and vice president at the University of Nebraska at Kearney and will take office April 17. As president, Oltmans will serve as UNK's student regent on the University of Nebraska Board of Regents and represent the student body to university leadership and the public.

Oltmans is a junior studying political science and business administration with a public law minor and is active in several campus organizations, including Pre-Law Society and the Panhellenic Council. Placke, a junior pre-medical

student studying biology with a health science emphasis, is involved in programs such as the Kearney Health Opportunities Program, Honors Program and Undergraduate Research Fellows.

Student Senate members and the executive cabinet will work with the president and vice president to represent student interests, pass legislation affecting campus life and appoint student representatives to university committees.

**Related Media Item:** <https://unknews.unk.edu/2026/03/06/paige-oltmans-john-placke-selected-to-lead-unk-student-body/>

## **2. More than 60 students selected for Kearney Health Opportunities Program at UNK**

More than 60 high school seniors have been selected to join the Kearney Health Opportunities Program (KHOP) at the University of Nebraska at Kearney, beginning their studies this fall with the goal of serving rural and medically underserved communities. The students were chosen based on academic achievement, leadership potential and commitment to practicing in rural Nebraska.

Launched in 2010, KHOP provides financial assistance, academic support and professional development for students pursuing careers in 12 health professions. Many participants receive full-tuition scholarships to attend UNK and guaranteed admission to the University of Nebraska Medical Center upon meeting program requirements.

Currently more than 170 students participate in KHOP, and the 67 students accepted for fall 2026 represent the second-largest class in the program's history. The initiative reflects a partnership between UNK and UNMC aimed at preparing health care providers for communities across the state.

**Related Media Item:** <https://unknews.unk.edu/2026/03/03/more-than-60-students-selected-for-kearney-health-opportunities-program-at-unk/>

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## **University of Nebraska–Lincoln**

### **1. Mad for Nebraska: Voting opens to decide what Huskers love most**

Huskers have a lot of love for the University of Nebraska–Lincoln — maybe a little too much. Now it's time to prove it. From Memorial Stadium flyovers to campus squirrels, 64 beloved Nebraska traditions are facing off in a March Madness–style bracket to crown the ultimate Husker favorite.

**Related Media Item:** <https://news.unl.edu/article/mad-for-nebraska-voting-opens-to-decide-what-huskers-love-most>

### **2. Decades of student writing in 'Laurus' are going digital**

For the first time, decades of student writing in the "Laurus" literary magazine are going online. From poetry to early works by now-acclaimed writers, the digitized archive lets readers explore 40 years of creativity, experimentation and the evolution of Nebraska's literary scene.

**Related Media Item:** <https://news.unl.edu/article/decades-of-student-writing-in-laurus-are-going-digital>

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## **University of Nebraska Medical Center**

### **1. \$4.7 million grant will fund preeclampsia research**

A UNMC research team has been awarded a \$4.7 million grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to advance the development of a potentially groundbreaking treatment for preeclampsia, a life-threatening pregnancy disorder that affects millions of women worldwide.

The two-year project, led by Sarosh Rana, MD, professor and chair of the UNMC Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology, will evaluate the safety and feasibility of a novel, naturally occurring compound as a clinical candidate to treat this condition.

Preeclampsia is one of the leading causes of maternal and fetal death globally, particularly in low-resource settings where access to specialized care is limited.

**Related Media Item:** <https://www.unmc.edu/newsroom/2026/01/22/4-7-million-grant-will-fund-preeclampsia-research/>

### **2. Children’s Dental Day held in York**

The UNMC College of Dentistry offered Children’s Dental Day, an outreach initiative designed to expand access to dental care while helping children build positive early experiences with oral health.

Bailey Neville, DDS, a former UNMC resident, hosted the event at her practice in partnership with Gail Rohlfing, DDS, interim chair of growth and development for the UNMC College of Dentistry. For this first event at Countryside in York, area schools helped identify students with dental needs who might otherwise struggle to access care, and 25 children received comprehensive care during the event.

By bringing care directly into the community, events like the Children’s Dental Day at Countryside help reduce barriers and connect families with local providers. In addition to serving patients, the event provided hands-on experience for dental residents, who worked alongside clinicians throughout the day.

**Related Media Item:** <https://www.unmc.edu/newsroom/2026/02/20/unmc-college-of-dentistry-holds-childrens-dental-day/>

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## **University of Nebraska at Omaha**

### **1. UNO to Launch Humanities Internship Initiative**

The University of Nebraska at Omaha has received a grant from the Mellon Foundation to launch Humanities in Action: The Maverick Internship Program, a cross-college initiative expanding paid, credit-bearing internships for humanities majors.

Beginning in spring 2026, the program will integrate revised internship courses, professional development workshops, and community-connected events to embed career preparation directly into the curriculum. Designed

to become a permanent part of UNO's academic infrastructure, the initiative will support at least 40 paid internships annually and strengthen students' connections to Omaha's civic and professional community.

**Related Media Item:** <https://www.unomaha.edu/news/2026/03/uno-to-launch-humanities-internship-initiative.php>

## **2. The real measure of a university's value**

Chancellor Joanne Li argues that public universities face a perception crisis and must redefine success through measurable community impact. The editorial calls on universities and communities alike to strengthen partnerships, align academic work with public needs, and judge higher education by the lives improved and problems solved.

**Related Media Item:** <https://nebraskaexaminer.com/2026/02/27/opinion-the-real-measure-of-a-universitys-value/>

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## **Agriculture and Natural Resources**

### **1. Gibbon credits Rural Prosperity Nebraska program for grant awards**

Gibbon, Nebraska received a \$435,000 downtown revitalization grant from the Nebraska Department of Economic Development, which local leaders credit in part to the Entrepreneurial Communities Activation Process (ECAP) through Rural Prosperity Nebraska, a Nebraska Extension program. ECAP helps communities identify development goals by gathering resident input through surveys and facilitated discussions. Gibbon joined the program in 2022 to better coordinate local efforts and understand community priorities. A survey of 247 residents highlighted needs such as downtown improvements and recreational projects. Since then, Gibbon has secured over \$1 million in funding for community initiatives, supporting long-term planning aimed at improving quality of life and attracting young families.

**Related Media Item:** <https://news.unl.edu/article/gibbon-credits-rural-prosperity-nebraska-program-for-grant-awards>

### **2. After Wildfire: Livestock Care, Documentation, and Recovery for Nebraska Cattle Operations**

Recent wildfires in Nebraska have forced many cattle producers to make urgent management decisions. Nebraska Extension is providing guidance, expertise, and resources to support producers impacted by the fires. After ensuring human safety, producers should focus on stabilizing livestock with health checks and access to clean water and feed, documenting losses for insurance and disaster assistance programs, and developing a grazing recovery plan to protect rangeland. Cattle should not return to recently burned areas due to hazards such as hot spots, ash, and debris that can injure hooves and soft tissues. Producers should continue monitoring animals for burns, respiratory irritation, and delayed hoof damage while consulting veterinarians as needed.

**Related Media Item:** <https://ianrnews.unl.edu/article/after-wildfire-livestock-care-documentation-and-recovery-for-nebraska-cattle-operations>

## **University of Nebraska Foundation**

### **Aidan O’Neil Foundation gift will support gene and cellular therapy research**

The Aidan O’Neil Foundation for the Prevention of Childhood Cancer has made a \$4.2 million gift through the University of Nebraska Foundation. Nearly all of the gift will support gene and cellular therapy research at UNMC, creating two endowed chairs at the Fred & Pamela Buffett Cancer Center and establishing the Aidan O’Neil Gene and Cellular Therapy Research Fund.

The Aidan O’Neil Foundation was established to better understand the risk factors for childhood cancer following the passing of 9-year-old Aidan O’Neil, who had been diagnosed with a rare and aggressive form of cancer.

**Related Media Item:** <https://nufoundation.org/honoring-aidans-legacy/>

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## **Buffett Early Childhood Institute**

### **Buffett Early Childhood Institute Releases New Research Brief to Widespread Media Coverage**

The Buffett Institute recently released a research brief on the child care gap in the Omaha-Council Bluffs metro area, which is home to potentially 4,454 children who need child care but whose families can’t easily access it.

Among the findings:

- The child care gap in the Omaha Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) is 7.9%, which translates to 4,454 children age 5 and under.
- Local child care shortages could result in long-term economic losses of \$221 million to \$335 million, due to reduced labor participation, lower productivity, tax losses, and more.
- Child care needs are concentrated in North Omaha, South Omaha, Bellevue, and Council Bluffs.

In January, those findings were shared with the City of Omaha as part of Omaha Mayor John Ewing’s Early Childhood Working Group—a group tasked with helping to implement the City’s Poverty Elimination Action Plan (PEAP).

The Institute also offered recommendations for community leaders, including treating child care as a regional planning issue.

The brief garnered media coverage from the Flatwater Free Press, the Omaha World-Herald, KMTV, KETV, and the Humphrey Democrat.

**Related Media Items:**

- BECI Brief: <https://buffettinstitute.nebraska.edu/policy-research/omaha-metro-child-care-gap-assessment>
- Flatwater Free Press: <https://flatwaterfreepress.org/nebraska-has-a-child-care-crisis-looming-cuts-to-medicaid-will-worsen-it/>
- Omaha World-Herald: [https://omaha.com/news/local/article\\_8b2b63b8-f5ab-456c-adde-15cd991f22c6.html#tracking-source=home-the-latest](https://omaha.com/news/local/article_8b2b63b8-f5ab-456c-adde-15cd991f22c6.html#tracking-source=home-the-latest)
- KMTV: <https://www.3newsnow.com/southwest-iowa/staffing-shortages-drive-childcare-gap-new-report-finds-iowa-side-of-metro-has-highest-need>

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

### **USGLC Luncheon: International assistance strengthens U.S. national security, expands Nebraska ag opportunities**

On February 25, DWFI Executive Director Joe Sanders joined Nebraska agriculture, business, and policy leaders for a U.S. Global Leadership Coalition (USGLC) luncheon in Lincoln titled “When America Leads, Nebraska Wins,” featuring former USAID Deputy Administrator Bonnie Glick. The event highlighted how strategic international assistance and American leadership in a competitive global landscape directly strengthen U.S. national security while expanding economic opportunities for Nebraska’s agricultural community and workforce.

**Related Media Item:** <https://www.usglc.org/events/america-leads-nebraska-wins-02-25-26/>

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## **National Strategic Research Institute**

### **NSRI advances CBRN, JEMSO research collaboration at premier defense conferences**

The National Security Research Institute (NSRI) at the University of Nebraska engaged on the national stage this week, bringing its capabilities and NU expertise to the forefront at two of the defense community's leading conferences.

At the 2026 Pacific Operational Science & Technology (POST) Conference alongside U.S. Indo-Pacific Command in Honolulu, Hawaii, NSRI staff drove conversations around collaborative research in joint electromagnetic spectrum operations (JEMSO), chemical and biological defense and field operations and training. POST proved to be a valuable launch platform for defense innovation — and NSRI was there to connect research potential with operational need and warfighting advantage.

Simultaneously, NSRI staff demonstrated medical countermeasures and chemical and biological defense capabilities at the 14th Annual Joint Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear (CBRN) Symposium in Washington D.C., where government, military, academia and industry converged to advance strategies against today's most complex threats.

Across both events, NSRI highlighted its designation from the U.S. Department of War as a University Affiliated Research Center (UARC) — and the efficient indefinite-delivery, indefinite-quality contracting mechanism it leverages to provide rapid-response research and development in support of the defense industrial base.

**Related Media Items:**

- <https://www.linkedin.com/feed/update/urn:li:activity:7436842388532240384>
- <https://www.linkedin.com/feed/update/urn:li:activity:7437225786341875714>