

People, Programs and Points of Excellence (P^3E) Report for November 20, 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 at Kearney

1. JD Stone brings real-world experience to UNK construction management program

A 2012 UNK graduate and McCook native, Stone joined the faculty in 2023 after working on major construction projects, including a $200 million hospital expansion in Arizona, the University of Nebraska-Lincoln College of Business building and the Central Nebraska Veterans' Home in Kearney. His courses emphasize practical knowledge gained through years as a project superintendent and construction designer. UNK's construction management program reports 100% job placement, with graduates earning starting salaries ranging from approximately $65,000 to $88,000. Housed in the College of Business and Technology, the program combines construction expertise with business and leadership education, distinguishing it from programs traditionally located in engineering or architecture colleges.

Related Media Item: https://unknews.unk.edu/2026/10/08/ask-an-antelope-jd-stone-shares-lessons-from-the-job-site-with-unk-students/

2. 'Where I wanted to be': UNK grad Tell Jensen begins career as Ogallala city manager

At just 24 years old, UNK graduate Tell Jensen is serving as city manager of Ogallala, Nebraska, overseeing municipal operations and working with elected officials, department leaders and residents. A Burwell native who earned his political science degree in December 2025, Jensen credits UNK faculty mentorship and practical experiences with preparing him for this leadership role. He participated in the Nebraska Good Life Opportunities Program, a partnership between UNK and the University of Nebraska at Omaha that provides tuition assistance, mentorship and professional development for students pursuing public service careers. Jensen also completed an internship with the city of Cozad and spent six months working alongside Kearney City Manager Brenda Jensen. Now pursuing a master's degree in public administration through UNO, he hopes to help Ogallala grow and prosper while building his career in rural Nebraska.

Related Media Item: https://unknews.unk.edu/2026/09/23/where-i-wanted-to-be-unk-grad-tell-jensen-begins-career-as-ogallala-city-manager/

University of Nebraska–Lincoln

1. 196 Huskers rank among world's most influential scientists

A total of 196 current and former University of Nebraska–Lincoln researchers rank among the world's most influential scientists, according to the 2026 Stanford/Elsevier Top 2% Scientists list. The annual publication identifies researchers whose published work has had significant influence in their fields, as measured by citations from other scholars. Inclusion indicates that a researcher's work ranks among the most frequently cited in their discipline worldwide. Current and former Nebraska researchers and affiliates on the 2026 ranking include 75 from the College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources; 58 from the College of Arts and Sciences; 41 from the College of Engineering; 17 from the College of Education and Human Sciences; two from the College of Business; two from the College of Architecture; and one from the College of Law.

Related Media Item: https://news.unl.edu/article/196-huskers-rank-among-worlds-most-influential-scientists

2. Nebraska ranks No. 37 among world's top undergraduate entrepreneurship programs

Nebraska ranked No. 37 globally among undergraduate entrepreneurship programs, marking its third consecutive year in the top 50. The recognition highlights student support, alumni success and the university's growing entrepreneurial impact.

Related Media Item: https://news.unl.edu/article/nebraska-ranks-no-37-among-worlds-top-undergraduate-entrepreneurship-programs

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University of Nebraska Medical Center

1. Faculty team recognized in NIH nutrition challenge

A team of UNMC faculty from the College of Allied Health Professions and College of Medicine was named a winner in the National Institutes of Health's Integration of Nutrition Training into Health Care Education Challenge. The team received a $75,000 award in the medical school developing track for its innovative approach to strengthening nutrition education for future physicians. The national competition sought effective, evidence-based models that can be adopted by medical schools across the country. Leading participation in the NIH challenge were Rachel Lietka, Stephanie Hartman, MD, Susan Evans, MD, Geoffrey Talmon, MD, and Amy Cutright, MD.

Related Media Item: https://www.unmc.edu/newsroom/2026/11/16/faculty-teams-efforts-recognized-in-nih-challenge/

2. Pharmacy students win national competition

A team of UNMC faculty from the College of Allied Health Professions and College of Medicine was named a winner in the National Institutes of Health's Integration of Nutrition Training into Health Care Education Challenge. The team received a $75,000 award in the medical school developing track for its innovative approach to strengthening nutrition education for future physicians. The national competition sought effective, evidence-based models that can be adopted by medical schools across the country. Leading participation in the NIH challenge were Rachel Lietka, Stephanie Hartman, MD, Susan Evans, MD, Geoffrey Talmon, MD, and Amy Cutright, MD.

Related Media Item: https://www.unmc.edu/newsroom/2026/11/05/pharmacy-students-win-national-competition/

University of Nebraska at Omaha

1. UNO Ranked No. 5 School in the Nation for Veterans

The University of Nebraska at Omaha has once again earned national recognition, ranking No. 5 overall among 370 universities in the 2026 Military Times Best for Vets: College Rankings. UNO also ranked No. 1 in Nebraska and the Central Region, No. 2 for traditional and online education, and No. 4 among public universities. This marks the third consecutive year UNO has ranked among the top five public universities, reflecting its longstanding commitment to supporting more than 1,600 military-connected students through exceptional academic opportunities, services and campus support.

Related Media Item: https://www.unomaha.edu/news/2026/11/uno-ranked-no-5-school-in-the-nation-for-veterans.php

2. UNO Lands NSF Grant to Turn Sports Into a Gateway for STEM Education

The University of Nebraska at Omaha has received a $749,894 National Science Foundation grant to launch SPARK-AI, an interdisciplinary research initiative that uses students' interest in sports to introduce middle schoolers to artificial intelligence, data science, and quantitative reasoning. Led by UNO's Department of Biomechanics in partnership with Teacher Education and the STEM TRAIL Center, the project will develop approximately 45 classroom lessons, provide teacher professional development, and engage Omaha and Millard Public Schools. The initiative aims to make emerging technologies more accessible to students while building early interest and skills for future careers in STEM, AI, and data science.

Related Media Item: https://www.unomaha.edu/news/2026/11/uno-lands-nsf-grant-to-turn-sports-into-a-gateway-for-stem-education.php

Agriculture and Natural Resources

1. Engler program celebrates 15 years of building people who build Nebraska

For 15 years, the Engler Agribusiness Entrepreneurship Program at the University of Nebraska–Lincoln has empowered students to turn ideas into businesses, develop entrepreneurial skills and strengthen communities. A newly released 15-Year Impact Report highlights the program's success, including more than 200 ventures launched, $83 million in gross revenue generated by alumni-owned businesses in 2025 and 213 jobs supported. Engler's hands-on approach emphasizes mentorship, innovation and learning by doing, helping students build confidence and embrace opportunities. With 83% of alumni living in Nebraska, the program is making a lasting impact on the state's economy, workforce and rural communities.

Related Media Items:

- IANR News Release: https://ianrnews.unl.edu/article/engler-program-celebrates-15-years-of-building-people-who-build-nebraska
- KLKN: https://www.klkntv.com/unl-engler-program-celebrates-15-years/

2. Cattle receipts, government payments support projected Nebraska farm income growth

Nebraska net farm income is projected to reach $9.4 billion in 2026, a 16% increase over 2025, according to a new report from agricultural economists at the University of Nebraska–Lincoln and the University of Missouri. Strong cattle receipts, projected to reach a record $22.29 billion, and increased government payments are driving the growth. Crop receipts are expected to rebound by 5% after three years of declines, while production expenses continue to rise. Despite the positive outlook, economists caution that many producers continue to face financial pressures. Looking ahead, net farm income is projected to increase another 3% in 2027, even as net cash farm income declines.

Related Media Items:

- IANR News Release: https://ianrnews.unl.edu/article/cattle-receipts-government-payments-support-projected-nebraska-farm-income-growth
- Nebraska Public Media: https://nebraskapublicmedia.org/en/news/news-articles/nebraska-farm-income-projected-to-grow-in-2026-amid-tight-margins/

University of Nebraska Foundation

Donors give record-breaking $745,194 during One Day for UNK

Loper supporters joined together in a stampede of support for the sixth annual One Day for UNK, raising a record $745,194 over 24 hours to support the University of Nebraska at Kearney. It was the first time that the total raised during the giving day surpassed half a million dollars. On Nov. 12-13, 2,666 gifts were received to support UNK students, its three colleges, Loper Athletics, the Loper Pantry, the Calvin T. Ryan Library, UNK's rural health initiatives and many other causes and priorities across the university.

Related Media Item: https://unknews.unk.edu/2026/11/13/donors-give-record-breaking-745194-during-one-day-for-unk/

Buffett Early Childhood Institute

Buffett Institute Leader Shares Early Childhood Workforce Well-Being Data at National Housing Convening

Oct. 15, the Friends Center for Children, a child care program in New Haven, Conn., brought together funders, government officials, and early childhood leaders from across the country to learn from its innovative work providing rent-free housing for its early educators at the First Home, First Teacher national convening. Among the speakers was Walter Gilliam, executive director of the Buffett Early Childhood Institute, who has extensively researched early childhood workforce well-being. A former Yale University professor, Gilliam returned to New Haven to share data and explain why supporting the adults who care for young children is essential to children's healthy development. The housing initiative has attracted interest from communities across the country grappling with similar workforce recruitment and retention challenges, especially rural areas, and attendees included Ken Snyder, a retired rancher and early childhood champion from Ogallala.

Related Media Items: https://buffettinstitute.nebraska.edu/blog/2026/11/inside-new-havens-rent-free-housing-model-for-child-care-teachers

Daugherty Water for Food Global Institute

Lab Director Dan Snow reflects on nearly four decades of water science

After nearly forty years at the forefront of environmental research, Dr. Dan Snow is stepping down as director of the Water Sciences Laboratory at the University of Nebraska–Lincoln, part of the Daugherty Water for Food Global Institute and the Nebraska Water Center. In an episode of the Water for Food Podcast hosted by Frances Hayes, Dr. Snow shared reflections on his journey from a childhood farm well to spearheading advanced mass spectrometry. Under his leadership, the laboratory expanded into an internationally recognized hub for analyzing agricultural contaminants, tracking groundwater quality and training future water scientists.

Related Media Item: https://waterforfood.nebraska.edu/news-and-events/news/2026/10/lab-director-dan-snow-reflects-on-nearly-four-decades-of-water-science

National Strategic Research Institute

University of Nebraska researchers, NSRI experts explore social science applications to national security

Building on the momentum of the National Security Social Science Seminar (NS4) in May, the University of Nebraska at Omaha Office of Research & Creative Activity reconvened University of Nebraska researchers with NSRI subject matter experts last week of an immersive, scenario-based brainstorming session focus on specific areas of NSRI's Research portfolio. From decision-making and cultural dynamics to misinformation, supply chain vulnerabilities, and deterrence, human behavior shapes complex national security challenges. Social science expertise provides critical insights that can strengthen the nation's ability to anticipate, deter and respond. NS4 participants identified key themes, unique strengths and next steps for pursuing research opportunities that integrate social science into NSRI's mission space.

Related Media Item: https://www.linkedin.com/feed/update/urn:li:activity:7521207544372174848