

Start Here



CENTER FOR ENTREPRENEURSHIP

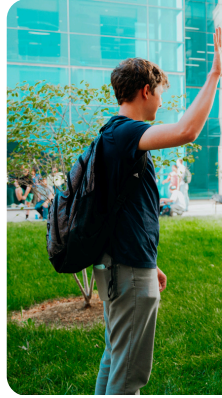
ANNUAL REPORT



Start here for entrepreneurial success. **N** CENTER FOR ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Start here for entrepreneurial success. **N** CENTER FOR ENTREPRENEURSHIP

BUILDING THE FUTURE LIKE ONLY NEBRASKA CAN



Since the introduction of the Entrepreneurship and Innovation track within the management major in 2012 and the entrepreneurship minor in 2016, hundreds of Huskers have graduated with the real-world problem solving skills, competency, resilience and curiosity to confidently pursue their passions and advance their careers.

Graduates have gone on to start their own ventures, many of them operating in the State of Nebraska, contributing jobs and development to local economies. Furthermore, they lead growth at established companies or startups, build entrepreneurship ecosystems, manage small businesses and more.

*Data reflects 2012-24 graduates of the University of Nebraska–Lincoln that engaged with the Center for Entrepreneurship and may not be complete.

102

Center-connected businesses acquired or currently operating

\$15.5M

Raised by highly engaged or major/minor graduates

46

Center-connected businesses currently operating in the state of Nebraska

202

Graduates from the major (2013-24)

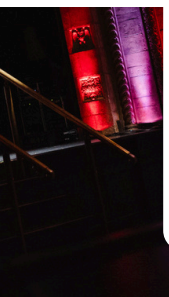
141

Graduates from the minor (2019-24)

41

Major or minor graduates who started their own venture

INSIDE THIS ISSUE



On the cover: Abby Miller and Eduardo Sicilia Ayala snap a photo after winning their respective brackets at the 2024 New Venture Competition.



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The Nebraska Center for Entrepreneurship is the hub for students who want to pursue their own ideas for a business, dream of owning a franchise or taking over their family business or are exploring their career opportunities in the entrepreneurship ecosystem. Students learn by doing – inside and outside the classroom – through hands-on competitions, workshops, and programming that connects them with valuable members of the Nebraska community. The center celebrates and supports all student entrepreneurs, regardless of their major or career aspirations.



DEAN KATHY FARRELL

Kathy Farrell

James Jr. and Susan Stuart Endowed Dean of the College of Business

HENRICKSON
FAMILY ATRIUM

WELCOME TO THE 15TH ANNUAL



QUICK PITCH
COMPETITION
3 minutes 2 pitch 1 idea.

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NEBRASKA CENTER FOR ENTREPREURSHIP



EXIT

EXIT





MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

I am delighted to present to you the highlights and accomplishments of another remarkable year at the Nebraska Center for Entrepreneurship. The 2023-24 academic year was exceptional, marked by groundbreaking achievements and significant progress.

This was our first year with a fully staffed team, allowing us to operate at our highest capacity. Our team's dedication and synergy led to a record-breaking year in fundraising, reflecting the robust support and belief in our mission. This year our financial support from donors increased significantly, including a \$2 million gift to support the Bauermeister Family Presidential Chair for the Center for Entrepreneurship. The progress made this year accounts for 15% of our overall goal.

We also experienced record attendance at all our events, highlighting the growing enthusiasm and engagement within our community. This year, we broadened our impact across campus by leveraging the Entrepreneurship Campus Fellows. This initiative has fostered deeper connections with students, staff and faculty, creating a more inclusive and expansive entrepreneurial community.

Moreover, we enhanced our impact on students and the Nebraska startup ecosystem through the Entrepreneurship Community Fellows. This program enabled us to establish valuable connections and collaborations with various stakeholders, providing students with opportunities to learn from and connect with area entrepreneurs, founders, service providers and innovators.

Looking ahead, we remain committed to expanding our impact and providing exceptional education, mentorship and resources to our community. We aim to equip our students and entrepreneurs with the skills and mindset necessary to drive positive change in the world.

Once again, I extend my heartfelt appreciation to everyone who has contributed to our success this past year. Let us continue to build upon our achievements, inspire one another, and create a future filled with endless possibilities.

Go Big Red,

Samuel A. Nelson

Director of the Nebraska Center for Entrepreneurship and
Associate Professor of Practice

1,151

Unique students enrolled in entrepreneurship (ENTR) courses

39

Campus Fellows connecting students from all colleges to entrepreneurial opportunities

65

Guest speakers in center-taught entrepreneurship courses

296

Registrants in four signature competitions

\$80K

Awarded to students and student-run businesses in Center for Entrepreneurship competitions

10

Colleges represented in center-hosted curriculum and competitions

\$46K

Awarded to students through external entrepreneurship competitions

68

Majors represented in ENTR courses

31

Percent increase in Campus Fellows Program participation



55

Community Fellows creating meaningful impact

24

Percent of non-College of Business students enrolled in ENTR courses

984

Prospective students engaged through on- and off-campus K-12 outreach

100

Percent of graduating entrepreneurship students have developed an actionable plan to launch a business

\$150K

Invested into Nebraska-based startups through Husker Venture Fund

67

Percent of non-College of Business students pursuing an ENTR minor



Message from the Assistant Director

As we reflect on the past year, I am filled with immense pride and gratitude for the remarkable strides we have made in fostering an entrepreneurial spirit across our campus and community. Our achievements in this academic year are a testament to the dedication and hard work of our students, faculty, staff and partners.

Our student events this year have been nothing short of transformative. Each event continues to grow and registrations are filled with an incredible diversity of students, giving them the chance to connect with other students from various backgrounds, creating some of the strongest teams to date.

The excellent recruitment and engagement efforts by our center this year have been instrumental in driving our success. Through targeted outreach and innovative engagement strategies, we have attracted a diverse and talented group of students.

As we look ahead, I am confident that the momentum we have built will continue to drive us towards greater achievements.

Together, we will continue to nurture the entrepreneurial spirit that is the cornerstone of the Nebraska Center for Entrepreneurship, empowering our students to become the innovators and leaders of tomorrow.

Thank you for your continued support and commitment to our mission.



AMANDA METCALF

Amanda Metcalf
Assistant Director of the Nebraska Center for Entrepreneurship

1977

First professor hired to teach entrepreneurship at Nebraska

Roommates Bill Jackson, '77, of La Jolla, California, and Bob Nelson, '77, of York, Nebraska, conspired to start the first entrepreneurship course at Nebraska in 1976. "Bill called the head of the state's Appropriations Committee, set up a meeting and received \$30,000 for the specific purpose of hiring an entrepreneurship professor," said Nelson.

1987

Nebraska Center for Entrepreneurship founded

Center hosts first business plan competition, now known as the New Venture Competition



1988

Founding Director, Robin Anderson, hired

"Robin established the foundation for our Center for Entrepreneurship, and his influence can still be seen in the center's offerings. He was instrumental in helping students hone their entrepreneurial skills and gain a global mindset at Nebraska," said Dean Kathy Farrell.

1997

Nebraska Center for Entrepreneurship wins National Model Entrepreneurship Program Award

2000

Terry Seborá hired as next Director

"My vision for the Center is to provide a source of inspiration for the faculty, staff, and students of the University of Nebraska. I want new venture creation to be a normal part of the ongoing career conversation at UNL. I would like every student who comes to the University to see that he or she can choose to employ or be employed," said Seborá.

2008

Center hosts first annual 3-2-1 Quick Pitch

2012

Entrepreneurship and Innovation introduced as a program of study within Management major

Nebraska Center for Entrepreneurship moves to Q Street

2013

First Entrepreneurship Management students graduate from Nebraska

2014

Abel family establishes fund to support Family Business education and programming

2015

Current Director, Sam Nelson, hired as Director

2016



Minor in Entrepreneurship introduced to serve non-Business students



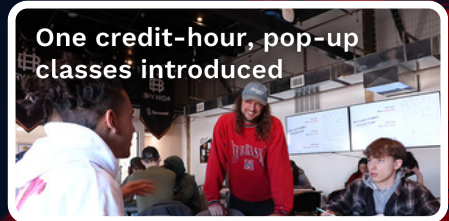
Nebraska Center for Entrepreneurship moves to new College of Business

2019

Janna Ronert establishes Husker Hustle Scholarship

"You can be a woman or from a farm, not have a great last name, but if you hustle, you can do anything," said Ronert, '87.

2020



One credit-hour, pop-up classes introduced

BUILDING ON A RICH HISTORY

2021

Husker Venture Fund and StartupsUNL win Student Impact Awards



Husker Venture Fund makes first investment

2022



Community Fellows program launched to connect students with founders, doers, leaders

Campus Fellows program launched to amplify entrepreneurial efforts across campus

Franchising class offered for first time since 1980s



Nebraska Entrepreneurship studies abroad in Rwanda

Catalysts Program receives first private gift

Allen Dayton, founder of VSA and long-time supporter of the university provided initial gift to the Catalysts Program, a cohort-based scholarship program for first year students of any major interested in entrepreneurship.

2023

Pledge funds Catalysts Program for next three years

A gift from Jolene and Kevin Vermeer will support the expansion of the Catalysts Program.

2024



Husker Venture Fund wins Regional, places third at Global VCIC Competition



Center preparation helps three teams of Huskers place at inaugural Governor's Competition

Record number of participants in co-curricular competitions and programming

Center accepts 23 students into 2024-25, inaugural cohort of the Nebraska Entrepreneurship Accelerator

Accelerator Program receives first private donations

Gifts from Bill Champion, winner of the first New Venture Competition and Ted Stuckey, '10 help fund inaugural cohort.



\$2 million gift establishes Bauermeister Family Presidential Chair for the Center for Entrepreneurship

2025

Future Impact Commitment

With the support of our alumni, donors and friends, we are headed in the right direction. With each step forward we build momentum and drive growth to better serve students at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

If we're not taking the best talent around the campus and bringing them together around this idea of entrepreneurship and starting things that are disruptive and making big bets and taking risks, then we're not going to be creating the atmosphere and future we want for the state. It's kind of the flywheel that a lot of other ingredients are going to come circle around.

John Wirtz, '05 and '06

Co-Founder and CPO of Hudl, Advisory Board Chair at Nebraska Center for Entrepreneurship, 2006 New Venture Competition Winner



JOHN WIRTZ

RECRUITING FUTURE HUSKERS

The University of Nebraska–Lincoln is the place for budding entrepreneurs. Our efforts to recruit and retain the next generation of innovators and entrepreneurs start long before students step foot on campus.

During the 2023-24 academic year, our team connected with 984 prospective students through university-wide recruitment events, school visits to campus and visiting high schools across the state, a 122% increase from the 2022-23 academic year.

(Below) Mallory Krenk, student engagement and recruitment coordinator, hosts Red Letter Day table in April.



(Above) Lincoln Standing Bear student pitches her business idea during the second round of the fall 2023 Quick Pitch Competition.

During the 2023-24 academic year, the Nebraska Center for Entrepreneurship engaged with 589 prospective students on campus. Our team is frequently invited to lead entrepreneurship workshops for various groups visiting campus and the College of Business.

Through a unique partnership with the Nebraska College of Business, students at a local high school are gaining immersive opportunities to prepare for college and their careers. In both the fall and spring semesters, the center hosted quick pitch events for students at Standing Bear High School, which houses the Nebraska Business Focus Program through Lincoln Public Schools. After two preparatory visits to Standing Bear, students visited campus to compete in two rounds of competition, receive real-time feedback and connect with current Nebraska students and faculty.

Off campus, the center is strengthening relationships with Junior Achievement (see page 13), DECA and FBLA chapters, as well as high schools in Lincoln, Omaha, and beyond. This year, we reached 395 students through classroom visits and regional and state high school competitions.

We look forward to expanding our reach and impact, empowering the next generation of leaders and entrepreneurs to choose Nebraska and pursue their passions.

Future Huskers and alumni pose for a photo after an entrepreneurship workshop on July 12.



Engaging Current Huskers

Entrepreneurs come from every industry, making cross-campus recruitment and engagement essential. A visit and workshop at the Johnny Carson Center for Emerging Media Arts led to three students stepping out of their comfort zone to participate in the 48-Hour Challenge (see page 10). A recommendation from a Campus Fellow led an engineering graduate student to pitch his cancer detection device at the New Venture Competition. These stories highlight the impactful role of our center and the support of Campus Fellows in uncovering transformative opportunities.

As the hub for entrepreneurship at Nebraska, we connect with all colleges to increase awareness and participation, through both the Campus Fellows program (see page 23) and grassroots recruitment efforts.

During the 2023-24 academic year, 39 Campus Fellows representing all colleges were onboarded to amplify efforts and expose students to entrepreneurial opportunities.

This strategic focus has resulted in increased participation in entrepreneurship courses, competitions, events and access to valuable resources across the university.

Email entrepreneurship@unl.edu to inquire about entrepreneurship workshops, programming and activities with your school, department or program.



(Above) Events intern, Lydia Tobin, and Mallory Krenk, student engagement and recruitment coordinator, at De-Stress Fest.



(Left) Ambassadors Teghan Metcalf and Brooke Bode at Student Athlete Involvement Fair.



First-Year Catalysts Cohort Provides Community and Experiences

Supported by the Nebraska Center for Entrepreneurship, the cohort-based program provides incoming first-year students of any major with a \$1,000 scholarship, valuable connections, experiences, and community as they pave their entrepreneurial journey at Nebraska.

Selected students enroll in Introduction to Entrepreneurship and Innovation (ENTR 121) during their first semester of their freshman year at Nebraska.

They also get opportunities to meet with founders, tour local headquarters, and explore entrepreneurial resources both on and off campus.

“Often students jump in with both feet during their junior or senior year, and tell us ‘I wish I would have gotten involved sooner.’ The Catalysts Program is our way to engage and empower students earlier in their college career, but also being a focal point in our recruitment efforts,” said Mallory Krenk, student engagement and recruitment coordinator. “Being able to provide a scholarship and exclusive programming is a huge draw for prospective students and their families.”

Thanks to the generous support of Jolene and Kevin Vermeer, we are able to strengthen the foundation of the program to allow for future expansion. “Supporting student scholarships for those interested in entrepreneurship empowers the next generation of leaders to drive progress and create lasting economic impact,” said Amanda Metcalf, assistant director.

We look forward to expanding our impact with future cohorts and empowering the next generation of Husker entrepreneurs.

Visit go.unl.edu/catalysts to find more information and apply for the 2025-26 cohort.

STUDENTS CRAFT CREATIVE SOLUTIONS AT THE

INNOVATION CHALLENGE

The Innovation Challenge tasks students with crafting a creative solution to a surprise challenge. This year, 35 students formed nine teams and accepted the challenge of designing and building a "race car" powered by alternative energy – nearly double the amount of participants from previous years.

Rubber bands, mouse traps and exercise bands replaced the conventional energy sources of gasoline or electricity, and four teams were awarded a total of \$1,600 after a series of contests in categories ranging from speed to off-road capabilities.

“Although the challenge is different every year, it requires creativity, collaboration, prototype testing, teamwork, design skills and even a bit of construction and engineering knowledge,” said Samantha Fairclough, associate director for the Center for Entrepreneurship. “Students enjoy being competitive, and this is the perfect introduction to some of the essential elements of entrepreneurship.”

On day one, Andrew Hanna, assistant professor of management, and Mike Smith, founder of The Bay, led a discussion about leveraging the diverse skillsets of each teammate. In addition, local entrepreneurs Bart Dillashaw, founder of Enterprise Legal Studio, Jordan Lambrecht, founder of Pixel Bakery, and Vishal Singh, founder of Quantified Ag, were guests for a panel on opening day.



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HUSKERS COLLABORATE TO
CREATE BUSINESSES AT THE

48-HOUR CHALLENGE

Twenty-three University of Nebraska–Lincoln students worked together to bring new startup business ideas to life. Collaborating with students in a variety of majors across the university while under strict time constraints, they competed by developing and pitching a new business to win cash prizes. From Thursday to Saturday, students form teams, develop a business model, validate their ideas and pitch their progress to a panel of local entrepreneurs.

DIVERSE SKILLSETS

Students represented several colleges and programs across campus including the College of Business, Jeffrey S. Raikes School of Computer Science and Management, College of Journalism and Mass Communications, College of Engineering and more.

Three Emerging Media Arts students, Alexah Fort, Hannah Gish and Micah Fullinfaw, decided to participate after our team shared the opportunity at the program’s weekly IGNITE colloquium that surrounds creative and professional development.

“I’m grateful that the Center for Entrepreneurship allows all students the opportunity to connect



with others from diverse backgrounds and areas of expertise,” said Gish.

“Creative individuals are catalysts for startup development and are a great help for all steps of the process.” Gish and Fort helped develop an AI GPT-based travel booking service and placed third in the competition.

“I learned valuable lessons from a group of diverse mentors who guided my team through the development of a business model. The challenge also allowed me to gain experience in pitching, as it was a first for me, and overcome challenges during development.”

Hannah Gish, junior emerging media arts major

Fullinfaw pitched an idea for a smart pantry on the first day of the competition. He then found five students to join his team for the competition. “Over the two days, we constantly pivoted our idea until we landed on a new, solid business plan. Restaurants would pay to be featured on an app called FOODI and users would connect with each other over their pursuit of finding new restaurants,” he said.

Fullinfaw hopes more students in the Emerging Media Arts program participate in the future. “It’s incredibly important to put yourself in uncomfortable situations if we want to learn more about the world and innovate with our creations,” he said. He and his teammates placed second in the competition.

THE POWER OF MENTORSHIP

Competitors had the opportunity to leverage the expertise of local entrepreneurs in person and others outside of Nebraska via Zoom. Emily Kist, ‘22, venture

and innovation associate at Nelnet in St. Paul, Minnesota, helped guide and mentor students.

“Participating in new business startup competitions is so important for students because it teaches them how to navigate the framework of starting a new venture. They get to practice things like customer discovery, market research, storytelling, building a pitch deck and more, which are the most essential steps to starting a company,” Kist said.

She added that even if the idea isn’t going to be a billion-dollar startup, it will teach them essential skills for when they are ready to build the next successful venture.

“I love mentoring these students because I can really help them build those fundamental skills and help narrow down their ideas. Additionally, they are so fun to work with and bring so much passion and really creative ideas to the table.”

Emily Kist, ‘22, 48-Hour Challenge Mentor

Paige Perrone and her teammates Jonathan Gerdes, Brennon Overbeek, Mohanendra Siddha, Kyran Thomas and Andrew Wellman won first place in the challenge with Paige’s idea, Street Eats, a designated food truck park and event space in Lincoln. She came up with the idea after she worked for a food truck and witnessed first-hand the struggles that food truck owners are met with.

Visit go.unl.edu/entrepreneurshipexcellencefund to support experiences like the 48-Hour Challenge.



Partnership with Loan Fund, Wells Fargo Fuels Native Entrepreneurs

In collaboration with Wells Fargo and the Native360 Loan Fund, four Native American students from the Great Plains were awarded \$42,500 in scholarships to advance their academic and entrepreneurial journeys in the Dreamcatcher Scholarship Competition.

Participants from the Cherokee, Southern Ponca Tribe of Oklahoma, Winnebago Tribe of Nebraska and Ponca Tribe of Nebraska traveled to campus for a day of learning and preparation to pitch their business or business idea to a panel of judges.

“This scholarship program represents not merely financial investments, but symbols of the faith these organizations have in the potential of Native American individuals and the positive change they can bring to their communities,” said Pete Upton, Executive Director of Native360 Loan Fund, a certified Native Community Development Financial Institution.



Winners of the 2024 competition (from left): Morgan Murakami, Keli Warrior, Macky Scott, Ni'cole Draper

RONERT SUPPORTS HUSKERS THROUGH SCHOLARSHIP COMPETITION



Recipients of the 2024 scholarship (from left): Cindy Tran, Mitchell West, Samantha Weeder (far right) pose for a photo following their presentations.

Ten students were selected to pitch their entrepreneurial dream, journey, or hustle with Janna Ronert, benefactor of the Husker Hustle Scholarship, on April 19.

Entrepreneurship, at its core, is problem solving. Janna Ronert, '87, founded IMAGE Skincare, a professional clinical brand, when she was unable to find paraben-free skincare to solve her rosacea. Since its establishment in 2003, IMAGE has grown to over 25,000 customers and is best known for changing the health and vitality of skin for women in more than 60 countries.



Janna established the Husker Hustle Scholarship to help students who are passionate about their ideas and hungry for entrepreneurial success. Since 2019, two Huskers have been chosen each year to receive \$2,500 scholarships to aid in their academic and entrepreneurial endeavors.

Application numbers doubled from previous years and, during their in-person presentations, financial need, business viability and preparation were all taken into consideration. The strength of candidates led Janna to award three \$2,500 scholarships. Recipients include Cindy Tran, sophomore marketing major from Lincoln, Nebraska, Samantha Weeder, junior agribusiness major from Genoa, Nebraska and Mitchell West, sophomore advertising and public relations major from Lincoln, Nebraska.

“Returning to college as a non-traditional first-generation student has been tough, especially given my lifelong struggle with self-confidence. Receiving the scholarship brought mixed emotions – excitement and doubt, but a conversation with Janna shifted my perspective, reminding me it's time to invest in myself. This scholarship is transforming my struggle into unexpected motivation. I'm deeply grateful.”

Mitch West, sophomore advertising and public relations major



EMPOWERING THE NEXT GENERATION OF WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS

Addisyn Mowinkel asks a question to the panelists at the EntrepreneuHER event on March 30.

In partnership with Junior Achievement, the center and the College of Business hosted 25 young women for a day of learning, connection, and empowerment.

Attendees from high schools across Nebraska learned from women leaders and entrepreneurs through a panel and small group discussions, and put what they learned into practice during an entrepreneurship activity led by the Nebraska Center for Entrepreneurship. The event not only provided valuable insights into the entrepreneurial journey but also fostered a supportive community where these young women could see themselves as future innovators and business leaders. We thank Junior Achievement of Lincoln for including us in the inaugural EntrepreneuHER event, which inspired the next generation of female leaders to pursue their entrepreneurial dreams with confidence and determination.

“As a panelist, I was truly inspired by the young women who attended - their bright minds and souls make me feel incredibly hopeful about the future. Together, we're paving the way for a new generation of female leaders.”

Lyn Wineman, founder of KidGlov, panelist and Center for Entrepreneurship Community Fellow



Panelists (left to right) Renee Sobotka, founder of True North Technologies, Karla Frese, managing partner of Home Care Partners, Kassy Knudson, vice president of business development at Lincoln Industries and Lyn Wineman, founder of KidGlov, share their perspectives with attendees.



Connecting Military Community to Entrepreneurship

The number of veteran-owned businesses is declining with U.S. Veterans Magazine reporting only 4.5% post-9/11 veterans opening a business.

The Center for Entrepreneurship looks to reverse the trend and empower the 1,600 military-connected students at the University of Nebraska–Lincoln to start or grow business endeavors.

Through a new program led by the National Veterans Leadership Foundation, Tutu Wah, a junior accounting major from Lincoln, Nebraska, served as the center's entrepreneurship military community advocate.

A mechanic in the U.S. Army for four years, Wah serves in the Army Reserve while pursuing his bachelor's degree at Nebraska. He took three entrepreneurship classes, including Lindsay Thomsen's franchising class.

“I want to help connect people to build a culture that facilitates camaraderie, similar to what they had in the military, as they work toward their goals,” said Wah. One in seven franchisees are military veterans.

“Franchising is a valuable opportunity for veterans because they learned to become incredible leaders and teammates in the service. Additionally, veterans qualify for special loans through the Small Business Association, and many franchise brands offer discounts for veterans,” said Thomsen.

“If our military community advocates engage just one more student we haven't yet reached and connects them to resources to help them succeed, it's all worth it,” said Joe Brownell, Military and Veteran Success Center executive director.



QUICK PITCH COMPETITION

3 minutes 2 pitch 1 idea

108 University of Nebraska–Lincoln students from every undergraduate college competed for prizes totaling \$12,000 by pitching their businesses or business ideas on November 9. The event pushes students out of their comfort zones and tests their storytelling ability by hosting the 12 competition “rooms” in unconventional settings in Howard L. Hawks Hall – hallways, a café, and high traffic areas – to simulate an “elevator pitch”.

The 3-2-1 Quick Pitch Competition is the first of many annual opportunities for students to get valuable feedback on their idea and their communication skills. In addition to the competition environment, competitors are under a strict time constraint of three minutes and must rely solely on communication, persuasion and storytelling skills – no pitch decks, notecards, props or prototypes.

“I’m grateful the Center for Entrepreneurship gets me out of my bubble. They really push you and get you out of your comfort zone, and they do it because they are pushing you to become the best version of yourself,” said Tyeisha Thompson, senior entrepreneurship management major.

Like all of the center’s programming, the competition meets students where they are in their entrepreneurial journey.



Victoria Ference (top) and Mia Van Leeuwen (bottom) pitch ideas to judges in their competition “rooms”.

For example, Deva Pushkaran, a computer science and mathematics major and Entrepreneurship Catalyst from Lincoln, drew from his drone research in high school and, more recently, for Nimbus Labs to pitch a business idea.

“I pitched a drone delivery service for medications. It’s not necessarily a business yet, but I based it around research I’ve done,” said Pushkaran, a member of the center’s inaugural Entrepreneurship Catalysts first-year scholarship program. “It was nerve-racking as I’m not great at public speaking. However, it was worth it to get the judges’



feedback. I had been coming at this idea from the academia side and am used to grant-related questions like, 'How are you going to create an impact?' Pitching it on the business side, I got many questions I may not have considered, like revenue and business models. It was valuable to see the contrast between the two."

Previously, the event was held at Morrill Hall. Due to higher participation, the team searched elsewhere. The change in scenery led Samuel Nelson, director of the center, to reflect on the growth from years prior.

"After doing this for 15 years, I've seen the amazing things past competitors are now doing. A lot of them would say they got their start doing something like this - putting themselves out there in front of a row of successful business people serving as judges and sharing their ideas. It's a big thing for our students to do because they are used to only giving presentations in a classroom setting, and they get a great deal out of the experience."

Sam Nelson, director of the center

Thirty-three area entrepreneurs, innovators and investors volunteered their time and advice by serving as judges for the competition, and it's a win-win for all competitors. If they win, they walk away with prize money, but even if they don't, they still get valuable feedback from judges like Rod Roberts, '85, Chief Operating Officer at Right at Home.

"I loved the variety of ideas - some were way out there and others very practical. Our winners have a good chance of success if they take it further. Nebraska is where I started my career. Taking a franchise studies class changed my career path, and I loved coming back to work with students starting their ventures."

Rod Roberts, '85, 3-2-1 Quick Pitch judge

108

Student competitors
(↑ 31% YoY)

40

Majors represented
(↑ 25% YoY)

45

Volunteer judges
and timers

\$12K

Awarded to student
competitors
(↑ 20% YoY)

2023 QUICK PITCH WINNERS

Matthias Algarin
Kyra Boesiger
Danielle Burge
Gage Cammack
Alexa Carter
Seth Daup
Clara Delzell
Elise Estudillo
Victoria Ference
Joseph Flodman
Josie Golka
Logan Greeno
Hannah Hurt
Lance Jones
Alivia Knoerzer
Langdon Kohn
Madison Kreifels
Lena Lankas
Nathan Lockman
Patrick McManigal
Abby Miller
Liya Mo
Kenny Morales
Malaika Opiyo
Zakaria Rab
Lane Rainforth
Elijah Riley
Joseph Seibel
Eduardo Sicilia Ayala
Tyeisha Thompson
Mia VanLeeuwen
Samantha Weeder
Sydney Wellsandt
Sam Wilkins
Maci Wilson
Seth Wright



Visit go.unl.edu/entrepreneurshipexcellencefund to support experiences like the 3-2-1 Quick Pitch Competition.

STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS ENHANCE EXPERIENCE

Clubs and student organizations are often students' first place to meet others, prepare for their future careers, and make connections with the community. The University of Nebraska–Lincoln is home to more than 500 student organizations. Three of them call the Center for Entrepreneurship home and serve as a collaborative environment where innovative ideas can flourish.

“Registered student organizations give students an opportunity to lead a group of their peers, foster community, and, in this context, connect with area founders, entrepreneurs and innovators. The connections and experiences for students are instrumental to their future.”

Mallory Krenk, student engagement and recruitment coordinator



Women+ in Entrepreneurship Serves Underrepresented Groups

Founded in the spring of 2022, Women+ in Entrepreneurship is dedicated to empowering and supporting women and other underserved communities in their entrepreneurial journeys.

This year, the organization participated in a candle-pouring event at local, woman-owned business, Wax Buffalo. Members of the organization learned about the growth of the business and connected while hand-crafting their own custom candle.



StartupsUNL Provides Community

StartupsUNL is dedicated to providing young entrepreneurs with the resources and connections to be successful.

The group regularly holds Workshop Wednesdays, an opportunity for students to collaborate, connect with other aspiring entrepreneurs, and prepare for upcoming competitions. In addition, the group hosts Founder Fridays, an opportunity for students to learn from local founders.





Husker Venture Fund Fills Funding Gap and Provides Foundational Experience

A WIN-WIN OPPORTUNITY

Since its inception in 2021, Husker Venture Fund has been an exemplar of experiential learning. In this hands-on experience, members of the fund manage the venture capital (VC) investment process from start to finish. Not only does the organization provide foundational experience to its members, it also addresses a funding gap that exists in the State of Nebraska.

"The Husker Venture Fund offers people a shot they didn't have before, which could be transformational for the state. It presents a win-win situation for our students and community," said Sam Nelson, faculty adviser for the fund.

Twenty students were accepted into the fund this year, 12 in the fall and eight in the spring. Applicants are immersed into an eight-week, hands-on Venture Bootcamp to learn more about the venture capital investment process and the startup ecosystem in Nebraska.

The new managing directors issued a collective statement for their goals for the next academic year. "Husker Venture Fund plans to lean into two areas of its founding vision this year: the authentic experience of working in a VC for its members and fulfilling the gap in VC education at the College of Business, university, Nebraska and beyond. We are looking forward to establishing a new standard of professionalism within the fund and are thrilled to host the inaugural Cornhusker Venture Capital Competition, providing schools and students across Nebraska with greater access to the venture capital industry."

OUTREACH IN THE COMMUNITY

Husker Venture Fund is a great connector to the community for students interested in finance, entrepreneurship and investing. This year, the fund co-hosted VC Office Hours with the Nebraska Startup Academy during Lincoln Startup Week, hosted the first Discover Entrepreneurship Day and hosted a pitch night for local founders to get feedback on their idea.



A team of six Husker Venture Fund members competed in their third regional Venture Capital Investment Competition this spring in Boston. The team earned the Entrepreneur's Choice Award against Dartmouth College, Washington University, Tufts University, New York University and Saint Mary's University.

OUTCOMES

Husker Venture Fund is shaping futures for its members. Adam Folsom, '22, an associate at Beeso Studios in Omaha, Nebraska said, "Husker Venture Fund gave me the knowledge and understanding of early-stage investing - the risk, the terminology, and the ins and outs of venture investing." Folsom continued by calling out the leg-up the fund gave him when it comes to his network. "So much of startups and angel or venture investing is based on networks. Starting Husker Venture Fund opened so many doors for meeting seasoned investors and founders," he said.

"With my passions, skillsets and community, Husker Venture Fund helped me leverage all these things into determining that breaking into venture capital, specifically in the Midwest, was feasible and something I wanted to pursue. I wanted to continue being around hustlers and innovators."

Adam Folsom, '22, founding managing director of Husker Venture Fund

Visit go.unl.edu/huskerventurefund to support the fund and learn more.



NEW VENTURE COMPETITION

AWARDS \$65,000 TO STUDENT STARTUPS

One of the longest-running business plan competitions in the world, the New Venture Competition provides all University of Nebraska-Lincoln student entrepreneurs the opportunity to showcase their entrepreneurial skills and compete for non-dilutive funding to bring their business to life.

A record-setting 75 teams applied to compete in the competition with 48 chosen to compete in the two-day, high-stakes tournament, representing nine colleges and 44 majors.

On April 16, 69 competitors and over 50 judges and room marshals gathered to kick-off the 37th annual competition. After two rounds of bracket-style competition, four finalist teams earned their spot in the final round on April 18.

FOURTH TIMES A CHARM

Eduardo Sicilia Ayala with 2%Football took first place and a \$15,000 cash prize. Sicilia Ayala, a senior management and marketing major from Cancún, Mexico, founded his startup as a freshman and became a consistent participant and contributor to the university's entrepreneurial community.

"I competed in this competition for four years and participated in many others during my time at Nebraska. However, this competition is closest to my heart because of the people who put it on. Of course, I want to win for the money, but this means a lot," said Sicilia Ayala.



2%Football provides scouting reports for football teams in the United States and Mexico to inform them about opponents' tendencies and patterns. His pitch included integrating artificial intelligence into the report-making process to further automate and scale the startup.



4TH PLACE

Madison Kreifels
InfoFilm

Communications business to bridge a growing gap between the agriculture industry and its consumers

2ND PLACE

Brooke Parrish
FutureHerd Solutions

Livestock tech startup addressing prevalent caretaker challenges

3RD PLACE

Peyton Peck, Lena Lankas
TeachFront

Mastery grading implementation tool for educators

CALIBER CLIMBS

In addition to being the largest New Venture Competition to date, Jeff Vaske, '92, founder and president of Charter Hill Partners in Omaha, Nebraska, believed it was also the strongest. Vaske has served on the center's advisory board since 2012.

"I spoke with several people today who said all 48 teams had fully vetted, thought-out plans," he said. "I'm thrilled to see this progression at Nebraska, and it shows how strong the entrepreneurial community is here."

Students heavily took advantage of the center's offerings to prepare for the competition. Sixty percent of teams consulted with center faculty and staff through workshops, one-on-one coaching or through classes.

"From business plans to pitch decks, students can come to any one of us and get feedback. We offer workshops leading up to the competition, but our open-door policy has helped the most. There's never been a time we can't find the right help for a student or team. That support really shined through this year with the most prepared student teams to date," said Amanda Metcalf, assistant director for the Center for Entrepreneurship.

"Participating in the New Venture Competition is a fantastic experience regardless of where you are on your entrepreneurial journey. The feedback you receive gives you some real world experience that ultimately helps you take your vision to a higher place, regardless of your final placement."
Student competitor, 2024 New Venture Competition

THOMAS G. GUY STARTUP TEAM AWARDS

The \$2,500 Thomas G. Guy Startup Team Award recognizes teams that excel in organization and collaboration. Both nominated teams were selected by members of the Nebraska Center for Entrepreneurship for their strong presence at pre-competition workshops, adaptability during preparation, and exceptional teamwork.

Cheyenne Prentice, a junior international business major, and Carlos Ferrer Moya, a junior business administration major, pitched Bakers Batter, a safe and edible cake batter.

Jaki Acosta, a senior management and marketing major, Megan Gusso, a senior biological sciences major, and Payson Loibl, a senior management major, pitched Crooz Vodka Water, a signature blend of vodka and water designed for health-conscious individuals seeking a lighter and more mindful drinking experience.



Visit go.unl.edu/entrepreneurshipexcellencefund to support experiences like the New Venture Competition.

A SOLUTION TO A GOOD PROBLEM

The Advanced Traction Bracket was introduced this year to give more seasoned teams the opportunity for funding aimed for growth. Teams that have been awarded \$7,500 or more in University of Nebraska–Lincoln competitions are placed in the new bracket and forego competing in day one of the competition. Instead of the standard business pitch, the competitors in the Advanced Traction bracket focused solely on use of funds, growth since their prior competitions and plans for the future.

"Students are making strides in their entrepreneurial journeys earlier on in their time at Nebraska," said Sam Nelson, director of the center. "We're thankful one of our donors made this bracket possible for our students."

Former New Venture Competition finalists — Brooke Bode with Cattle Kettle, Bridget Peterkin and Tristan Curd with Dyslexico, Maci Wilson with INFR (formerly pitched with Beacon) and Abby Miller with Pat on Tap — competed in the bracket.



MILLER EARNS TOP SPOT IN ADVANCED TRACTION BRACKET

Abby Miller, senior animal science major from Mead, Nebraska, placed fourth in the 2023 New Venture Competition with her company Pat on Tap, making her eligible for the advanced traction bracket in this year's competition, where she was awarded \$15,000.

"I really care about people and the moments that we spend together. Being a photographer, I got to go to a lot of events, and now I turn them into great events by hosting tap trucks at them. We're now growing Nebraska's first tap truck fleet and scaling the business in the Midwest," said Miller.

START THEIR OWN VENTURES

Dozens of students across campus are actively building or growing a business of their own. From home services and tech to food and beverage and agriculture, Husker entrepreneurs are turning their passions into thriving ventures.

Abby Miller, '24 an animal science major from Mead, Nebraska, is growing her company, Pat on Tap, to be Nebraska's first fleet of tap trucks to elevate events into experiences. patontap.com



FRANK ARTH AND JACKSON DONLEY

Frank Arth, a freshman finance major, and **Jackson Donley**, a freshman management major, have grown their business, Some Guys Window Cleaning, to four states. someguyswindows.com



LARKIN BARRY

Larkin Barry, a freshman marketing major, started Barry's Bouquets, a local cut flower farm and full service florist based in Raymond, Nebraska. [@barrysbouquetslincoln](https://www.instagram.com/barrysbouquetslincoln)



SAMUEL DEZUBE

WORK AT LOCAL STARTUPS

After graduating from Nebraska and serving as managing director of Husker Venture Fund, **Samuel DeZube**, '23, joined Workshop, an Omaha internal communications startup.



INTERN AT GLOBAL COMPANIES

Jonathan Gerdes, '24, a civil engineering and double minor in business and entrepreneurship, interned at Tesla as a global supply analyst intern.



JONATHAN GERDES

CULTIVATE COMMUNITIES

Hunter Bergman, '22, is a community organizer for One Million Cups Norfolk, a weekly community event designed to connect, educate, empower and Inspire local entrepreneurs.



HUNTER BERGMAN

HUSKER ENTREPRENEURS

Husker entrepreneurs represent every college at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. They are students and alumni who are not only starting their own ventures but also leading startup teams, interning at global companies, and pursuing advanced degrees. Several are student-athletes, demonstrating their dedication and discipline both on and off the field. They are actively cultivating entrepreneurship communities and making significant strides in industries traditionally underrepresented by women, such as venture capital.

At the Nebraska Center for Entrepreneurship, we recognize that entrepreneurship is more than just starting something new - it's a way of thinking. We encourage students to start, grow, build, create, and innovate, no matter their path or passions.

ENGLER AGRIBUSINESS
ENTREPRENEURSHIP
PROGRAM

Nutech



JOEY AND TYRA KAPLAN

Joey and Tyra Kaplan, '22, founded Cedar Creek Coffee Van, a mobile espresso van serving Omaha and the surrounding areas. cedarcreekcoffee.net



LUKE BOGUS

FanCave, co-founded by **Luke Bogus**, '21, was accepted into Y Combinator. FanCave brings fans closer to the athletes through NCAA-compliant name, image and likeness support. fancave.me

Emily Kist, '22, and **Maria Heyen**, '23, share their takes on career, culture and capital in a newsletter, Soapbox, created with women in venture capital in mind. the-soapbox.beehiiv.com



EMILY KIST AND MARIA HEYEN

Stahla Services, founded by **Grant Stahla**, '14, continues to grow: The company provides services across the country with a fleet of 60+ trailers. stahla.com



GRANT STAHLA



BLAKE LAWRENCE

A class with director Sam Nelson gave **Blake Lawrence**, '09 and '11, the confidence to start his first company, Hurrdat, which he sold shortly before co-founding Opendorse, the leading deal marketplace for athletes to build and monetize their name, image, and likeness value. opendorse.com



DAVID GRAFF, BRIAN KAISER, JOHN WIRTZ

Co-founders **David Graff**, '05 and '06, **Brian Kaiser**, '06 and '07 and **John Wirtz**, '05 and '06 had initial support from great coaches and business plan competitions, including the New Venture Competition to get Hudl started. hudl.com



TRISTAN CURD AND BRIDGET PETERKIN

LEAD STARTUP TEAMS

Tristan Curd, '24, and **Bridget Peterkin**, '24, led their team through the Raikes School Startup Studio. They and their team continued development of Dyslexico, a writing assistance tool built for dyslexics and founded by alumni, **Grace Clausen**, '23. dyslexi.co



MAKENZIE PARKS

PURSUE ADVANCED DEGREES

MaKenzie Parks, '24, was accepted into UNMC to pursue her PharmD degree.

WIN INTERNATIONAL VOLLEYBALL COMPETITIONS

Andi Jackson, a communications major and entrepreneurship minor, won the NORCECA Volleyball Championship with USA Volleyball.



ANDI JACKSON

COMPETE IN OLYMPIC TRIALS

Kevin Shubert, '23, competed for his spot on team USA in shotput.



KEVIN SHUBERT



TAYLOR STREICH

INTERN AT HUSKER-FOUNDED COMPANIES

Taylor Streich, a freshman international business major and Entrepreneurship Catalyst, interns at Hudl as an inclusion intern.

COMMUNITY FELLOWS CREATE MEANINGFUL IMPACT



The Community Fellows program at the Nebraska Center for Entrepreneurship experienced a remarkable year of growth and success in this academic year. With an impressive 20% increase in participation, the program expanded its reach and impact within the community. This growth is a testament to the program's ability to provide valuable opportunities for both students and community members to engage in meaningful and impactful experiences.

One of the standout achievements of the year was the program's high participation rate, with 66% of fellows engaging in two or more meaningful interactions with students. These interactions included speaking in entrepreneurship classes, serving as a mentor for students, serving as a judge at our events, and working on collaborative projects within the classroom, all of which fosters a dynamic exchange of knowledge and experience. This high level of engagement not only enhanced the educational experience for our students but also continues to strengthen the connection between the university and the local entrepreneurial community.

The success of the Community Fellows program underscores the Nebraska Center for Entrepreneurship's commitment to fostering a vibrant entrepreneurial ecosystem. By facilitating meaningful interactions and providing growth opportunities, the program has become a cornerstone of the center's efforts to nurture the next generation of entrepreneurs. As the program continues to grow, it promises to further enhance the

"When I was starting on my own entrepreneurial journey, I was fortunate to have a lot of people help me and I want to make sure I'm there for others on their own entrepreneurial path. This helps strengthen the startup community.

Vishal Singh, '10
Founder of Quantified Ag



collaborative spirit and entrepreneurial vitality of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and the surrounding community.

The fellows program launched two years ago with the support of Dean Kathy Farrell and Chancellor Ronnie Green, and initial members were primarily located in Nebraska. Today, we're proud to have expanded our reach, partnering with fellows from across the United States, including Arizona, Florida, Minnesota, New York, Oklahoma, and Virginia. In addition to broadening our geographic reach, we've also diversified the industry expertise within our group. "When we talk about meeting students where they are at, it's important to have a group of community members representative of that," said Amanda Metcalf, assistant director of the center.

"Adding fellows this year from industries such as legal, advertising and marketing, retail, and franchise has really expanded the breadth of knowledge this group can provide and that will benefit our students for years to come," said Metcalf.

Community Fellows commit to a two-year term and are selected each spring. Nominations for new fellows can be made at anytime by visiting go.unl.edu/entrepreneurshipfellows.

2023-24 COMMUNITY FELLOWS

Aakriti Agrawal

Co-Founder, Girls Code Lincoln

Pedro Agüero

VP of Operations, Arroyo Exteriors

Brian Ardinger

Founder, InsideOutside.io
Director of Innovation, Nelnet

Christopher Aumueller

Founder and CEO, FanWord

Rick Bettger

President, Omaha Car Care

Erik Bird

CEO, Eat Fit Go

Mark Buss

Owner and CEO, Pop-A-Lock Indianapolis

Rick Cantril

Senior Director, Tebra

Sourabh Chakraborty

Owner, Proto Banao

Breck Collingsworth

CEO, Resort Lifestyle Communities

Charlie Colón

Owner, Chick-fil-A SouthPointe

Dustin Dam

Owner, Dam Integration & Technology

Josh DeMers

Co-Founder, Prepare Insurance
Program Manager, The Combine

Bart Dillashaw

Founder, Enterprise Legal Studio

Sid Dinsdale

Chairman, Pinnacle Bancorp

Mike Dunlap

Executive Chairman, Nelnet

Don Eckles

Co-Founder, Scooter's Coffee

Brenda Fleck

Owner, G.P. Fleck & Sons

Laura Frantz

Owner, House of Colour Lincoln

Andrea Fredrickson

President, Revela

Angela Garbacz

Owner and Chef, Goldenrod Pastries,
Goldenrod Grocery

Carey Gille

Co-Founder and CEO, Franchise Fastlane

Erleen Hatfield

Founder, Hatfield Group

Scott Henderson

Managing Principal, NMotion

Dan Hoffman

CEO, Invest Nebraska

John Hogan

Co-Founder and President, PLUS Services

Paul Hogan

Co-Founder, Home Instead Senior Care

Jason Hornady

VP, Hornady Manufacturing Co.

Umeda Islamova

Communications Manager, Rabata

Julian Ivey-Caldwell

CIO, TS Banking Group

Paska Juma

Program Manager, Google

Emily Kist

Venture and Innovation
Associate, Nelnet

Ashley Kloxin

Owner, Perspire Sauna Studio

Todd Koca

Founder, President and CEO,
CrownSource

Jordan Lambrecht

Founder and Director, Pixel Bakery

Sam Manzitto Jr.

President, Manzitto Construction

Chad Mariska

President, Mariska Family Holdings

Chuck Norris

Managing Director, Nelnet

Reed Nyffeler

Co-Founder and CEO, Signal

Christina Oldfather

Workforce Development Director,
Rabble Mill

Graham Pansing Brooks

Co-Founder and President,
SEAchange, LTD

Dan Pauley

Co-Founder and Partner, Smith Pauley

Katie Pocras

CEO, MotorTango

Alicia Reisinger

Founder and Creative
Director, Wax Buffalo

Brandon Rigoni

Owner, Yogurtini Lincoln

Rod Roberts

COO, Right at Home

Doris Robertson

Executive Vice President, Union
Bank & Trust

Janna Ronert

Founder, Image Skincare, Hush
& Hush

Tyler Seals

Co-Founder and Partner, Smith Pauley

Vishal Singh

Founder, Quantified Ag

Grant Stahla

Owner, Stahla Services

Jeff Vaske

Founder and President, Charter
Hill Partners

Erica Wassinger

Co-Founder and General
Partner, Proven Ventures

Matthew Wegener

President, iSoft Data Systems

Tom Welter

President, Empower Brands

Lizz Whitacre

Founder and CEO, Pawlytics

Lyn Wineman

President and Chief Strategist, KidGlow

John Wirtz

Co-Founder and CPO, Hudl

Wendy Wiseman

Owner and CEO, Constellation
Collective



Campus Fellows Amplify Entrepreneurship

Thirty-nine faculty and staff from every University of Nebraska–Lincoln college work together to elevate entrepreneurship and amplify our efforts to empower Nebraska students to explore and pursue ownership or a career in the startup ecosystem.

Through this focused effort, more students across both city and east campus are studying entrepreneurship in the classroom, participating in competitions, attending events, making connections, and being exposed to resources they otherwise wouldn't be.

2023-24 CAMPUS FELLOWS

Ajai Ammachathram

Nutrition and Health Sciences

Germán Ávila

Office of Diversity and Inclusion

Gregory Bennett

College of Dentistry

Yashin Brijmohan

Discipline-Based Education Research
(DBER), College of Engineering

Craig Boesch

Nebraska Business
Development Center

Ankit Chandra

Water for Food Institute

Barry Cheung

Department of Chemistry

Brennan Costello

Engler Agribusiness
Entrepreneurship Program

Aziza Cyamani

Interior Design

Carrick Detweiler

School of Computing

Brittany Duncan

School of Computing

Joy Eakin

NUtech Ventures

Megan Elliott

Johnny Carson Center for
Emerging Media Arts

Kate Engel

Nebraska Innovation Campus

Kaitlin Ferris

Clifton Strengths Institute

Robin Garewal

Department of Marketing

Jemalyn Griffin

Advertising and Public Relations

Courtney Hillebrecht

Department of Political Science

Timothy D. Hodges

Clifton Strengths Institute

Emira Ibrahmapasic

School of Global Integrative Studies

Valerie Jones

College of Journalism and
Mass Communications

Jake Koperski

Jeffrey S. Raikes School of Computer
Science and Management

Rebecca Lai

Department of Chemistry

David Lambe

Department of Agronomy
and Horticulture

Jan Landis

School of Art, Art History and Design

Tom Larson

Glenn Korff School of Music

Tom Lemke

Husker Athletics

Ashley Light

Explore Center

Kristin Malek

Nutrition and Health Sciences

Katie Mowat

Biological Systems Engineering,
Product Innovation

Rob Nickolaus

Jeffrey S. Raikes School of Computer
Science and Management

Santosh Pitla

Biological Systems Engineering

Jerry Reif

Nebraska Innovation Studio

Brad Roth

NUtech Ventures

James Schnable

Department of Agronomy
and Horticulture

Rob Simon

Department of Marketing

Brett Stohs

College of Law

Edel Summers

Food Processing Center

Marilyn Wolf

School of Computing

NEBRASKA GOVERNOR'S — NEW VENTURE COMPETITION



Eight student teams from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln participated in the final round of the statewide Governor's New Venture Competition held Feb. 1 at The Lincoln Marriott Cornhusker Hotel in Lincoln, Nebraska.

The Nebraska Center for Entrepreneurship helped prepare students pitching new ventures by hosting pitch practice sessions and connecting them with our community of entrepreneurs and industry leaders.

For some students, the inaugural Governor's New Venture Competition was their first experience competing in a business plan competition.

"It was our team's first time pitching in a competition, and we really leaned on those who advised us in the prep sessions. From helping organize our slides to providing contacts for more networking opportunities, we could not have made it as far as we did without the Center for Entrepreneurship," said finalist Brooke Parrish, doctoral student in animal science from Elmwood, Illinois.

Starting in November, student competitors were invited to the center to help prepare their initial submission to the competition, which included a 20-slide pitch deck covering the basic elements of a business plan.

"We wanted to be sure all students interested in competing were prepared at each level of the competition. Organizing prep sessions at each stage

was our goal from the start," said Amanda Metcalf, assistant director for the Center for Entrepreneurship. "We opened up our prep sessions to any student in the State of Nebraska who planned to compete, not just University of Nebraska-Lincoln students."

To get the teams ready for the semifinals through virtual presentations in December, the center asked Community Fellows, a group of entrepreneurs and industry leaders who commit to providing their time and insights to students pursuing entrepreneurial ventures, to help out. The fellows provided feedback, asked difficult questions and simulated the upcoming competition.



Bridget Peterkin and Tristan Curd accept their third place trophy from governor Jim Pillen on February 1.

“As an investor, you go into student pitch competitions with lots of grace. No need at the University of Nebraska–Lincoln. These entrepreneurs, who happen to be students, are ready for prime time. They have gone beyond studying their target customer and have engaged customers in the build,” said Erica Wassinger, one of the center’s Community Fellows and mentor for the competition. “I anticipate more great Nebraska companies hatching as a result of the many Center for Entrepreneurship programs.”

My time with entrepreneurs like Brooke Bode at Cattle Kettle reveals to me the strength of upcoming leaders who are super smart, creative and who look at the world from a different lens, solving age old problems with new views and solutions. I am shown daily that our future is very bright.

Tom Welter ‘88
Entrepreneurship Community Fellow and President at Empower Brands



TOM WELTER

Parrish and fellow competitors applied the Community Fellows’ feedback and advanced to the final round of the Governor’s competition. Of the 11 teams that advanced to the competition’s final round, eight were led by UNL students.

“It’s a testament to the ecosystem and collaboration we are fortunate to have on campus,” said Samuel Nelson, director of the Center for Entrepreneurship and associate professor of practice in management. “Entrepreneurship is rooted everywhere on campus, and our team is equipped and excited to support and celebrate any student that we can.”

The final 11 teams pitched their venture in 10 minutes or less to a panel of judges representing companies including Hudl, Fast Forward, Nebraska Public Power District, Move Venture Capital and Grit Road Partners on Feb. 1. They represented several colleges and programs on campus including the College of Business, Jeffrey S. Raikes School of Computer Science and Management, Engler Agribusiness Entrepreneurship Program, College of Journalism, College of Engineering, and more.

“Pitching can be extremely nerve-racking, but with the extra rounds of feedback from the center’s team and mentors, we were able to feel more confident once the competition came around,” said competitor Madison Kreifels, junior agricultural communications and journalism major from Syracuse, Nebraska.

Tan Phan, senior computer science and math major from Lincoln, and Samuel Ingledue, senior software engineering major from Gretna, Nebraska, secured the grand prize of \$20,000 for their venture, PrivyAI. PrivyAI sources high-quality, redacted training data for AI developers and companies.

“Students looking to start a business should feel confident they have the resources to succeed. The prep sessions helped us validate our business idea, model and pitch. We received feedback about the holes in our pitches that we otherwise wouldn’t have noticed.”

Tan Phan, grand prize winner

Cattle Kettle, a stock tank management company that simplifies managing cattle tanks and allows ranchers to monitor and control their tanks remotely, was chosen for the second place prize of \$15,000. Cattle Kettle is led by Brooke Bode, junior mechanical engineering major from Hershey, Nebraska, and Seth Daup, junior finance major from Gothenburg, Nebraska.

Dyslexico, an assistive writing platform that uses AI-powered spelling and grammar corrections, dyslexia accessibility tools, and powerful analytics to help dyslexics grow as writers and communicate with confidence, placed third and earned a \$10,000 prize. Dyslexico is led by Bridget Peterkin, senior computer science and math major from Omaha, Nebraska, and Tristan Curd, computer science major from Omaha.

It’s incredibly energizing to see the next generation of entrepreneurs in action. Across Nebraska, economic opportunities are increasingly being created by local entrepreneurs. The state is intensifying our support of these homegrown entrepreneurs, through initiatives like the Governor’s New Venture Competition, as the most viable economic development strategy for sustained growth.

K.C. Belitz
Director of the Nebraska Department of Economic Development



In collaboration with the Yum! Center for Global Franchise Excellence at the University of Louisville, the center hosted the second annual Franchise Forum on March 5. Over 100 attendees gathered to connect and learn from four esteemed franchise leaders.

Two panelists joined us in Lincoln, Tom Welter, president of Empower Brands and Joe Robert Thornton, CEO of Scooter's Coffee, while Kathleen Gosser, director of the Yum! Center was joined by Heather McLeod, Chief Growth Officer at Authority Brands, and Paul Pickett, Chief Development Officer at Wild Birds Unlimited.

Students, alumni, and members of the community got a front row seat to conversations about the future of franchising, maintaining culture in a period of growth and remaining innovative through market changes.



Tyler Vander Woude asks a question to franchise panelists on March 1.

“Talking with great members of the franchise community has been one of the biggest highlights in my college career yet.”

Tyler Vander Woude, junior marketing and management major

We thank the three franchise companies that provided the meal following the panel discussion - Chick-fil-A, Runza, and Valentino's.

Franchise Students Scoot to Omaha for Field Trip

Since the relaunch of the Franchising course in the spring of 2022, the number of students enrolled has doubled. In the course (ENTR 425), Lindsay Thomsen helps students explore every side of franchising. “Students learn about all the working parts of a franchise network and every department that contributes to a franchisee’s success. They also gain the skills and knowledge needed to become a successful franchise owner or franchise an exciting business into a profitable enterprise,” she said.

This spring, students in the course visited the headquarters of Scooter's Coffee, one of the nation's fastest growing drive-thru coffee franchise companies.





Franchise Sidekick Invites Entrepreneurship Students to Attend Annual SKIP Summit

Four students attended the annual SKIP Summit thanks to a new partnership with Franchise Sidekick. The experience was offered to former Franchising (ENTR 425) students and attendees earned one credit-hour.

Ryan Zink, founder and chief executive officer, said “The purpose for the conference is to bring the very best established and emerging franchise brands in the country into Omaha to meet with the Franchise Sidekick Advisors. During our time together we will learn more about these franchise brands and help our clients become successful if they choose to become franchisees. Our only goal is to help our clients reduce their risk when buying a franchise and this conference will be focused on the education we need to accomplish this.”

In this immersive experience, Mumtaz Blasiny, a junior management major, Allie Boell, junior entrepreneurship management major, Steven Pham, junior accounting major, and Livy Price, junior entrepreneurship management major, were put in the shoes of



STEVEN PHAM

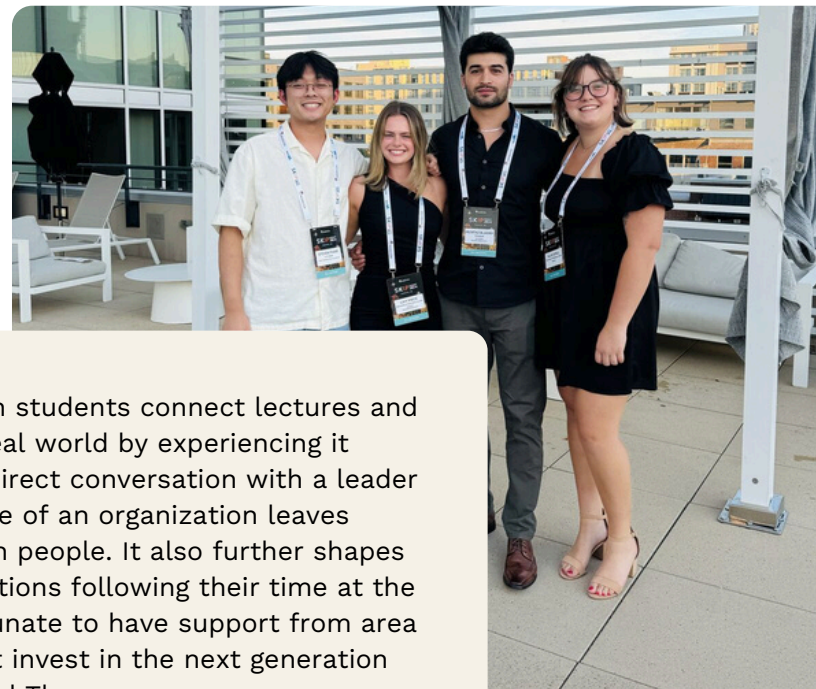
“On paper, we were the only students at this conference. Upon arrival, I came to realize the conference was really a classroom and I was surrounded by students and teachers. Professionals in the franchise industry, young and old, came to share their knowledge as well as listen to one another’s experiences. I can’t help but feel inspired to keep accomplishing goals I’ve set for myself to get to where they are one day.

Steven Pham

Junior accounting major and SKIP Summit attendee

franchisees, gaining practical knowledge to further their franchising education and consideration when it comes to a career in franchising.

“Here I have learned about overcoming my fears and stepping out of my comfort zone to achieve my goals; along with learning about sales and how to effectively sell to customers by uncovering their true emotional needs,” said Price.



Franchise students (from left) Pham, Price, Blasiny and Boell attend SKIP Summit on August 8.



“It’s fulfilling to watch students connect lectures and skill building to the real world by experiencing it personally. Having a direct conversation with a leader and feeling the culture of an organization leaves lasting impressions on people. It also further shapes their goals and aspirations following their time at the university. We’re fortunate to have support from area franchise leaders that invest in the next generation of entrepreneurs,” said Thomsen.

“The field trip to Scooter’s headquarters opened my eyes to new internship opportunities and a potential career in franchising. I also loved learning from our guest speakers and their experience in the field.”

Franchising course student testimonial

GO BIG GRAD

In 2012, Entrepreneurship and Innovation was introduced as one of four tracks within the Management major in the College of Business. Four years later, the minor in entrepreneurship, open to all students across campus, was unveiled.

The minor and major equip students with the real-world problem solving skills, competency, resilience and curiosity to confidently pursue their passions and advance their careers.

Both inside and outside the classroom, students collaborate with their peers and strengthen their networks to set themselves up for success.

We congratulate the 64 entrepreneurship students that earned their degrees from Nebraska during the 2023-24 academic year.

Sammie Anderson

Aidan Buscher

Colleen Byrne

Caitlin Cairns

Jack Carlson

Jacy Chittenden

Haylee Cielocha

Bruce Coleman

Danae Contino

Abigail Cornelius

Cameron Crites

Malcolm Crumme

Vanessa Cruz-Alariste

Grant Diesing

Rudra Dixit

Sophia Egermier

Preston Erks

Gabriel Ervin

Emily Faltys

Jake Foss

Jonathan Gerdes

Aditi Gunda

Megan Gusso

Kort Hamel

Nathan Hawkins

Grace Hudnall

Luka Ivkovic

Riley Johnson

Katie Keatts

Langdon Kohn

Ashley Kosmicki

Luke Kuenstler

Theodore Krieger

Spencer Lane

Sarah Lawlor

Noah Lawrence

Colter Mann

Maggie Mantini

Teghan Metcalf

Ryan McCormick

Nolan Niemiec

Charlie Otto

Brennon Overbeek

Makenzie Parks

Gabriela Paskach

Dillon Pelster

Chase Perchal

Christopher Ramsey

Jennifer Reiser

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Jacob Studley

Tyeisha Thompson

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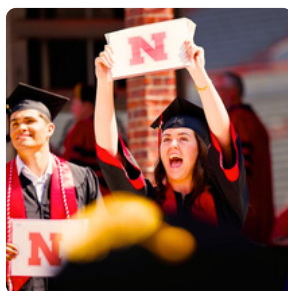
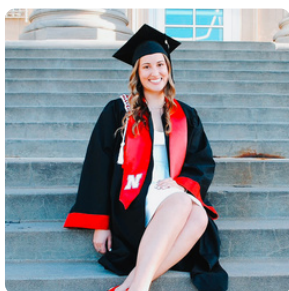
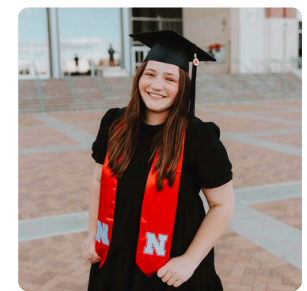
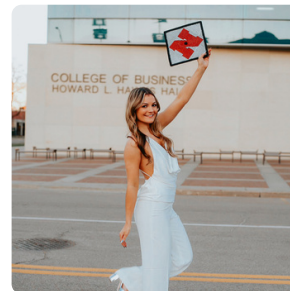
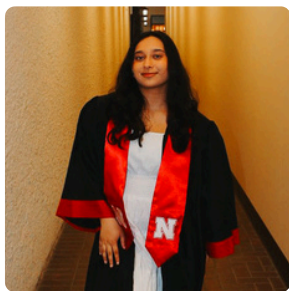
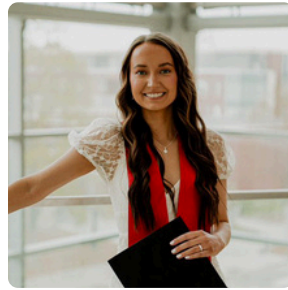
Divyn Williams

Hannah Wilson

Sarah Wilson

Mitch Yosten





We are fortunate to witness the growth of these students as individuals, entrepreneurs, leaders and now alumni of the University of Nebraska–Lincoln. Their presence in the center, classroom and at competitions reminds us every day why we are here.

To our students, we cannot wait to see what you accomplish in the future. Your dedication and passion have been a source of inspiration to us all.

ENTREPRENEURS AND ADVOCATES HONORED

FOR THEIR INNOVATION, SUCCESS AND ENTREPRENEURIAL SPIRIT

The Center honored the legacy of entrepreneurship at Nebraska by presenting four long-standing awards, while also introducing three new awards to recognize students, advocates, and others integral to the state's entrepreneurial ecosystem. These awards celebrated entrepreneurs, startups, advocates, and students during a ceremony held in conjunction with the 37th annual New Venture Competition at the Rococo Theatre on April 18.

"We honored seven outstanding entrepreneurs who have demonstrated exceptional creativity, resilience and impact and make the Nebraska entrepreneurial ecosystem so special.

Nominated by members of the community and the university, all of our awardees have made a significant contribution to the entrepreneurship ecosystem and enhanced entrepreneurial education at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and throughout the State of Nebraska," said Samuel Nelson, center director.



Distinguished Entrepreneur Award

Janna Ronert,
'87, founder of
IMAGE Skincare
and Hush &
Hush



Entrepreneur Advocate Award

Justin Krug, Account
Executive at Workshop
and Founding Organizer
of the Nebraska
Startup Job Mixer

Faculty and Student Recognized for Teaching, Collaboration, Impact

Hanna Selected for Seacrest Fellowship

Andrew Hanna, assistant professor of practice in management and entrepreneurship, uses his ability to connect and engage students - even in larger classrooms - by creating a class culture where students can feel comfortable being themselves. His fellowship enables him to further innovate his teaching to advance student outcomes.

"I believe that education is not just about disseminating knowledge; it's about igniting the flames of curiosity and fostering a genuine passion for learning. This fellowship presents a unique opportunity for me to delve deeper into the art of teaching, try some new creative things I've been beating around in

my head and sculpt the classroom into a space where ideas collide and students really flourish," said Hanna.

"The Seacrest Teaching Fellowship allows an avenue for transformative learning that not only equips our students for the challenges of the future but also shapes them into compassionate, agile thinkers capable of reshaping the world for the future they have in mind."



Uchechukwu Jarrett and Andrew Hanna (right), assistant professor of practice in management and entrepreneurship, comprise the sixth cohort of Seacrest Teaching Fellows.

Nebraska Distinguished Entrepreneur Award

Mike Smith, founder of The Bay



Faculty and Staff Entrepreneurship Advocacy Award

Dave Lambe, Chief Learning Officer of the Engler Agribusiness Entrepreneurship Program



Startup Executive Award

Erin Stahla, co-owner of Stahla Services (not pictured)

Emerging Venture Award

Sentinel Fertigation, founded by Jackson Stansell, '21



Student Entrepreneur Award

Eduardo Sicilia Ayala, '24, marketing and management major and founder of 2%Football



Thomsen Honored with Career Center Award

Lindsay Thomsen, director of business development and assistant professor of practice in management, was honored by the Business Career Center with the Sue Vagts Faculty/Staff Partner of the Year Award. The award honors a faculty/staff colleague who has gone above and beyond their duties to build relationships with employers and enhance career development, education and opportunities.

Lindsay Thomsen accepts the Sue Vagts Partner of the Year Award alongside Dean Kathy Farrell (left) and Chris Timm (right), director of the Business Career Center.



Anderson Honored with Student Impact Award

Will Anderson, a senior software engineering major, was honored with the Outstanding Student Organization Member for his involvement with Husker Venture Fund and leading the planning efforts for Discover Entrepreneurship Day.

“I’m of course thankful to have received the award, but even more thankful to have been a part of such a talented and driven team. HVF is truly pushing the boundaries for what VC education and student involvement in the VC world can look like,” said Anderson.



Will Anderson (center) accepts his award alongside other members of Husker Venture Fund.

THANK YOU, DONORS

Each year we are reminded of the generosity and unwavering support of our community. Thanks to the contributions from our dedicated donors, the Nebraska Center for Entrepreneurship expanded its impact through curriculum, mentorship and consulting, co-curricular programming and recruitment.

We extend our heartfelt gratitude for your continued commitment to our mission and look forward to achieving even greater milestones together.

MOMENTUM MATTERS

We are grateful to our donors for their generous gifts and commitment to future gifts, many of which have already begun to transform the Nebraska Center for Entrepreneurship. Their generosity, with all others, during the past academic year has laid a strong foundation for our future endeavors, allowing us to expand our resources, enrich our programs, and support the growing number of students pursuing and exploring entrepreneurship, both inside and outside the classroom.

The impact of your contributions is not only being felt today but will continue to resonate for years to come. To all listed below, thank you for investing in our momentum.

*Jim and Mary Abel
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Donald and Dianna Wright
Ryan and Mandy Zink*

By donating to the Nebraska Center for Entrepreneurship, you play a vital role in fostering innovation and empowering the next generation of entrepreneurs. Join us in making a lasting impact on our students and the economic development of the state and beyond.



Visit go.unl.edu/entrepreneurshipexcellencefund to support the greatest needs of the center or contact Amy Kloefkorn at amy.kloefkorn@nufoundation.org to learn more about giving options.

GLOW BIG RED

The following friends of the center generously participated in Glow Big Red, the University of Nebraska-Lincoln's annual 24-hour giving event. To all listed below, thank you for your commitment to entrepreneurship at Nebraska.

M. Anderson
 Chris Cooper
 Grant and Elizabeth Gier
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 Liz Husmann
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 Mallory Krenk
 Amanda and Ryan Metcalf
 Tristen Metcalf
 Samuel and Melanie Nelson
 Scott and Clarine Nelson
 Keith Nordling
 Northwestern Mutual Foundation
 Keith Peterson and Mallory Heim Peterson
 Joe Petsick
 Scott Probst
 Kendra and Montgomery Ritchie
 Alexandria Cerveney-Sandall and Riley Sandall
 Paula Schroeder
 Dr. Brett S. and Lindsay J. Thomsen
 Diane Trifiro
 Frank and Ann Uryasz
 Lyn and Neil Wineman



TEAM



Samuel A. Nelson
 Director, Associate Professor of Practice



Samantha Fairclough
 Associate Director, Associate Professor of Practice



Amanda Metcalf
 Assistant Director



Lindsay Thomsen
 Director of Business Development, Assistant Professor of Practice



Mallory Krenk
 Student Engagement and Recruitment Coordinator



Andrew Hanna
 Assistant Professor of Practice, Seacrest Teaching Fellow



Craig Boesch
 Director, Nebraska Business Development Center



Matthew Barlow
 Assistant Professor



Varkey Titus
 Amy and J. E. Van Horne Jr Chair and Associate Professor of Management

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