University of Nebraska at Omaha

SKILLS REPORT 2026–27

Skills That Shape Omaha

UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA AT OMAHA
MAVERICK FLEX PATH

GRADUATE CERTIFICATE

EXECUTIVE BUSINESS

Advance Your Career Without Putting It on Hold

The Graduate Certificate in Executive Business at the University of Nebraska at Omaha prepares experienced professionals to lead with confidence across key areas of business. This 14-credit certificate is designed for working professionals who want to sharpen in-demand business skills and move forward in their careers. Offered through Maverick Flex Path, you'll demonstrate mastery of workplace-relevant competencies instead of progressing based solely on time spent in class, while learning in a flexible, 100% online environment.

Is This Program Right for You?

This program is designed for:

- Working professionals
- Emerging leaders
- Technical professionals transitioning into leadership
- Individuals seeking executive business skills
- Learners balancing work, family, and education

PROGRAM AT A GLANCE

Credential	Graduate Certificate in Executive Business
Delivery	100% Online
Structure	14 competencies across 7 courses
Completion	Typically less than one year
Start Dates	Five opportunities to begin each year

What You'll Learn:

- Leadership
- Strategy
- Finance
- Marketing
- Economics
- Accounting
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SIMPLE, TRANSPARENT PROGRAM PRICING

One transparent program price of $15,000, paid over the course of the program.

How payment works:

$3,000 First course + **$2,000** For each of remaining six courses = **$15,000** Total program investment

$2,500 PRIORITY ENROLLMENT SCHOLARSHIP available for qualified applicants.

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1. Apply
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3. Develop your personalized learning plan
4. Begin your first course
5. Graduate with your Executive Business Certificate

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ABOUT THE REPORT

The annual UNO Skills Report is an institutional publication produced by the Center for Competencies, Skills, and Workforce Development (CCSW). The report documents UNO's continued work to connect academic learning, workforce needs, and verified skill development through transparent, evidence-based, and regionally responsive practices. The 2026–27 report builds on the foundation established in the inaugural UNO Skills Report by highlighting progress in the UNO Skills Lab, updating UNO's annual Top 10 Skills, and sharing how skills-based learning is being integrated across academic experiences. Together, these efforts reflect UNO's commitment to preparing students not only with knowledge, but with visible and credible skills.

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UNO'S VISION, MISSION, CORE, AND VALUES

Our Core

UNO is an urban public research university educating people of the world. We innovate for the public good through pragmatic and impactful research and discovery. We advance the social and economic mobility of our learners and serve our communities. We assume responsibility for workforce and economic development within our state and beyond. We devote each day to transforming lives.

Our Mission

As both a Metropolitan University of distinction and a Carnegie Doctoral Research institution, the University of Nebraska at Omaha (UNO) transforms and improves the quality of life locally, nationally, and globally.

Our Vision

The University of Nebraska at Omaha is recognized as the premier Metropolitan University throughout the United States and the world.

Our Values

Excellence, Engagement, Discovery, Integrity, and Maverick Spirit.

THE FUTURE OF WORK

The future of work is changing fast, and higher education must evolve alongside it. At the University of Nebraska at Omaha, we believe in preparing learners for their first job and for a lifetime of meaningful work, leadership, and impact. That preparation begins with skills.

The UNO Skills Report reflects our commitment to educating learners who are ready to meet the evolving needs of Nebraska's workforce and economy. It highlights the in-demand skills shaping industries today and the ways UNO continues to align learning, research, and community partnerships to support student success.

As Nebraska's metropolitan university, UNO plays an important role in developing talent that supports the growth of our region and state. We know workforce development is not only about meeting employer demands, but also about preparing learners to adapt, grow, and succeed throughout their careers. That effort requires strong partnerships, a forward-looking mindset, and a shared investment in creating pathways for lifelong learning.

UNO is committed to expanding opportunities, strengthening economic mobility, and helping learners adapt to our rapidly changing world. Thank you to all whose collaboration continues to move this important work forward. Together, we are preparing the next generation of professionals who will shape the future of our community.

JOANNE LI, Ph.D., CFA
Chancellor
University of Nebraska at Omaha

LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

When the Center for Competencies, Skills, and Workforce Development (CCSW) was formed in January 2025, UNO created an institutional home for work that sits at the intersection of academic learning, workforce needs, and student opportunity.

Since then, the CCSW has moved quickly from launch to implementation. We became an officially designated center with NU Board of Regents approval, launched the UNO Skills Lab, released the inaugural UNO Skills Report, established the CCSW Advisory Board, and piloted UNO Skill Badges in courses across campus. We also advanced UNO's competency-based education efforts, including Higher Learning Commission approval to offer competency-based education programs and the launch of UNO's first competency-based education pathway.

This report focuses on one of the most important parts of that work: helping students make their skills visible, credible, and valued. UNO students develop valuable skills through coursework, projects, applied learning, and co-curricular experiences every day. The UNO Skills Lab helps identify those skills, embed them in learning experiences, assess them through real work, and validate them through skill badges that students can share with employers.

Skills are one of the clearest bridges between academic excellence and workforce impact, helping students articulate what they can do and help UNO build a more transparent and workforce-aligned learning ecosystem.

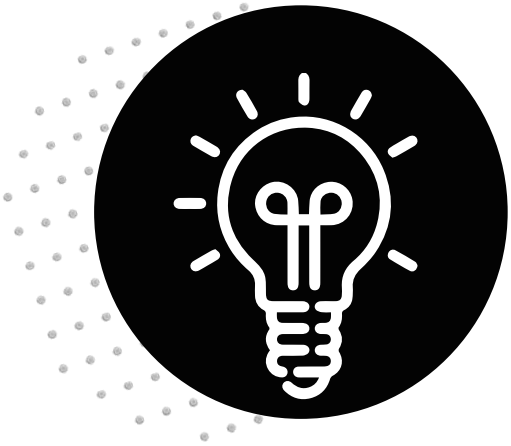
I am grateful to the faculty, staff, students, advisory board members, employers, community partners, and university leaders who are helping bring this work to life. CCSW's progress reflects the strength of many individuals and groups committed to preparing students for the future of work.

ERIN BASS, Ph.D., MBA

Executive Director, Center for Competencies, Skills, and Workforce Development
Professor of Management, College of Business Administration

University of Nebraska at Omaha

METHODOLOGY



For the 2026–27 UNO Skills Report, we refined our approach for identifying UNO's "top skills" for the upcoming academic year. This year's methodology was designed to identify the top skills with the greatest potential for learner impact.

In this report, "learner impact" refers to the effect that developing a specific skill can have on a learner's career opportunities, mobility, and long-term trajectory. The skills selected for inclusion were identified using employer input and data from Lightcast, a leader in labor market intelligence. This year's Top 10 Skills demonstrate strong demand from both local and national employers, support advancement across a range of career fields, and, when paired with a bachelor's degree or higher in relevant disciplines, are likely to have a positive return on investment for learners. By identifying the Top 10 Skills and where these skills are developed within our courses and programs, UNO helps clarify the connection between academic learning and workforce relevance. Learners benefit by gaining a clearer understanding of the high-value skills they are developing, how those skills can be communicated on resumes and in interviews, and which employment opportunities in the local and broader labor market may align with their preparation. Employers benefit from improved visibility into the skills represented within UNO's talent pipeline, as well as added confidence that these skills and validated through UNO, a trusted academic institution.

METHODOLOGY AT A GLANCE

1. **ANALYZE WORKFORCE DEMAND**
2. **ASSESS ACADEMIC ALIGNMENT**
3. **MEASURE LEARNER IMPACT**
4. **IDENTIFY TOP SKILLS**

BRIDGING EDUCATION AND THE WORKPLACE

COMMUNITY PARTNER PERSPECTIVE

by Elizabeth Hemphill

After more than 15 years in human resources, Cyndi Brassette, VP of People at Quantum Workplace, has seen employee and technology trends come and go. But employee engagement, the employee experience, and ongoing learning and development continue to be central to retention and performance. And what's central to learning and development goals? Skills.

Cyndi Brassette, VP of People at Quantum Workplace

During her tenure, Quantum Workplace has launched an AI-powered career growth plan for employees called Development. In addition to their technology that helps create better workplaces, Development encourages employees to grow and master new competencies. A goal that closely aligns with the work UNO is advancing through its Skills Lab.

"From a recruiting perspective, in Chief Human Resource Officer or other HR leadership groups, we are all struggling with finding talent because of fake applicants," Cyndi says. "From a skills perspective, it's important to get certifications to truly showcase skills, which increases accountability and adds detail to vague interview answers."

> ***"FROM A SKILLS PERSPECTIVE, IT'S IMPORTANT TO GET CERTIFICATIONS TO TRULY SHOWCASE SKILLS, WHICH INCREASES ACCOUNTABILITY AND ADDS DETAIL TO VAGUE INTERVIEW ANSWERS"***

The relationship between technical expertise and human skills is evolving. Skills like written communication, teamwork, and decision-making cannot be separated from more niche, trained skills. In Cyndi's experience working with large technology teams, she has found that building the technology is just as important as being able to explain the technology you're building.
Across the Omaha Metro, employees are being shaped by skills like project management, decision-making, and data analysis in accordance with labor market needs. Community employers and higher education institutions like UNO must be in lock step when it comes to building a skills infrastructure that effortlessly transitions students into the workforce.

"Workplaces tend to change at a more rapid pace than universities. It's important to really hear what workplaces are experiencing because, in return, we want educated individuals working for us," Cyndi says. "It [education] has to be timely. We need to be able to adjust quickly and adapt." UNO's skills reporting helps workplaces like Quantum do just that.

"Students need experience with flexing these skills alongside what they are learning. Learning the theories and knowledge in the books, then applying it in the world or workplace is where it matters," she continues.

Her advice to other workplace leaders is simple and rooted in HR best practices: "Read the UNO Skills Report. Assess your organization and try to identify opportunities for learning for teams and individuals. Research says employees want a weekly one-on-one with their manager and monthly conversations where they can 'step back' and review career vision and goals." These Top 10 Skills found in the 2026-27 UNO Skills Report are a direct reflection of the skills the workforce needs.

TOP 10 SKILLS

2026–27

NEW FOR 2026–27

- AI for Decision Support
- Financial Analysis
- Marketing Communication
- Data Analysis
- Decision Making
- Microsoft Office
- Presentations
- Project Management
- Teamwork
- Writing

HOW TO READ THE SKILLS DATA

- **Top Regional Jobs**: Job titles with the strongest regional posting demand associated with the identified skill.
- **Omaha-Area Employers**: Employers within the Omaha metropolitan area with the highest job-posting demand for the identified skill.
- **Projected Demand Growth**: Projected percentage change in employer demand for the identified skill over the next two years.
- **Starting Salary for Related Roles**: Median advertised salary among early-career job postings requiring the identified skill.

ABOUT THE DATA

Labor market data are provided by Lightcast using job postings from June 2025 through May 2026. Regional data reflect job postings within 200 miles of UNO's Dodge Campus, representing the primary labor market UNO serves. All data are filtered for positions requiring a bachelor's degree or higher. The indicators presented on the following pages provide complementary measures of labor market demand and opportunity associated with each skill.

UNO'S TOP 10 SKILLS FOR 2026-27

AI FOR DECISION SUPPORT

NEW FOR 2026–27

Definition

The ability to use artificial intelligence tools and techniques to analyze information, generate insights, model scenarios, and support data-informed decision-making in organizational, operational, or strategic contexts.

Top Regional Jobs Requiring AI for Decision Support Skills

- Strategy Manager/Consultant
- Software Developers
- Business Development Analyst/Manager
- Data Analyst/Scientist

Omaha-Area Employers Posting for This Skill

- KPMG
- Yahoo Holdings
- FNBO
- Fiserv

39.2%

PROJECTED DEMAND GROWTH

(2 Years)

$101,632

STARTING SALARY FOR RELATED ROLES

(Bachelor's Degree + 0–2 Years of Experience)

FINANCIAL ANALYSIS

NEW FOR 2026–27

Definition

The evaluation of financial information to determine the financial health of individuals or organizations. This skill encompasses the ability to scrutinize balance sheets, income statements, and cash flow statements, identifying trends, risks, and opportunities. It is used to make informed decisions about investments, budgeting, forecasting, and strategic planning, contributing to the overall financial stability and growth of an entity.

Top Regional Jobs Requiring Financial Analysis Skills

- Financial Analyst
- Accountant
- Project/Program Manager
- General/Operations Manager

Omaha-Area Employers Posting for This Skill

- FNBO
- Molina Healthcare
- Conagra Brands
- Lincoln Financial Group

22.5%

PROJECTED DEMAND GROWTH

(2 Years)

$87,296

STARTING SALARY FOR RELATED ROLES

(Bachelor's Degree + 0–2 Years of Experience)

UNO'S TOP 10 SKILLS FOR 2026-27

MARKETING COMMUNICATION

NEW FOR 2026–27

Definition

The process of conveying messages about a product, service, or brand to target audiences through various channels. This skill encompasses the development and execution of strategies that integrate advertising, public relations, and promotional activities to inform and engage consumers. It is used to create cohesive messaging that aligns with organizational goals and resonates with the intended audience, ultimately influencing perceptions and behaviors.

Top Regional Jobs Requiring Marketing Communication Skills

- Marketing Specialist/Manager
- Community Representative
- Graphic Designer
- Account Manager/Executive

Omaha-Area Employers Posting for This Skill

- Cengage Learning
- HDR
- Creighton University
- Olsson

21.1%

PROJECTED DEMAND GROWTH

(2 Years)

$64,000

STARTING SALARY FOR RELATED ROLES

(Bachelor's Degree + 0–2 Years of Experience)

DATA ANALYSIS

Definition

The ability to inspect, cleanse, transform, and model data with the goal to discover useful information, inform conclusions, and support decision-making. This skill involves applying various analytical methods to interpret datasets, identify patterns, and extract meaningful insights. It contributes to evidence-based decision-making by presenting clear and actionable findings derived from complex datasets.

Top Regional Jobs Requiring Data Analysis Skills

- Data Analyst/Scientist
- Financial Analyst
- Software Developer
- Product/Project Manager

Omaha-Area Employers Posting for This Skill

- Fiserv
- FNBO
- TriWest Healthcare Alliance
- Conagra Brands

19.9%

PROJECTED DEMAND GROWTH

(2 Years)

$78,080

STARTING SALARY FOR RELATED ROLES

(Bachelor's Degree + 0–2 Years of Experience)

UNO'S TOP 10 SKILLS FOR 2026-27

DECISION MAKING

Definition

The process of choosing between two or more options to reach a desired outcome. It requires analyzing and evaluating available information, considering the potential outcomes, and weighing the pros and cons of each option.

Top Regional Jobs Requiring Decision Making Skills

- Program/Product Manager
- Financial Analyst/Manager
- Software Engineer
- Data Analyst/Scientist

Omaha-Area Employers Posting for This Skill

- JE Dunn Construction
- FNBO
- GE Aerospace
- State of Nebraska

21.2%

PROJECTED DEMAND GROWTH

(2 Years)

$79,744

STARTING SALARY FOR RELATED ROLES

(Bachelor's Degree + 0-2 Years of Experience)

MICROSOFT OFFICE

Definition

Microsoft Office suite includes programs such as Word, Excel, PowerPoint, and Outlook, which are commonly used for tasks such as document creation, data analysis, presentation design, and email communication.

Top Regional Jobs Requiring Microsoft Office Skills

- Program/Project Manager
- Human Resource Specialist/Generalist
- Accountant
- Sales/Account Manager

Omaha-Area Employers Posting for This Skill

- HDR
- Nebraska Medicine
- Sedgewick
- Fiserv

16.9%

PROJECTED DEMAND GROWTH

(2 Years)

$63,104

STARTING SALARY FOR RELATED ROLES

(Bachelor's Degree + 0-2 Years of Experience)

UNO'S TOP 10 SKILLS FOR 2026-27

PRESENTATIONS

Definition

The ability to deliver effective and engaging content to an audience. It encompasses the structuring of the presentation, the design of visual aids such as slides, the modulation of voice tone, and the use of appropriate body language. It is used to communicate information clearly and persuasively, often in professional or educational settings, to achieve specific objectives such as informing, persuading, or teaching.

Top Regional Jobs Requiring Presentations Skills

- Program/Project Manager
- Account Executive/Manager
- Business Development Analyst/Manager
- Sales Representative/Manager

Omaha-Area Employers Posting for This Skill

- HDR
- FNBO
- Sedgewick
- Fiserv

21.2%

PROJECTED DEMAND GROWTH

(2 Years)

$75,136

STARTING SALARY FOR RELATED ROLES

(Bachelor's Degree + 0–2 Years of Experience)

PROJECT MANAGEMENT

Definition

The ability to manage the application of processes, methods, skills, knowledge, and experiences to achieve specific project objectives according to the project acceptance criteria within agreed parameters. It is used to plan, execute, and monitor projects, ensuring that goals are met on time and within defined constraints. It is used to coordinate resources, mitigate risks, and communicate effectively to deliver successful outcomes for various initiatives within an organization.

Top Regional Jobs Requiring Project Management Skills

- Program/Project Manager
- Engineer
- Business Development Manager
- Marketing/Communications Coordinator

Omaha-Area Employers Posting for This Skill

- Fiserv
- HDR
- Kiewit Corporation
- Google

14.1%

PROJECTED DEMAND GROWTH

(2 Years)

$80,256

STARTING SALARY FOR RELATED ROLES

(Bachelor's Degree + 0–2 Years of Experience)

UNO'S TOP 10 SKILLS FOR 2026-27

TEAMWORK

Definition

The ability to work effectively and harmoniously with others toward a common goal. It involves being cooperative, communicative, and collaborative, as well as being able to contribute to and participate in group decision-making processes.

Top Regional Jobs Requiring Teamwork Skills

- Software Engineer
- Program/Project Manager
- Medical Laboratory Scientist
- Operations Manager

Omaha-Area Employers Posting for This Skill

- Nebraska Medicine
- KPMG
- Sedgewick
- JE Dunn Construction

14.1%

PROJECTED DEMAND GROWTH

(2 Years)

$75,136

STARTING SALARY FOR RELATED ROLES

(Bachelor's Degree + 0–2 Years of Experience)

WRITING

Definition

The ability to put thoughts and ideas into words through the use of language. It is an essential communication tool used to convey messages, express thoughts and emotions, and share information. Effective writing requires clarity, coherence, and proper grammar and punctuation, among other things.

Top Regional Jobs Requiring Writing Skills

- Business Analyst
- Project/Program Manager
- Marketing/Communications Specialist
- Teacher

Omaha-Area Employers Posting for This Skill

- KPMG
- Sedgewick
- Children's Nebraska
- National Indemnity Company

14.1%

PROJECTED DEMAND GROWTH

(2 Years)

$67,456

STARTING SALARY FOR RELATED ROLES

(Bachelor's Degree + 0–2 Years of Experience)

STUDENT PERSPECTIVES

THE VALUE OF SHARING SKILLS

GABRIEL PILON GAIOTTO

Student, Economics | Data Analysis Badge

University of Nebraska at Omaha

"As an Economics student, this badge provides the proof of skills I need to stand out. It turns my academic research into a professional credential, giving me the confidence to show employers I can deliver actionable data insights in today's competitive market."

EVERETT E. WHITE JR.

Student, Multidisciplinary Studies Communication | Presentations Badge

University of Nebraska at Omaha

"Earning the badge was a seamless process because it naturally aligned with the coursework and presentation requirements already built into the class."

ASHLYN PENAS

Student, Biology, Pre-Clinical Perfusion Track | Writing Badge

University of Nebraska at Omaha

"The skills badge experience was very similar to what we learned in class. Professor (Travis) Adams did a great job at preparing me for it. A big thing I learned was the importance of revision and how it can completely improve a project if used correctly."

SKILLS FRAMEWORK

FROM WORKFORCE DEMAND TO VALIDATED SKILLS

The UNO Skills Framework connects regional workforce needs to student learning, assessment, and verified skill recognition. Through the Skills Lab, UNO uses labor market analysis, employer insight, and faculty expertise to identify priority skills, embed them in academic and co-curricular experiences, and validate them through UNO Skill Badges. The framework is designed to make skills visible, credible, and valued for students, faculty, employers, and the broader community.

1

SKILLS RESEARCH

Analyze regional market data and identify in-demand skills.

2

UNO SKILLS REPORT

Create a data-driven skills report that highlights in-demand skills and how UNO is advancing skill-based learning. This is updated annually.

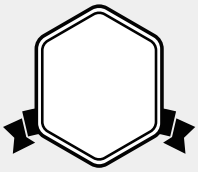
3

SKILLS ACADEMIC INTEGRATION

Use a structured skills framework to integrate skills-based learning into the academic experience through curriculum and activities.

4

UNO SKILLS BADGES



Students earn verified, portable digital skill badges when they demonstrate skills as part of their academic experience.

THE IMPACT

For Students

Gain clarity on high-value skills, communicate them with confidence, and pursue meaningful career opportunities.

For Faculty

Access labor market insights and tools to design relevant, skills-based learning experiences.

For Employers

Gain visibility into the skills of UNO students and confidence in the quality and relevance of our talent pipeline.

MAKING SKILLS VISIBLE

TECHNOLOGY INTEGRATION

UNO's technology integration strategy begins with the student experience. Students develop and demonstrate skills through regular coursework, projects, and classroom activities, making skill validation part of the learning they are already doing. Rather than requiring students to seek out separate programs or external platforms, UNO embeds skill assessments into existing academic experiences and tracks earned skill badges through Canvas, the university's learning management system.

UNO Students graduate with more than a transcript. They graduate with evidence of what they know and what they can do.

Within Canvas, students can view earned UNO Skill Badges, understand what each skill badge represents, and share verified achievements through LinkedIn, resumes, email, and other professional channels. This design helps students recognize the skills they are building, connect those skills to career goals, and communicate their capabilities beyond the transcript.

S.L.A.M. TEAMWORK SKILL WORKSHOP

March 11, 2026 | Mammel Hall

University of Nebraska at Omaha

Students in Leadership and Management (S.L.A.M.), a UNO student organization, organized a skills workshop for fellow students as an opportunity to earn the UNO Teamwork Skill Badge. Through a simulation-based experience, participants worked through real-world leadership dilemmas, practiced collaboration and communication in timed team challenges, and received individualized feedback using the official UNO Teamwork Skill Badge rubric. Students who earned the UNO Teamwork Skill Badge can share this digital credential on their resumes, LinkedIn, and other professional channels.

KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

KPI PROJECT OVERVIEW

The KPI framework tracks baseline measures that show the reach, adoption, and student impact of UNO Skill Badges. These measures help CCSW assess progress, identify gaps, and guide future improvements as the UNO Skills Lab grows.

1. Skill Badge Modules Developed
2. Instructor Engagement
3. Courses with UNO Skill Badges
4. Student Exposure
5. Student Engagement
6. Total Skill Badges Earned

2025-26 KPI RESULTS

667

Students Reached

Across 31 course sections taught by 16 faculty members.

210

Verified Digital Skill Badges

Earned across the UNO Skill Lab's Top 10 Skills.

65

Skill Badges Shared

Through professional channels to increase visibility and impact.

10

Validated Skill Badges

Helping students build skills and professional portfolios.

KPI PROJECT LEAD

Beckie Barta, Instructor in the College of Business Administration and CCSW Faculty Fellow, supported the collection and reporting of Skills Lab KPIs for the 2025-26 academic year. The UNO Skills Lab continues to expand faculty engagement, strengthen skills-based assessment practices, and increase opportunities for students to earn verified skill badges.

SKILLS ASSESSMENT DEVELOPERS

ENSURING QUALITY THROUGH FACULTY AND EXPERT COLLABORATION

Behind each UNO Skill Badge is the expertise of a subject matter expert (SME)—a faculty or staff member with deep knowledge of a specific skill area. These experts were selected from across the UNO community to design the assessments that anchor each badge. By tapping into our campus expertise, we ensured that every skill assessment reflects the latest research, disciplinary best practices, and real-world expectations. Additionally, all assessments underwent internal peer review and are shared with employer partners to ensure that criteria reflect both academic expectations and workplace relevance.

AI for Decision Support

Dr. Magie Hall
Associate Professor, Information Systems and Quantitative Analysis, College of Information Science & Technology

Financial Analysis

Dr. Brian Payne
Professor, Finance, Banking and Real Estate, College of Business Administration

Dr. Patty Bick
Associate Professor, Finance, Banking and Real Estate, College of Business Administration

Marketing Communication

Dr. Shana Redd
Assistant Professor, Marketing & Entrepreneurship, College of Business Administration

Data Analysis

Dr. Dustin White
Associate Professor, Economics, College of Business Administration

Writing

Angelika Stout
Lecturer, Marketing & Entrepreneurship, College of Business Administration

Presentations

Casey Riesberg
Instructor, Communication, College of Fine Arts & Media

Decision Making

Dr. Anne E. Herman
Instructor, Marketing & Entrepreneurship, College of Business Administration

Teamwork

Ashley Varilek
Instructor, Management, College of Business Administration

Project Management

Dr. Thu Trang "Jenny" Hoang
Assistant Professor, Management, College of Business Administration

Microsoft Office

Mikaela Peterson
Technology Training Services Associate, NU ITS

ENSURING QUALITY IN SKILL ASSESSMENT

UNO's skill assessments are developed to ensure academic integrity and alignment with workforce expectations. To verify the quality and relevance of each badge, the university follows a multi-step validation process grounded in peer and employer review.

ALIGNMENT TO NACE COMPETENCIES

UNO's skills initiative incorporates the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) Career Readiness Competencies as a benchmark for transferable, job-relevant skills. These standards help ensure that skills assessments are valued across industries and professions.

CAMPUS PARTNERSHIPS IN ACTION

RIGOR IN SKILL ASSESSMENT DEVELOPMENT

The CCSW partnered with the Center for Applied Psychological Services to develop evidence-informed assessment resources for two of UNO's Top 10 Skills: Interpersonal Relationship Building and Coordination. Through interviews with faculty across colleges and disciplines, the team identified how these skills are already demonstrated in coursework and the most effective ways to assess them consistently. The collaboration resulted in flexible Canvas resources that include skill definitions, reflection prompts, observational rubrics, peer review tools, and skill badge scoring guidance. Designed for use across a variety of teaching contexts, these resources enable faculty to assess workforce-ready skills through existing course activities while maintaining a consistent, evidence-based approach.

> ***This partnership was a strong example of how IO psychology can support workforce-focused learning by translating faculty expertise into practical tools that help students document skills employers care about.***
>
> *—Dr. William Kramer, Center for Applied Psychological Services*

SHARING UNO'S SKILLS FRAMEWORK WITH THE WORLD

The UNO Skills Report supported a presentation on skills-based résumés at Canggu Community School in Indonesia and was incorporated into a Cross-Cultural Management lecture at the Thai-Nichi Institute of Technology, in Thailand by Dr. Andrea Stiefvater, Associate Vice Chancellor for Global Engagement at UNO. Together, these engagements highlighted the UNO Skills Report as a model of UNO's commitment to workforce readiness, international collaboration, and sharing innovative practices with global partners.

FACULTY PERSPECTIVES

INTEGRATING SKILLS INTO ACADEMIC LEARNING

Faculty across UNO are integrating skill badges into coursework to help students document and communicate workforce-ready skills.

DUSTIN WHITE, Ph.D.

Associate Professor, Economics
Research Director, Koraleski CAB Lab
University of Nebraska at Omaha

"Integrating a skill badge into my course gave my students an extra opportunity to showcase their concrete skills in data analysis. These demonstrated skills really help to highlight the growth that our students experience throughout their education at UNO."

SHARON STORCH, Ph.D.

Associate Professor of Organizational Communication
Graduate Program Chair, M.A. in Communication and Human Resources & Training Certificate

University of Nebraska at Omaha

"UNO's Top 10 Skills are transferable across Communication Studies contexts, strengthening audience analysis, strategic communication, and professional adaptability."

BUILDING CAREER READINESS STARTS IN K–12

COMMUNITY PARTNER PERSPECTIVE

by Elizabeth Hemphill

Are students simply graduating or are students truly prepared to navigate a rapidly changing world with confidence, adaptability, and purpose? These questions point to very different outcomes.

Dr. Andrea Haynes, Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources and District Operations at Westside Community Schools, believes the UNO Skills Report can help shift the focus from the former to the latter question.

Dr. Andrea Haynes, Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources and District Operations at Westside Community Schools

Career readiness begins early. And partnerships between K-12 educators, higher education, and local organizations can help ensure that students are better prepared for the realities they will face after graduation.

"From a K-12 leadership perspective, I think collaboration matters tremendously because education systems cannot operate in isolation anymore," Dr. Haynes says. "The strongest workforce pipelines are created when schools, higher education, and industry are all communicating about what students actually need to be successful long term."

> ***"THE STRONGEST WORKFORCE PIPELINES ARE CREATED WHEN SCHOOLS, HIGHER EDUCATION, AND INDUSTRY ARE ALL COMMUNICATING ABOUT WHAT STUDENTS ACTUALLY NEED TO BE SUCCESSFUL LONG TERM."***

Partnerships between the UNO Skills Lab and K-12 education help students do more than decide "what they want to be." Rather, these intentional partnerships can build a seamless education experience that helps students build awareness, durable skills, and confidence as they navigate life after high school—wherever that path may lead.

When it comes to skills work after high school, universities shouldn't have to start from scratch. Dr. Haynes continues, "By the time students leave high school, they should already have meaningful exposure to real-world applications of learning." One of the benefits of UNO's skills infrastructure is that students can document and prove the transferable skills they have learned, including skills that wouldn't show up on a traditional transcript.

The structured tracking of skills helps higher education stay connected to the needs of employers and their communities. "It creates stronger alignment between K-12 systems, colleges, and the workforce so students can move more seamlessly into careers and postsecondary opportunities," Dr. Haynes concludes.

Skills connect K-12 education, higher education, and employers by creating a shared language for what students need to know and for what they must be able to do. They are the backbone of a strong workforce pipeline, helping students move more effortlessly from learning to employment. Through the UNO Skills Report and the Skills Lab, UNO is helping lead these conversations and build stronger alignment across the education-to-workforce ecosystem.

SHAPING SKILLS WITH INDUSTRY

UNO's skills infrastructure is strengthened by ongoing collaboration with employers, workforce and economic development leaders, education partners, nonprofit organizations, and community stakeholders. Through the CCSW Advisory Board, UNO brings together regional leaders who help ensure that the university's skills strategy remains connected to the needs of students, employers, and the Omaha workforce.

Employer input has directly informed:

- The selection of UNO's Top 10 Skills
- The design of valid and relevant assessments
- Early planning around skill badge utility in hiring and workforce pipelines

THE CCSW ADVISORY BOARD

Launched as an active advisory group, the CCSW Advisory Board includes 40 leaders representing industry and employers, workforce and economic development, education, and nonprofit and community organizations. Board members help shape the annual UNO Skills Report and the future of skill badge development. Their input helps UNO identify the Top 10 Skills, recognize emerging skills, validate regional workforce demand, and ensure UNO Skill Badges are meaningful to employers.

Education Partners

- Dr. Andrea Haynes, Westside Community Schools
- Cathy Brunkhorst, Metropolitan Community College
- Dr. Jane Meza, UNMC
- Dr. Katie Graham, Nebraska Department of Education
- Dr. Kim Saum Mills, Millard Public Schools

Nonprofit & Community

- Albert Varas, Latino Center for the Midlands
- Ana Lopez Shalla, University of Nebraska
- Dan Esch, Douglas County
- Erin Grace, Omaha Mayor's Office
- Kellee Mikuls, Ignite Nebraska
- Teresa Mardesen, Share Omaha
- Wayne Watkins, Suzanne and Walter Scott Foundation

Workforce & Economic Development

- Dell Nared, Omaha Chamber
- Erin Porterfield, Heartland Workforce Solutions
- George Achola, Communitas–Law & Economic Development Group
- Heath Mello, Omaha Chamber
- Merrick Brtek, Omaha Chamber
- Shonna Dorsey, Nebraska Tech Collaborative

Industry & Employers

- Andrea Fillaus, Union Pacific
- Brian Poppe, Mutual of Omaha
- CJ Jackson, OPPD
- Cyndi Brassette, Quantum Workplace
- Dakotah Taylor, FNBO
- Jami Kemp, Physicians Mutual
- Jeff Harrison, Deloitte
- Jeremy Reinoehl, Tenaska
- Jimmy Harding, Omaha Airport Authority
- Joni Stewart, Farm Credit Services
- Lindsay Odvody, BCBSNE
- Mark Himes, Olsson
- Mike Siedschlag, Retired – HDR
- Randy Fredericks, Kiewit
- Rebecca Bardsley, Fiserv
- Sheri Howard, Physicians Mutual
- Sue Wilkinson, Ameritas
- Tana Phelps, CQuence Health
- Tonya Eggspuehler, Union Pacific
- Zack Robertson, Children's Nebraska

INTERESTED IN JOINING THE CCSW ADVISORY BOARD?

Contact Dr. Erin Bass

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