



STUDENT HONORS CONVOCATION

APRIL 25, 2025



CHANCELLOR'S WELCOME

Dear Honorees and Attendees,

Today we gather to recognize the accomplishments of our outstanding students. Honors Convocation provides us with the opportunity to celebrate both students' academic achievements and their contributions and service to our university and community. Their independent thinking and demonstration of excellence in scholarship and service is amazing proof of UNO's mission as a metropolitan university.

The biographies within these pages highlight the individual students, but we also recognize that their accomplishments are shared with the family, friends, faculty, and staff who help make that excellence possible. To each of you who have helped support our students: thank you.

To the students we are recognizing today, congratulations! Know that you have earned this recognition with your long hours of study, service, and dedication. Thank you for that effort, because your work – today and in the future – reflects on UNO and builds on our reputation as a leading force in higher education, research, and community engagement.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Joanne Li', with a large loop at the start and a horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Joanne Li, Ph.D., CFA,
Chancellor

CEREMONY

WELCOME

Ni (Phil) He, Ph.D.
Senior Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs

Joanne Li, Ph.D., CFA
Chancellor

AWARDS

Helen Hansen Outstanding Graduate Students

Presented by Juan Casas, Ph.D.
Dean, Graduate Studies

NIH and NSF Fellowships

Presented by Juan Casas, Ph.D.
Dean, Graduate Studies

National Scholarships and Fellowships

Presented by Lucy Morrison, Ph.D.
Director, University Honors Program

Undergraduate Major Honorees

Presented by college deans

Deans' Awards

Presented by college deans

CHANCELLOR AWARDS

Academic Excellence

Presented by Joanne Li, Ph.D., CFA
Chancellor

Outstanding Student Leadership

Presented by Joanne Li, Ph.D., CFA
Chancellor

Outstanding Service Learning

Presented by Joanne Li, Ph.D., CFA
Chancellor

Excellence in Research or Creative Activity

Presented by Joanne Li, Ph.D., CFA
Chancellor

Outstanding Student Athletes

Presented by Adrian Dowell, MBA, MSSM
Vice Chancellor of Athletics

CLOSING

Ni (Phil) He, Ph.D.
Senior Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs

HELEN HANSEN OUTSTANDING GRADUATE STUDENT AWARDS

Scholarships are awarded to graduate students who have completed at least 18 hours of graduate work, demonstrated excellence in performance, and have been admitted for candidacy with a grade point average of 3.75 and above.



BIANCA RUIZ
School Psychology

Bianca Ruiz (she/her/ella) is a first-generation Latina graduate student in her third year of the School Psychology program. In 2024, she earned her Master of Science in school psychology and is currently pursuing her educational specialist (Ed.S.) degree. She is completing her practicum with Omaha Public Schools (OPS) and has accepted an internship position with the district for the 2025-2026 school year. With a background in public health, she brings a strong community-centered perspective to her work in schools. Her passion for family engagement led her to design and facilitate a culturally responsive storytelling workshop in Spanish for local families, which served as her applied research project. As a future bilingual school psychologist, she is committed to strengthening her skills in bilingual assessment and implementing best practices for supporting multilingual students. She currently serves as co-chair of the Diversity Committee within UNO's School Psychology program and is an active member of both the Nebraska School Psychologists Association (NSPA) and the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP).



CODY ANDERSON
*Biomechanics &
Kinesiology*

Cody Anderson is a Ph.D. student studying biomechanics and kinesiology with a concentration in physiology of exercise. During his Ph.D., Anderson has been a research assistant in the Vascular and Metabolic Phenotyping Research Laboratory under Dr. Song-Young Park. Anderson's research interests focus on vascular physiology and biomechanics. He specifically focuses on the development of wearable technologies that can be used to monitor and diagnose arteriosclerosis (arterial stiffening). After graduation, he will pursue a university faculty position to continue performing academic research.

UNDERGRADUATE MAJOR HONOREES

Honorees selected by departments in which they are majoring must have a minimum cumulative grade point average of 3.33. They are chosen on the basis of academic achievement in addition to their contributions to the university and the community.

COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

Edrees Amani	Chemistry
Alexander Becker*	Biology
Kyley Bishop*	English
Joe Byers	Religion
Lydia Deichmann	Sociology
Makayla Demmon	Interdisciplinary Studies
Thomas Eilers*	Medical Humanities
Abigail Faris	International Studies, Political Science
Jessica Fernandez-Erazo	Latino/Latin American Studies
Elizabeth Finn	Psychology
Saki Fukuda	Women's & Gender Studies
Eternity Gines	Neuroscience
Will Harr	Mathematics
Deja Harris	Black Studies
Cody Jackson	History
Shelby Krzemien	Economics
Isaac Noel	Environmental Science
Dylan Owens	Physics
Tai Prauner*	World Language and Literature, Molecular & Biomedical Biology
Destiny Tobar	Philosophy

**Denotes Honors Student*



COLLEGE OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

Ishani Adidam*	Human Resources Management
Samantha Barrett	Sales
Charles Castle Jr.	Accounting
Bei Chen	Logistics and Supply Chain Management
Mirsada Demirovic	Banking and Financial Markets
Dondi Evans	Business Analytics
Mohamed Haji	Legal Studies
Carley Keller	Management and Leadership
Trinity Love	International Business
Nicholas Merio	Business Finance
Brandon O'Dell	Economics
Howard Stubstad	Investment Science and Portfolio Management
Hailey Teller	Marketing
Jocelyn Tena Vigil	Real Estate & Land Use Economics
Alexander Young	Entrepreneurship

COLLEGE OF COMMUNICATION, FINE ARTS AND MEDIA

Chance Dunn	Creative Writing
Isaiah Escobar	Music Education
Morgann Gardner	Journalism and Media Communication
Elizabeth Gonzalez	Communication Studies
Alyssiah Green	Music
Elizabeth Holloway	Studio Art - BSA
Antonia Parker	Studio Art - BFA
Jack Poitras	Music Performance
Thomas Rowe	Theatre
Kennedy Wallman	Art History
Clarissa Weitzel	Studio Art - Art Education

*Denotes Honors Student

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION, HEALTH, AND HUMAN SCIENCES

Gabrielle Anzalone*	Library Science
MaKenzie Bias	Secondary Education
Jacqueline Gonzales-Torres*	Elementary Education
Daniela Gutierrez	Secondary Education
Marc Marin-Perez	Kinesiology
MacKenzie McGuire*	Special Education
Abby Meier	Biomechanics
Moo Say	Early Childhood Inclusive
Sydney Schott	Communication Disorders
Kaylee Snowardt	Elementary Education
Allison Whitmire*	Public Health
Kaitlyn Wusk*	Kinesiology

COLLEGE OF INFORMATION SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

Jordan Bakar*	Cybersecurity
Ava DeLaGarza	Computer Science
Violeta Jacinto-Flores	Applied Computing and Informatics
Kelli Smith	Management Information Systems

**Denotes Honors Student*



COLLEGE OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS AND COMMUNITY SERVICE

Patrick Brady*	Criminology & Criminal Justice
Colleen Martincik	Gerontology
Andrew Ornduff	Criminology & Criminal Justice
Brian Rapp	Multidisciplinary Studies (General Administration)
Mark Schaffer	Emergency Management
Haley Schuler	Social Work
Danielle Smith	Multidisciplinary Studies (Non-Profit Administration)
Tristan Weston	Aviation
John Wischmeier	Multidisciplinary Studies (Cybersecurity)

UNL COLLEGE OF ENGINEERING

Ben Crist	Computer Engineering
Peyton Dilly	Environmental Engineering
Julia Ehlers	Architectural Engineering
Kyle Fitch	Electrical Engineering
Sadie Khalil	Civil Engineering
Brogan Posey	Construction Management
Max Sladovnik	Construction Engineering



DEANS' AWARDS

Award recipients reflect a combination of outstanding scholastic achievement and leadership on campus and in the community. They are selected from the Undergraduate Major Honorees.



TAI PRAUNER

College of Arts and Sciences

Tai Prauner is graduating with a Bachelor of Science in molecular and biomedical biology and a Bachelor of Arts in Spanish for health sciences. She conducts research in the Wong Lab on genetic and epigenetic factors related to stress, earning a FUSE grant and recognition as a Barry Goldwater Scholar. As a CNA and tutor, she became a multilingual physician who communicates with empathy and cultural humility in caring for underserved communities. She will pursue a master's in cancer research before continuing to medical school. She carries with her the lessons, support, and quiet encouragement of those who believe in her and hopes to share that same thoughtfulness as she moves forward.



MAKENZIE BIAS

College of Education, Health, and Human Sciences

Kenzie Bias is earning a Bachelor of Science in secondary education with a concentration in mathematics. As a passionate math teacher and coach, they thrive on building strong relationships with students and uplifting the community. They have contributed as STEM STAR leader and Noyce Scholar, inspiring curiosity and a love of learning in, Omaha Metro classrooms and beyond. Currently a full-time teacher and coach at Omaha North, Bias is beginning their graduate journey in the CADRE Project at UNO, pursuing a master's degree while continuing to support students as an educator and mentor.



ISHANI ADIDAM

College of Business Administration

Ishani Adidam is earning her bachelor's degree in business administration with concentrations in business analytics and human resource management, along with secondary concentrations in marketing and management. She is also pursuing a minor in public health. She is UNO's student regent and student body president, having held multiple roles in the Student Government Association throughout her college career. She is the vice president of the Human Resource Association and a member of the CBA Scholars Academy and UNO Honors Program. After graduation, she will begin a full-time role as an HR Analyst at JP Morgan Chase in Dallas, Texas.



BRIAN RAPP

College of Public Affairs and Community Service

Brian Rapp will graduate in May with a bachelor's in multidisciplinary studies – general administration concentration, along with minors in public administration and nonprofit management. He will begin pursuing a master's degree in public administration at UNO this summer. He is a dedicated and results-driven professional with 27 years of experience in the railroad industry. A passionate advocate for his community, state, and country, he currently serves as the local post commander for Post 53 of the American Legion in Grand Island, Neb. He also serves as vice commander for District 6 of the Department of Nebraska American Legion and will assume the role of District 6 commander in June 2025.



COLLEEN MARTINCIK

*College of Public Affairs and Community Service
Division of Continuing Studies*

Colleen Martincik will receive her bachelor's degree in gerontology with a minor in healthy aging this spring. A passionate advocate for older adults, she is dedicated to enhancing their quality of life through social engagement, wellness programs, and community support. Her academic journey has been shaped by caring for her mother with Alzheimer's and working in administrative roles supporting older adults. She looks forward to making a meaningful impact in the field of aging services, helping older adults lead fulfilling, independent lives.



AVA DELAGARZA

College of Information Science & Technology

Ava DeLaGarza will earn a bachelor's degree in computer science and Spanish, with a minor in mathematics. She completed internships with Omaha Public Schools, the Nebraska Defense Resource Corporation, and the W. M. Keck Observatory. She also collaborated with the Malone Center nonprofit in Lincoln, providing solutions for patient and grant management systems to support the local BIPOC community. As an after school iSTEM teacher, she introduces students to the world of computer science and STEM. She serves as the treasurer of the Sigma Delta Pi Spanish Honor Society. After graduation, she will join the Scientific Software Engineering Team at the W. M. Keck Observatory in Hawai'i.



ELIZABETH GONZALEZ

College of Communication, Fine Arts and Media

Elizabeth Gonzalez is a first-generation college student graduating with a Bachelor of Arts in communication. She is double majoring in communication studies and Spanish. She served as a facilitator for Intercultural Communication and was president of Sigma Delta Pi. Her passion for fostering inclusive environments will guide her Human Resources career. She credits her mother as her greatest inspiration and is deeply grateful for the support that has shaped her educational journey. She also extends heartfelt thanks to the Susan Thompson Buffett Foundation for the scholarship that made her college experience possible.



PEYTON DILLY

UNL College of Engineering

Peyton Dilly is working towards a Bachelor of Science in environmental engineering at UNO. During his time at UNO, he assisted a professor with a research project that aimed to evaluate the treatment capabilities of water treatment plants throughout the United States. He worked on outlining the structure of the final research report by collecting, organizing, and interpreting data sets nationwide. He also credits some of his achievements to his family and the Nebraska Career Scholarship program, along with guidance from faculty members and friends. Following graduation, he plans to continue his work in environmental engineering, with a focus on water resources management.

CHANCELLOR'S AWARD FOR ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE

This Award is given based on a combination of outstanding scholastic achievement and demonstrated leadership on campus and in the community. The recipient is selected from the Deans' Award recipients.



AVA DELAGARZA

College of Information Science & Technology

Ava DeLaGarza will earn a bachelor's degree in computer science and Spanish, with a minor in mathematics. She completed internships with Omaha Public Schools, the Nebraska Defense Resource Corporation, and the W. M. Keck Observatory. She also collaborated with the Malone Center nonprofit in Lincoln, providing solutions for patient and grant management systems to support the local BIPOC community. As an after school iSTEM teacher, she introduces students to the world of computer science and STEM. She serves as the treasurer of the Sigma Delta Pi Spanish Honor Society. After graduation, she will join the Scientific Software Engineering Team at the W. M. Keck Observatory in Hawai'i.

CHANCELLOR'S AWARD FOR OUTSTANDING STUDENT LEADERSHIP

This award recognizes an undergraduate student who has demonstrated exemplary leadership through influential participation in campus organizations and community volunteer work, in addition to scholarly achievement.



SUZANA NTIRAMPEBA

College of Arts and Sciences

Suzana Ntirampeba is a first-generation Burundian American and graduate of the University of Nebraska at Omaha (UNO), earning dual degrees in criminal justice and political science with additional certifications in Black studies, international studies, leadership and public policy, and philosophy. She is passionate about service and community leadership, having worked as a pharmaceutical technician, social worker, interpreter, and peer mentor. She has served as president of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc. - Gamma Beta chapter, and president of the National Pan-Hellenic Council at UNO, along with holding leadership roles in Student Government. A recipient of multiple scholarships and the Miss Burundian American title, she is dedicated to making a meaningful impact through advocacy, mentorship, and community engagement.



CHANCELLOR'S AWARD FOR OUTSTANDING SERVICE LEARNING

This award recognizes a student enrolled in service learning courses who demonstrates reflective practice techniques in coursework, provides outstanding service and maintains an excellent relationship with a community agency, and embraces the philosophy of service learning and community service.



ERIK ZAMORA

College of Arts and Sciences

Erik Zamora is a second-year graduate student in the school psychology program. He graduated from UNO in 2023 with a Bachelor of Science in psychology with a concentration in mental health. He has completed service-learning projects in Millard Public Schools, Head Start preschool program, and the Boys and Girls Club of the Midlands. Zamora has also worked as a special education educational assistant in Westside Community Schools for three years.

CHANCELLOR'S AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE IN RESEARCH OR CREATIVE ACTIVITY

Selection of recipient is based on a combination of outstanding research or creative activity as demonstrated through scholastic endeavors and achievements. The recipient is selected from the Dean's Award recipients.



TAI PRAUNER

College of Arts and Sciences

Tai Prauner is graduating with a Bachelor of Science in molecular and biomedical biology and a Bachelor of Arts in Spanish for health sciences. She conducts research in the Wong Lab on genetic and epigenetic factors related to stress, earning a FUSE grant and recognition as a Barry Goldwater Scholar. As a CNA and tutor, she became a multilingual physician who communicates with empathy and cultural humility in caring for underserved communities. She will pursue a master's in cancer research before continuing to medical school. She carries with her the lessons, support, and quiet encouragement of those who believe in her and hopes to share that same thoughtfulness as she moves forward.



OUTSTANDING STUDENT ATHLETE AWARDS

The Outstanding Student Athlete Award is presented to one male and one female student athlete. Honorees are also selected on the basis of academic and athletic achievement, in addition to their contributions to the university and the community.



MAGGIE O'BRIEN

College of Business Administration

Maggie O'Brien will graduate this May with her MBA after completing her Bachelor of Science in business administration with a concentration in management and leadership, and a minor in marketing. She has been a member of the UNO softball team for the past four years and is currently competing in her fourth and final season this spring. Upon graduation, she will return to her hometown in Illinois and secure a position in the healthcare administration field. She would like to especially credit her parents, coaches, support staff, teammates, and friends who have pushed her to be the best version of herself during her time here at UNO.



JAMES GLYNN

College of Business Administration

Jimmy Glynn is a driven business professional and current MBA candidate at the University of Nebraska at Omaha (UNO), where he also earned his undergraduate degree in business administration with a concentration in entrepreneurship and management. Over the past five years, he has balanced academic excellence with athletic achievement, playing Division I hockey for UNO. He is currently playing professional hockey for the Kansas City Mavericks in the ECHL where he hopes to continue chasing his dreams to play professional hockey in the NHL.

NIH AND NSF FELLOWSHIPS

SHERI MCVAY

National Science Foundation GREP Fellowship

LIBBY CALDWELL

National Science Foundation GREP Fellowship

SANGWON SHIN

American Heart Association Predoctoral Fellowship

CHRIS ENGSBERG

American Heart Association Predoctoral Fellowship

PRIYANKA CHAUDHARY

Buffett Early Childhood Institute Graduate Scholars

KAITLIN FRASER

Buffett Early Childhood Institute Graduate Scholars

NATIONAL SCHOLARSHIPS AND FELLOWSHIPS

GIO GOMEZ

Voyager Scholarship

MILA HERZBAUM-HARDING

Fulbright Semi-Finalist

CLINT PLOZAY

Congress-Bundestag Youth Exchange (CBYX)

ABBY TARR

Goldwater Scholarship

KATIE HILL

Fulbright Semi-Finalist

OTTILIE COOPER-OHM

Schwarzman Scholarship

University of Nebraska at Omaha Administration

Joanne Li, Ph.D., CFA, *Chancellor*

Ni (Phil) He, Ph.D., *Senior Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs*

Adrian Dowell, MBA, MSSM, *Vice Chancellor of Athletics*

Carol Kirchner, MBA, CPA, *Vice Chancellor of Business and Finance*

Andrew Jacobsen, *Interim Co-Vice Chancellor for Institutional Effectiveness and Student Success*

Sammi Kaiser, Ph.D., *Interim Co-Vice Chancellor for Institutional Effectiveness and Student Success*

Jaci Lindburg, Ph.D., *Associate Vice Chancellor for Innovative and Learning-Centric Initiatives*

Sara Myers, Ph.D. *Associate Vice Chancellor for Research and Creative Activity*

Cathy Pettid, M.S., LMHP, *Associate Vice Chancellor for Student Life and Wellbeing, Dean of Students*

Bret Blackman, *Chief Information Officer*

Julie Dierberger, Ph.D., *Chief Engagement Officer*

Keristiena Dodge, MSc, *Chief of Staff*

Victoria Kohout, *Chief of External Relations*

Drew Nielsen, *Chief Compliance Officer*

Lauren Miltenberger, *Vice President for UNO Advancement*

Anthony Flott, M.A., *Executive Director, Alumni Engagement*

The Colleges

Juan Casas, Ph.D.,
Dean of Graduate Studies

Melanie Bloom, Ph.D.,
Dean, College of Arts and Sciences

Neal Grandgenett, Ph.D.,
*Dean, College of Education, Health,
and Human Sciences*

Steve Schultz, Ph.D.,
Interim Dean, College of Business Administration

Gaylene Armstrong, Ph.D.,
Dean, College of Public Affairs and Community Service

Martha Garcia-Murillo, Ph.D.,
Dean, College of Information Science & Technology

Michael Hilt, Ph.D.,
Dean, College of Communication, Fine Arts and Media

David Richards, M.A., MLIS,
Dean, Library Services

University of Nebraska-Lincoln Academic Programs

Lance Pérez, Ph.D., *Dean, College of Engineering*

University of Nebraska Board of Regents

Timothy Clare, J.D.

Jack Stark, Ph.D.

Jim Scheer

Elizabeth O'Connor, J.D.

Robert Schafer, J.D.

Paul Kenney

Kathy Wilmot

Barbara Weitz, MPA, MSW

Student Regents

University of Nebraska at Omaha, Ishani Adidam

University of Nebraska at Kearney, Sam Schroeder

University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Elizabeth Herbin

University of Nebraska Medical Center, Pranita Devaraju

University of Nebraska System Administration

Jeffery P. Gold, M.D., *President*

David Jackson, *Interim Executive Vice President and Provost*

Anne Barnes, *Interim Vice President and Chief Financial Officer*

Chris Kratochvil, M.D., *Interim Vice President for External Relations*

Bren Chambers, *Interim Vice President and General Counsel*

Katie Hoffman, *Corporation Secretary*



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