



STRAUSS PERFORMING ARTS CENTER
APRIL 24, 2026

UNIVERSITY OF
Nebraska
Omaha





CHANCELLOR'S WELCOME

Dear Honorees and Attendees,

Today is about celebrating excellence and the Mavericks who define it. Honors convocation gives us the privilege of recognizing students whose academic achievement, leadership, and service reflect the very best of the University of Nebraska at Omaha. Their curiosity, discipline, and commitment to making a difference embody what it means to be a metropolitan university educating people of the world.

However, we recognize that none of these milestones were reached alone. Behind every late night of studying and every moment of service stands a network of encouragement – family members, friends, faculty, and staff who believed in these learners along the way.

To those who supported them, thank you for helping shape their success. Your time, mentorship, and care matter more than you know.

To our honorees, your resilience and dedication have earned this recognition. The work you have done, and will continue to do, strengthens our university and advances our reputation as a leader in higher education, research, and community engagement.

Today, we celebrate your achievements. Tomorrow, we look forward to the impact you will make.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Joanne Li', with a large, stylized initial 'J'.

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

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.



GRACE GUNDERSON
School Psychology

Grace Gunderson is earning a Master of Science in applied behavior analysis in May 2026. During her time at UNO, she has gained clinical experience at the Munroe-Meyer Institute, where she supports individuals with autism through skill acquisition, behavior reduction, and group-based instruction.

She has also contributed to multiple research projects focused on verbal behavior and instructional strategies, with her work presented at regional and national conferences. Beyond her clinical and research work, Gunderson serves as president of Students in Applied Behavior Analysis at UNO, where she leads professional development and student engagement initiatives.

After graduation, she plans to begin a doctoral program this fall at Utah State University, where she will continue studying behavior analysis and working in clinical and research settings to support meaningful outcomes for individuals with autism.



JOHN URSINO
*School of Criminology
and Criminal Justice*

John Ursino is a Ph.D. candidate in criminology and criminal justice and is expected to graduate in May 2026.

Ursino has distinguished himself as both a scholar in the field of corrections and criminal justice policy. During his doctoral studies, he has authored and coauthored multiple peer reviewed publications in leading journals, including the *Journal of Criminal Justice* and *Justice Quarterly*. His research focuses on risk and needs assessment, decarceration policy, and prison and jail population dynamics. His work has directly informed correctional policy decisions, including large scale evaluations for the Nebraska Department of Correctional Services and county jail systems

Through his scholarship, teaching, and applied policy work, he has demonstrated a strong commitment to advancing evidence-based corrections and improving public safety outcomes.

Upon completion of his doctorate, he plans to continue contributing to research and policy development that bridges academic scholarship and real-world impact.

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

Yasmine Alhejaj	Women's and Gender Studies
Nicholas Armstrong	Molecular and Biomedical Biology
Jannette Castro-Gomez	Latino/Latin American Studies
McKenna Decker	Chemistry
Kelsey Golden	Medical Humanities
Gio Gomez*	Political Science
Lucian Hadford	Bioinformatics
Vivian Hickman	Religion
Joel Jarusek	Physics
Maddy Leland	Environmental Science
Isabella Manhart*	English
Isabella Martin	History
Adam McLaughlin	Geography
Simon Medinger	World Languages & Literature
Bella Merrill	Interdisciplinary Studies
Jonathan Schaeffer	Economics
Chris Schinzel	Biology
Jaylin Sims	Psychology
Kyla Talavera	International Studies
Sloane Vanarsdall	Sociology
Isabelle Vargas	Neuroscience
Nathan Walther*	Mathematics
Asiaewel*	Philosophy
Ursula Ziebolz	Geology

**Denotes Honors Student*



COLLEGE OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

Morgan Baker	Management & Leadership
Victoria Gamboian	Investment Science and Portfolio Management
Abby Hill	Human Resource Management
Cameron Jordan*	Logistics & Supply Chain Management
Reece Lampe	Sales
Ashlyn McIntyre	Real Estate & land Use and Marketing
Jakob Myers	Legal Studies
Avery Nicklous	Business Analytics
Katherine Palais	Banking and Financial Markets
Lucia Revollo*	Entrepreneurship
Blaine Spulak	International Business
Jordan Walton	Economics
Alden Zabawa	Accounting
Jack Zalewski	Business Finance

*Denotes Honors Student

COLLEGE OF COMMUNICATION, FINE ARTS AND MEDIA

Salvador Becerra	Music
Monse Carranza Bernal	Art Education K-12
Sydney Dickerson	Studio Art
Bailey Gross*	Music Education K-12
Madison Hagan	Communication Studies
Mary Mitzlaff	Journalism and Media Communication
Skylar Perran	Music Performance
Emilie Rothanzl	Theatre
Juliana Scheopner*	Studio Art
Grace Spaulding	Art History
Rayni Wekluk	Creative Writing

*Denotes Honors Student

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION, HEALTH, AND HUMAN SCIENCES

Sarah Boseck	Early Childhood Inclusive
Arlene Garcia*	Elementary Education
Grace Johnson	Communication Disorders
Emily Karmazin	Biomechanics
Amanda Lopez	Special Education - Secondary
Isabella Manhart*	Secondary Education
Meh Mo	Elementary Education
Nadeen Osman	Public Health
Jordan Wolfe	Kinesiology
Molly Zabawa	Library Science
Brittney Zastrow	Special Education - Elementary
Noah Ziegler*	Secondary Education

**Denotes Honors Student*

COLLEGE OF INFORMATION SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

Sarah Nakamura	Bioinformatics
Jack Rygg	Applied Computing and Informatics
Drew Scebold	Cybersecurity
Nathan Schmitz	Artificial Intelligence
Callum Ward*	Computer Science
Mackenzie Wright	Management Information Systems

**Denotes Honors Student*



COLLEGE OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS AND COMMUNITY SERVICE

Jack Adrian	Criminal and Criminal Justice
Lila Congrove	Criminal and Criminal Justice
Owen Eickhoff	Emergency Management
Kaitlyn Oswald	Gerontology
Jennifer Potmesil	Multidisciplinary Studies (General Administration)
Ella Stamp	Aviation
Jake Sorenson	Multidisciplinary Studies
Kennedy Touali	Social Work

UNL COLLEGE OF ENGINEERING

Ella Falk	Construction Engineering
Maddax Frye	Architectural Engineering
Audrey Hill	Civil Engineering
Joseph Kaipust	Electrical Engineering
John Mentgen	Computer Engineering
Connor Neville	Environmental Engineering
Grant Sila	Construction Management



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.



ISABELLE VARGAS

College of Arts and Sciences

Isabelle Vargas is graduating with dual bachelor's degrees with four majors in neuroscience, psychology, sociology, and medical humanities. Vargas has conducted interdisciplinary research spanning neuroscience, psychology, and sociology. She is vice-president of UNO's Nu Rho Psi and has served as president of the Youth Advisory Board (YAB) for the Threshold Continuum of Care.

After graduation, she will complete a post-baccalaureate research position at the National Institutes of Health (NIH) before pursuing a Ph.D. in neuroscience with a focus on serious mental illness in human research.



EMILY KARMAZIN

College of Education, Health, and Human Sciences

Emily Karmazin is earning a bachelor's degree in biomechanics. Karmazin competed on the UNO Women's Golf Team and served as team captain her senior year. She was also secretary of the Student Athlete Advisory Committee (SAAC).

She has volunteered both through UNO and within the community, including at her parish, St. Vincent De Paul.

Following graduation, she will attend Life West Chiropractic College to pursue her Doctorate of Chiropractic degree and obtain certification in Active Release Techniques (ART).



MADDAX FRYE

UNL College of Engineering

Maddax Frye is earning a bachelor's degree in architectural engineering, with a minor in mathematics. Frye completed internships with the City of Omaha Public Works Department, the National Renewable Energy Laboratory, and HDR.

She has participated in the peer tutoring program and given tours to prospective students. She was a member of the NE STEM 4U Program and served as the president of the UNO Society of Women Engineers.

After graduation, Frye will continue her education on the Omaha campus through enrollment in the Master of Architectural Engineering Program and work toward obtaining licensure as a professional engineer.



JACK ZALEWSKI

College of Business Administration

Jack Zalewski is graduating with a bachelor's degree in business finance and a minor in accounting, earning Summa Cum Laude distinction. Zalewski has completed internships at Interpublic Group, State Farm, and the I See It Ventures Family Office, where he managed proprietary capital through complex derivative and equity investments.

During his senior year, he began working at ExitBig, a mergers and acquisitions advisory firm, and plans to continue his role at ExitBig, helping local business owners and buyers navigate complex transactions.



JACK ADRIAN

College of Public Affairs and Community Service

Jack Adrian is earning a bachelor's degree in criminology and criminal justice, with minors in policing and victimology and victim services. Adrian has interned with the Omaha Police Department's Felony Assault Unit as well as the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA).

He explored the global justice system through a study abroad program in London and was president of the UNO Criminal Justice Student Organization. He is progressing through the application process with the Omaha Police Department and hopes to join the police academy in July 2026.



JENNIFER POTMESIL

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

Jennifer Potmesil is earning her Bachelor of Multidisciplinary Studies, with a concentration in general administration and a minor in emergency management. She is a member of both the Alpha Sigma Lambda (ASL) Honor Society and the Society for Collegiate Leadership and Achievement (SCLA). She volunteers for many community focused organizations, supporting families, children, animals, and vulnerable populations throughout Omaha. She is a member of the Omaha Downtown Rotary Club.



SARAH NAKAMURA

College of Information Science & Technology

Sarah Nakamura is earning a bachelor's degree in bioinformatics, with a minor in computer science. Nakamura's research focused on bioinformatics techniques in next-generation sequence analysis.

She completed research internships with Harvard Medical School and University of Nebraska - Lincoln.

She works as an iSTEM afterschool program mentor for elementary and middle school students and is a curriculum supporter at the NebraskaCYBER MATRIX.

She plans to pursue a career in translational genomics research in the intersection of research and the clinic.



MADISON HAGAN

College of Communication, Fine Arts and Media

Madison Hagan is earning a bachelor's degree in communication studies with a minor in black studies and plans to pursue graduate study in communications.

Hagan was the 121st Mayor of Boys Town, and has spoken at international conferences, testified in support of policy reform, and worked to uplift marginalized voices.

She is committed to ensuring young people are heard, protected, and meaningfully included in the decisions that impact their lives.

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.



ISABELLE VARGAS

College of Arts and Sciences

Isabelle Vargas is graduating with dual bachelor's degrees with four majors in neuroscience, psychology, sociology, and medical humanities. Vargas has conducted interdisciplinary research spanning neuroscience, psychology, and sociology.

She is vice-president of UNO's Nu Rho Psi and has served as president of the Youth Advisory Board (YAB) for the Threshold Continuum of Care.

After graduation, she will complete a post-baccalaureate research position at the National Institutes of Health (NIH) before pursuing a Ph.D. in neuroscience with a focus on serious mental illness in human research.

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.



DANIELA MARTHA-PALMA

College of Arts and Sciences

Daniela Martha-Palma is earning a Bachelor of Science in psychology and a Bachelor of Art in Latino/Latin American studies with a minor in sociology.

Martha-Palma completed an internship at AM Counseling and Consulting and has collaborated with Partnership For Kids, where she helped mentor 7th grade students to ensure peer support and college readiness.

She served as president of the Psi Chi Psychology Honor Society and president of the National Alliance on Mental Illness on Campus (NAMI).

After graduation, she will be attending the University of Nebraska - Lincoln to pursue a Ph.D. in educational psychology with a concentration in counseling psychology, continuing her work in expanding access to culturally responsive mental health services and advocating for underserved communities.



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.



ISABELLA FREDERICK

College of Public Affairs and Community Service

Isabella Frederick is earning a bachelor's degree in social work, with a minor in gerontology. Frederick completed an internship with Quality Living Inc., gaining hands-on experience in neurological rehabilitation, case work, and family service.

She served as vice president of Phi Alpha National Honor Society through the School of Social Work, where she helped organize community fundraisers and service events.

Frederick will graduate with a community engaged scholar transcript designation. After graduation, she will work at Quality Living Inc. where she will continue to promote dignity, instill purpose, and create hope for individuals with neurological injuries.

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.



SARAH NAKAMURA

College of Information Science & Technology

Sarah Nakamura is earning a bachelor's degree in bioinformatics, with a minor in computer science. Nakamura researched bioinformatics techniques in next-generation sequence analysis under the mentorship of Kate Cooper, Ph.D.

She completed summer research internships with Harvard Medical School and University of Nebraska - Lincoln.

She works as an iSTEM afterschool program mentor for local elementary and middle school students, and curriculum supporter at the NebraskaCYBER MATRIX, developing a training environment for cybersecurity professionals.

After graduation, she plans to pursue a career in translational genomics research in the intersection of research and the clinic.



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.



JACKSON BURRUS

College of Arts and Sciences

Jackson Scott Burrus will be graduating with a bachelor's degree in neuroscience, with minors in medical humanities and chemistry. Burrus has been a member of the Men's Swim and Dive team, receiving three Academic All-Summit recognitions and a CSC All-District award. He served as president of the Student-Athlete Advisory Committee and a member of the Summit League Student Athlete Advisory Committee. He was a part of Dr. Karen Kim-Guisbert's genetics lab, where he studied fertility and fertilization competency.

He volunteers as a swim coach for Special Olympics Nebraska and has been a Teacher's Aid in General Chemistry courses. After graduation, Burrus plans on taking the MCAT and working as a medical assistant during his year before medical school.



EMILY KARMAZIN

College of Education, Health and Human Sciences

Emily Karmazin is earning a bachelor's degree in biomechanics. Karmazin competed on the UNO Women's Golf Team and served as team captain her senior year. She also held a leadership role as secretary of the Student Athlete Advisory Committee (SAAC).

She is committed to service, volunteering both through UNO and within the community, including at her parish, St. Vincent De Paul.

Following graduation, she will attend Life West Chiropractic College to pursue her Doctorate of Chiropractic degree and obtain certification in Active Release Techniques (ART).

NATIONAL SCHOLARSHIPS AND FELLOWSHIPS

MOO LAW EH SOE

Fulbright Semi-Finalist

ZACH VENN

Goldwater 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*

Jason Browning, Ph.D., *Vice Chancellor for Institutional Effectiveness And Student Success*

Jason D. Coleman, 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*

Gurpreet S. Dhillon, Ph.D.,
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

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

Robert Schafer, J.D.

Paul Kenney

Kathy Wilmot

Barbara Weitz, MPA, MSW

Joel Makovicka

Student Regents

University of Nebraska at Omaha, Drew Leisy

University of Nebraska at Kearney, Sam Schroeder

University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Libby Wilkins

University of Nebraska Medical Center, Brock Calamari

University of Nebraska System Administration

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

David Jackson, Ph.D., *Interim Executive Vice President and Provost*

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

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

Bren Chambers, *Vice President and General Counsel*

Bret Blackman, *Vice President for Information Technology and Chief Information Officer*

Katie Hoffman, J.D., *Corporation Secretary*



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