



UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA MEDICAL CENTER

# Office of Global Engagement

2024 ANNUAL REPORT



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# From the Leadership



Once again, UNMC has increased the number of Office of Global Engagement sponsored international students, scholars and employees; developed new partnerships; and expanded our global activities.

Our most important goal is to ensure the success of our international students while they are at UNMC and after they graduate. The Office of Global Engagement staff assists our international students to have meaningful experiences while they are here. I am delighted to report that UNMC welcomed 86 visa-sponsored new international students in 2024. In-person international student orientation was held, along with pre-arrival sessions to assist our new international students with their transition to UNMC and Omaha. Students are always welcome to come to our office located in the Williams Science Hall, second floor, 2.0.100 or email us at [global@unmc.edu](mailto:global@unmc.edu).

This year, the Office of Global Engagement announced the creation of the D.J. and Janet Thayer Family Global Engagement Award. This faculty award was designed to grow and build collaborations in global health and global engagement. Applications were accepted in December 2024 and January 2025. The award was presented in April 2025.

Through the collaboration of UNMC employees and students, we have expanded our partnerships into new countries. We extend our sincere gratitude for your contributions in fostering global understanding and awareness and advancing internationalization throughout the UNMC community.

To provide timely information regarding immigration policy updates, relevant events and resources for working with international students, we publish the *Global Glance*, our monthly newsletter. *Global Connections* is our quarterly newsletter, which showcases our events, global partnerships, and student activities. If you would like to receive either of these newsletters, please email [global@unmc.edu](mailto:global@unmc.edu).

This 2024 annual report offers a glimpse into the Office of Global Engagement's activities, showcasing our international student community, strategic partnerships, enriching global learning experiences and comprehensive student support.

Thank you for your continued support of the Office of Global Engagement as we diligently work to provide excellence to our international students, visitors and UNMC campus.

Sincerely,  
**Jane L. Meza, PhD**  
*Interim Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs*

# Mission and Vision

## Mission

The Office of Global Engagement promotes global understanding and awareness, and advances internationalization efforts throughout the UNMC community.

## Vision

Our vision is comprehensive global engagement for Nebraska and beyond, advancing UNMC's world-class education, cutting-edge research and renowned public service to meet the complex challenges of today's interconnected world.

## What We Do

The Office of Global Engagement is committed to providing the UNMC community with high-quality opportunities to enrich and expand its experiences with the people, cultures and contemporary concerns with all regions of the world. The Office of Global Engagement is responsible for:

- Providing support to and advocating for the university's international community including students, staff, faculty and scholars;
- Facilitating and coordinating opportunities for global learning experiences;
- Coordinating bilateral exchange programs for health science rotations and research with UNMC's global partners;
- Developing and managing observership and training programs;
- Managing the US immigration and visa sponsorships of international students, staff, faculty and visitors on behalf of UNMC;
- Collaborating with UNMC departments to ensure compliance with UNMC policies including compliance training, immunizations, and export control;
- Developing and maintaining academic collaborations and business partnerships;
- Developing capacity in the healthcare sector;
- Bolstering economic development in Nebraska and the world;
- Coordinating various international and cultural engagement opportunities.





# By the Numbers



**86** new international students representing **24** countries



**343** international students representing **48** countries



**35** students in education abroad programs



**51** active or pending international agreements from **22** countries



**127** international registered visitors representing **34** countries



**917** assisted and sponsored international students, employees and visitors



**15** SEED program participants



**8** students in SAGH service trip



# International Students



*Students gather for the Fall 2024 International Student Orientation.*

## International Student Orientation

UNMC welcomed 86 new international students in January and August 2024. These students represent 24 countries and are from 14 academic health sciences programs across all colleges.

Dele Davies, MD, interim chancellor and Jane Meza, PhD, interim vice chancellor for academic affairs, welcomed the students during their orientation sessions. The core of the International Student Orientation consists of formal presentations on a variety of topics.

As a part of orientation, a welcome pizza party was held as well as a student resources fair. Various departments and groups from campus showcased their services to students.

An integral part of the international student orientation is the popular international student ambassador program, which has been offered for more than a decade. UNMC students volunteer to serve as ambassadors and are matched with incoming students.

cont. pg 5





The purpose of this program is for the ambassadors to help the incoming students have a successful transition to UNMC.

Following the structured spring and fall sessions, the Office of Global Engagement organized trips for the new students to the Henry Doorly Zoo and the Nebraska Crossing Outlet Mall. In addition, global engagement hosted an International Student Welcome Lunch and Ambassador Appreciation.

The First-Year Club, newly created by the Office of Global Engagement, was designed to enhance the experience of international students during their first three semesters at UNMC. By offering engaging

activities and outings, the club fosters connections among students and provides an opportunity to explore the campus and local community. Throughout the year, First-Year Club participants enjoyed a variety of events, including a guided tour of the iEXCEL/Davis Global Center, showcasing innovative simulation technologies and global health training facilities; a tour of the Wigton Heritage Center, highlighting UNMC's rich history, followed by a gathering to encourage networking and camaraderie; and a trip to the Durham Museum, where students explored exhibits on regional history and culture and viewed the iconic Christmas tree.



86 new international students



Representing 24 countries



From 14 academic health sciences programs



*Students enjoy the Welcome Lunch and Ambassador Appreciation.*



*Welcoming new students at the Spring 2024 International Student Orientation.*

# International Students



*UNMC students, staff, faculty and friends celebrated Dwali, the festival of lights, which was held in November. Diwali featured crafts, singing, dancing and Indian food.*

## International Student Association

The UNMC International Student Association (ISA), supported by the Office of Global Engagement, hosted a variety of cultural and social events throughout 2024, fostering community among students, staff and faculty. These events provided opportunities for engagement, cultural exchange, and fun for the entire campus community. Events included Spooky Soirée Halloween party, Diwali Festival, Global Forums, Holi, Mid-Autumn Festival and Trivia Night.

One of the largest events, International Education Week, held Nov. 18-22, promotes global engagement at UNMC. More than 250 students, staff, and faculty attended the week-long event. Organized by the ISA and the Office of Global Engagement, International Education Week kicked off with an opening ceremony of students representing their

respective countries. Opening remarks were given by Mahek Fatima, vice president of the ISA; Nivadeta Krishna Kumar, president of ISA; Phil Covington, PhD, associate vice chancellor for student success; and Jane Meza, PhD, interim vice chancellor for academic affairs.

The week featured a range of events designed to bring the campus community together. Other events included bingo night, culture expo and intramural sports. More than 180 students, staff and faculty attended the Culture Fair. Representatives from 18 countries displayed food, games, artifacts and clothing from their respective countries. Collaborators included the Asian American and Pacific Islander Student Association and the Graduate Student Association.







*UNMC students, staff, faculty and friends enjoy the bright colors as they celebrated Holi at the campus event in April.*



*International Education Week activities attracted more than 250 UNMC students, faculty, and staff. UNMC students share their native countries during the culture expo, held during the annual International Education Week in November.*



# Other Events



*A guest takes his turn at trying the bamboo toy during the Lunar New Year Celebration.*

## Celebrate Culture

More than 250 UNMC and Nebraska Medicine community members celebrated the Lunar New Year at Celebrate Culture, which was held Feb. 29. The event was moved to a new location, the Truhlsen Events Center in the Sorrell Center, which allowed the event to grow with more interactive tables and an area for people to sit and eat.

The first 200 attendees received ornaments. Interactive tables included Chinese calligraphy, lantern making, origami, tea tasting, toys/games, trivia and Yunnori, a South Korean game.

Celebrate Culture was coordinated by the UNMC Office of Global Engagement, along with the Asian American and Pacific Islander Student Association, Asian American and Pacific Islander Employee Resource Group, and UNMC Chinese Students and Scholars Association.





## Farewell Celebration

In 2024, the Office of Global Engagement proudly hosted two farewell celebrations to honor the achievements of our students completing their degrees in May and December. These events brought together students, staff and faculty to celebrate the academic accomplishments, resilience and hard work of our graduates.

Jane Meza, PhD, interim vice chancellor for academic affairs, presented each student with a commemorative coin as a keepsake to mark this special milestone. The receptions provided a warm, welcoming space for reflection and celebration, reinforcing the supportive global community at UNMC.



*Dr. Jane Meza welcomes graduates and friends.*



*Graduating students and friends enjoyed cake and camaraderie during the Farewell Celebration.*



# Global Learning Opportunities



*Marcela Carvajal, PhD student in the College of Public Health (right), is conducting data collection at a swine farm in the Friuli Venezia Giulia region of Italy, accompanied by Rino Gubiani, who served as her principal support during the process. Gubiani, an associate professor in the Department of Agricultural, Food, Environmental, and Animal Sciences, University of Udine, stands beside her as they both wear disposable plastic boots—an essential biosecurity measure required to enter the farm. These boots help prevent the transmission of viruses, a crucial precaution given the recent outbreak of African Swine Fever that severely affected the northern part of the country in 2024.*

## Education Abroad

In 2024, 35 UNMC students embarked on life-changing educational journeys abroad, exploring the healthcare environments in eleven countries: Canada, Costa Rica, India, Italy, Japan, Kenya, Mexico, Peru, Rwanda, Thailand, and Uganda.

Among them, Marcela Carvajal-Suárez, PhD student in the Department of Health Promotion, College of Public Health, spent two transformative months at the University of Udine, Italy. Driven by a lifelong passion for global health cultivated over 20 years in the Americas, Carvajal-Suarez sought to bridge cultural understanding and address public health challenges on an international scale.

The opportunity to collaborate with colleagues at the University of Udine, who had prior connections with her PhD advisor, presented an ideal avenue for fostering new research collaboration that will benefit future researchers. "My time in Udine was far more than just conducting research," she said. "It was about navigating a new academic system, embracing a different culture, and learning a new language."

Despite the initial challenges, Carvajal-Suarez found the Italian people to be exceptionally welcoming. "From the moment I arrived at the airport, I felt at home," she recalled. "The University of Udine's support was crucial in arranging my accommodation and ensuring I had everything I needed to conduct my research. Their efforts made the recruitment process seamless and turned my experience into one of the most rewarding of my life."

While not fluent in Italian, Carvajal-Suarez found that the language barrier was easily overcome by the kindness and helpfulness of the people she met. "They went above and beyond to assist me, ensuring I could operate within the system and achieve my research goals," she said.

This binational collaboration not only provided Carvajal-Suarez with profound personal growth but also strengthened the research infrastructure and collaborative capacity between UNMC and the University of Udine, paving the way for future impactful partnerships.





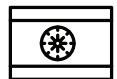
## 2024 Education Abroad Students



**College of Allied Health Professions students (4), Canada**



**College of Pharmacy students (2), Costa Rica**



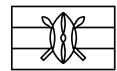
**College of Medicine (5), India**



**College of Public Health student, (Chambers Scholar) (1), Italy**



**College of Medicine students (2), Japan**



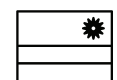
**College of Allied Health Professions students (7), Kenya**



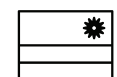
**College of Medicine student (1), Mexico**



**College of Medicine student, Peru**



**College of Public Health student, (Chambers Scholar) (1), Rwanda**



**College of Public Health students (9), Rwanda**



**College of Medicine student (1), Thailand**



**College of Public Health student, (Chambers Scholar) (1), Uganda**



*Jocelyn Cheek, UNMC nursing student, is doing exercises with a child at the rehabilitation center.*



*UNMC students help in the church garden, which provides produce for the pantry boxes.*



## Student Association for Global Health (SAGH) Service Opportunities

SAGH, supported by the Office of Global Engagement, continued its partnership with Clair United Methodist Church to support the church's drive-up food pantry, offered the third Saturday of every month. For every drive-up pantry, SAGH arranges for 8-12 student volunteers to assist with packing the food boxes, loading the food into the vehicle of each customer, and post-pantry cleanup. During the warm weather months, the students also work in the church garden, which provides some of the produce for the pantry boxes.

Eight UNMC students participated in a one-week medical service trip held during the 2024 spring break. UNMC's partner institution, Universidad Anáhuac Veracruz (UAV) at the Córdoba-Orizaba campus hosted the group, comprised of two physical therapy students and six nursing students, along with two faculty/staff supervisors.

Each student was partnered with a medical student from the Córdoba-Orizaba campus and lived with that student and her family during the

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week-long stay. These partner students also participated in the daily activities of the UNMC students. Each student shadowed/observed medical personnel in various capacities in three different facilities.

This year, students visited an elementary school, and the UAV first-year medical students were split into teams, and each had their own presentation to share with the children. UNMC students were able to participate in the presentation or observe.

The students also had the opportunity to visit local and nearby cultural attractions, as well as participate in student activities on the Córdoba-Orizaba campus. Prior to departing to Mexico, the students organized donations of toothbrushes, toothpaste, gloves, and hand sanitizer which they transported with them to Mexico for use in local clinics and schools. During fall 2024, SAGH

sponsored a toyraiser for children in Ukraine who have lost one or both parents, due to the continuing conflict in that country. Toys were collected for children ages 3-15 years old via collection bins strategically placed across campus, as well as the College of Dentistry in Lincoln and the College of Nursing in Norfolk. As collection continued into early 2025, a full tally of the toys collected was not available at the end of 2024. Preliminary results show that a minimum of several hundred toys were donated. Faculty and staff from Ukraine pack the toys and arrange for their shipment to Ukraine for distribution at a children's center.

SAGH also featured select global-health focused speakers and presentations during the academic year.



*Four hundred and fifty toys were collected during the toyraiser for Ukraine, which was sponsored by the Student Association for Global Health.*



# Training Programs



*Interim Chancellor Dele Davies, MD, met with a delegation from Ukraine during the group's visit to UNMC in November.*

## UNMC Hosts Ukrainian Health Care Professionals

In November 2024, UNMC hosted five surgeons and a program manager from Ukraine as part of the Congressional Office for International Leadership Open World Program. The surgeons are visiting as Ben Nelson Fellows for an exchange on polytrauma and the injuries of war.

“We recognize this is a partnership,” UNMC Interim Chancellor H. Dele Davies, MD, said upon meeting the group, “and a partnership is two ways. We are very proud of the relationship we have had with Ukraine and look forward

to continuing the relationship, especially right now.”

UNMC and the Ukrainian Ministry of Health previously signed a cooperative agreement that formalized the university’s pledge to support continued emergency preparedness expertise in Ukraine.

Viktor Romanchuk, MD, head of the department of planned surgery with the Military Medical Clinical Center of the Central Region in Ukraine, told Dr. Davies, “We want to share our experience, and ask you your advice.”





The visit took place over eight days, Nov. 8-16. While in Omaha, the Nelson Fellows took part in a traditional Thanksgiving dinner, had an all-American cookout and visited the Henry Doorly Zoo and Aquarium. There were tours and friendship mixers. Friendship Force provides homes where the Ukrainian delegates stayed and helped organize an immersive cultural experience.

But it also was very much a serious exchange. UNMC is a top American academic medical center with next-generation technology, cutting-edge innovations and the latest training techniques. The Ukrainian physicians have extensive hands-on experience in dealing with war casualties. Dr. Romanchuk, for example, has performed more than 2,000 surgeries, including approximately 500 highly complex operations involving severe injuries to the heart, aorta, inferior vena cava, pancreas, liver and pelvic organs, since joining the Armed Forces of Ukraine following Russia's invasion in 2022. He is head of surgery at his military medical center, where more than 20,000 surgical interventions have been performed under his ultimate supervision.

"My main focus is organizing and implementing a highly effective system for timely and highly qualified surgical care for patients and the wounded,



*One of the Ukrainian visiting surgeons handles an innovative Ponseti Brace invented at UNMC to be used by children with Club Foot. This is the first-ever smart instrumented brace and is able to measure the forces and moments from the interaction with the patient's feet when worn during therapy. The measurements are relayed to a computer in real time and can inform the surgeon or clinician if the settings of the brace are optimal or need adjustment to be more effective. Hani Haider, PhD, director of the Orthopaedic Biomechanics and Advanced Surgical Technologies Laboratory, explains this technology, which he invented.*

aiming to save lives and ensure rapid combat and work capacity recovery," he said in his application for the fellowship at UNMC. "Through participating in the program, I hope to gain experience from colleagues and share my own regarding the provision of aid to victims of polytrauma and combat injuries."

The Ukrainians and their UNMC colleagues met on acute care surgery and trauma, the use of whole blood, tourniquet

use and ischemic reperfusion, orthopaedic biomechanics and advanced surgical technologies and more. There were discussions on infections in combat casualty care, a visit to Madonna Rehabilitation Hospitals and visits with emergency medicine and iEXCEL.



*Students from the UNMC Summer Experiential Education (SEED) program in physical therapy*

## Global Perspective on Physical Therapy

Fifteen international learners participated in the UNMC Summer Experiential Education (SEED) program in physical therapy in July 2024. This program gives students an opportunity to develop a global perspective on rehabilitation and learn about physical therapy in the U.S.

Joseph Siu, PhD, professor for the UNMC Physical Therapy Program and director of global health opportunities in the UNMC College of Allied Health Profession, said, "I see their hard work and passion for learning. Coming to UNMC

and adapting to a new learning environment in a short period of time is not an easy task, but the SEED scholars did it and were highly successful." Hannah Tong, PhD, executive director of academic partnerships with the UNMC Office of Global Engagement, said the organizers were excited to welcome back students for the first in-person SEED program since the pandemic.

"This program offers a unique and invaluable opportunity for students to gain experience, exchange knowledge and forge

cont. pg 17







*Students practice taking blood pressure during the lab practice portion of their training.*

lasting connections that will shape their professional journeys,” she said.

The SEED program, administered by the Office of Global Engagement and delivered by the UNMC Physical Therapy Program, is a two-week, in-person summer program designed for international physical therapy and rehabilitation students. It includes lectures by UNMC physical therapy faculty, research experience, clinical observation and cultural activities.

Lecture topics included an introduction to U.S. physical therapy education, major topics in physical therapy, including

neurology, musculoskeletal, cardiopulmonary and pediatric physical therapy, evidence-based practice and professionalism.

Faculty took students to UNMC’s cutting-edge Wellness Innovation Clinical Research Lab. Students also visited different physical therapy and rehabilitation clinical settings in Omaha, including Madonna Rehabilitation Hospital, Nebraska Medicine and Quality Living Inc.

“This program has not only improved my understanding of physical therapy but also broadened my perspective on the field,” said program

participant Dinis Vasco Maria da Conceicao. “I’ve gained not just knowledge but also a sense of duty and the right attitude toward what defines physical therapy.”

# International Partnerships



*Harutoyo Hirano, PhD, senior assistant professor, Fujita Health University and Jane Meza, PhD, interim vice chancellor for academic affairs, sign an MOU between both universities.*

In 2024, UNMC had 51 active or pending international agreements for education, research and business collaborations in 22 countries. Ten new or renewal agreements were signed with partners in Ghana, India, Japan, Mexico, Morocco, South Korea, and Taiwan.

The Office of Global Engagement partnership activities include reviewing and documenting all international agreements, strengthening relationships with existing partners and developing new strategic partnerships.

These UNMC partners visited campus in 2024 to discuss expanding our collaborations:

- **Consulate-General of Japan in Chicago** – The consul-general visited UNMC to explore collaborations in nursing.
- **Embassy Sultanate of Oman** – The cultural attaché and one other delegation member visited UNMC in May to meet various college deans and others to discuss possible collaborations.
- **Fujita Health University** – Harutoyo Hirano, PhD, senior assistant professor, visited UNMC to sign an MOU and discuss the details for the first group of students from Fujita Health University to come to UNMC for two weeks in spring 2025.

cont. pg 15





- **Tashkent Medical Academy, Uzbekistan**

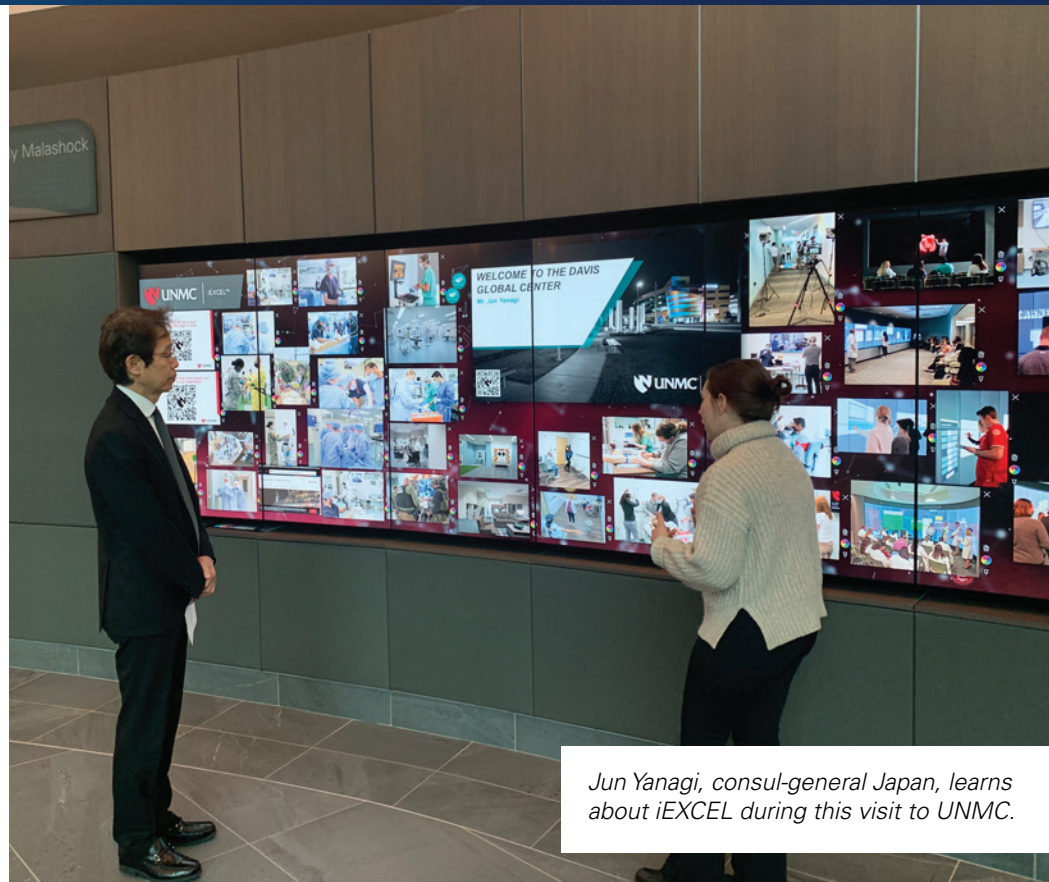
–The head of the department of international cooperation and three other delegation members visited UNMC to sign an MOU and meet with UNMC faculty and researchers to discuss possible collaborations.

UNMC delegations visited these partners in 2024:

- **Universidad de Anahuac Veracruz (UAV) -**

After the 2023 visit from UAV to UNMC, UNMC sent a delegation to UAV to discuss further collaborations. The shared vision is to build on the successes experienced by the UNMC medical Spanish program, the annual global health course taught in Veracruz by UNMC faculty, and annual service-learning trips for UNMC students.

Expansion of the partnership is focusing on (1) UNMC's support in the development of a research infrastructure and related portfolio and (2) the bi-directional exchange of students and faculty, hosted at UNMC by the vice chancellor for research, the department of family medicine and the department of neurological sciences. UNMC students and faculty will be hosted at UAV by the leadership of the medical schools in Xalapa and Cordoba. These exchanges of medical students, residents and faculty are scheduled to begin summer 2025.



*Jun Yanagi, consul-general Japan, learns about iEXCEL during this visit to UNMC.*



*Zaid Zabanoot, PhD, cultural attaché of Oman, and Dele Davies, MD, interim chancellor.*





*Jeff Harrison, MD, chair, department of family medicine (second from the left), Lius Linares, UAV Chancellor (third from the left), Armando De Alba, MD, MPH, PhD, associate professor and assistant dean, department of family medicine, (fourth from the left), and UAV faculty discuss details for future collaborations.*



*Tashkent Medical Academy leadership and Dele Davies, MD, interim chancellor*



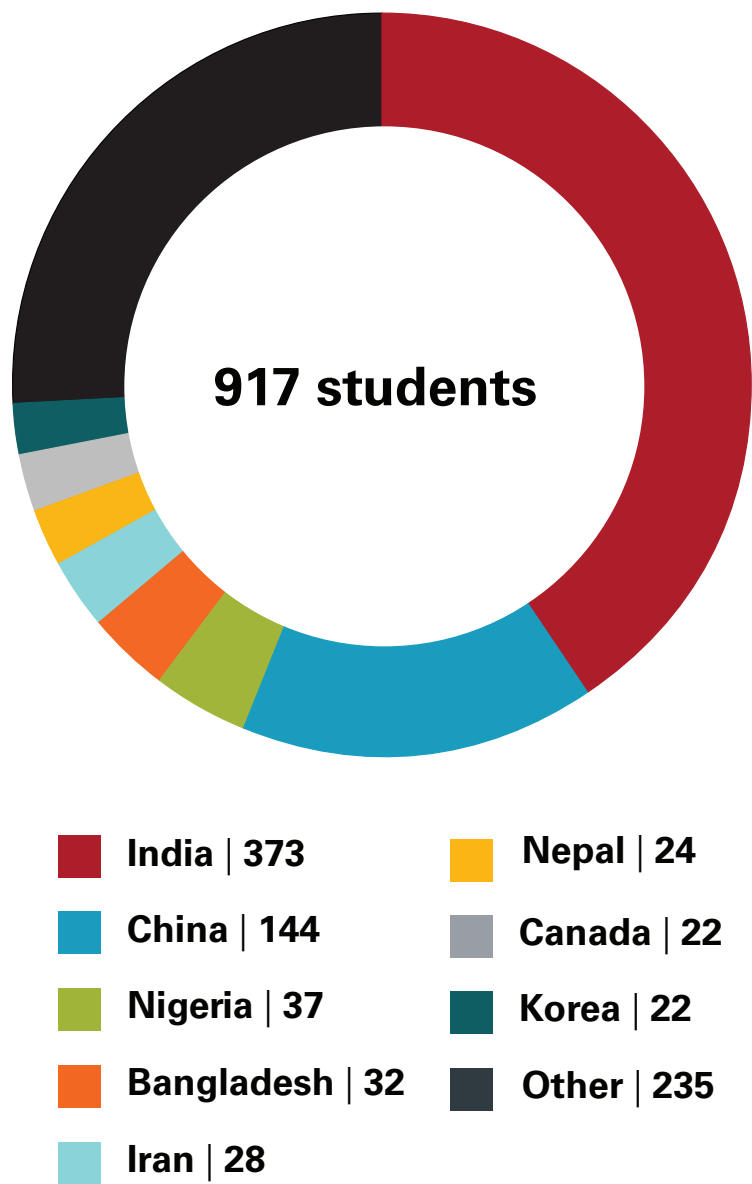
## International Visitors

The International Visitor Program, initiated more than a decade ago, is utilized by campus units to bring visitors to UNMC for engagements ranging from a few hours up to one year. The program ensures the visitors meet UNMC requirements, such as compliance training modules, immunizations, in addition to UNMC Export Control requirements. In 2024, global engagement registered 127 international visitors representing 34 countries.

## Visa Sponsorship

The Office of Global Engagement assisted and sponsored 917 international students, employees and visitors representing 73 countries to work, study, or visit UNMC in 2024. Global engagement staff advised sponsored employees and students on visa and immigration-related issues. The Office of Global Engagement also provided assistance to UNMC departments and international employees regarding the process and regulations for sponsorship of permanent residence. Services were also offered to the University of Nebraska Omaha to advise departments with international immigration issues.

International Students, Employees and Visitors by Country, 2024



# Other Activities



*"Eye of Andros," taken by Jaime Yrastorza, was the grand prize winner of UNMC's Fourth Annual International Photo Contest.*

## Fourth Annual UNMC International Photo Contest

The Office of Global Engagement held its Fourth Annual International Photo Contest in March. Global engagement invited participants to submit up to three of their favorite travel photos in the areas of cityscapes/architecture, landscapes/nature, people/animals for the contest.

The goal was to have the photos inspire adventure and cultural awareness. An anonymous panel judged the images based on originality and

creativity, photographic quality, and communication of culture and place.

The contest had 17 faculty/staff and 12 student/resident participants, with a total of 83 photos submitted. The Office of Global Engagement awarded a grand prize and prizes for the top three entrants in both the student/resident and faculty/staff divisions.





# Our Staff



**Jane Meza, PhD**  
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*College of Public Health*



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**Donald "DJ" Thayer, MBA**  
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Instructor, Department of Pharmacology,  
Exp Neuroscience  
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The Office of Global Engagement has created two digital newsletters to keep our colleagues and partners updated on our international activities. *Global Glance* is a monthly bulletin that relays technical information, deadlines and other pertinent information and opportunities. *Global Connections*, published quarterly, contains campus-wide stories of events and accomplishments. Subscribe or read past issues at [unmc.edu/global/news-events/index.html](http://unmc.edu/global/news-events/index.html).



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