

SEARCH PROFILE:

PRESIDENT



Peru State

College

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ABOUT PERU STATE COLLEGE

[Peru State College](#) is nestled in the hills of historic Southeast Nebraska along the Missouri River. Known as the “Campus of a Thousand Oaks,” the College is a member of the Nebraska Statewide Arboretum. Serving approximately 2,270 students, the College offers a mix of innovative online and traditional on-campus undergraduate and graduate programs.

Peru State is Nebraska’s first post-secondary institution, established in 1867 as a teacher training school with one building and 60 students. It has transformed over the past century and a half into a state-of-the-art institution offering diverse, multifaceted educational programs. The College has long been a wellspring of leadership, an invaluable resource for communities and businesses in the region, and a source of accomplished graduates known for their excellent education and professional competence.

Peru State is one of three institutions that comprise the [Nebraska State College System \(NSCS\)](#). Combined with Chadron State and Wayne State Colleges, the three Colleges serve just over 11,000 students and offer more than 300 degree, certificate, and pre-professional programs. The open-enrollment institutions are located in the far reaches of the state, partnering with the rural communities they serve to provide an engaging, personalized, and rewarding college experience. The NSCS is committed to providing a high-quality, four-year education that is affordable and accessible to all students.

Peru State maintains a special commitment to serve the residents and needs of Southeast Nebraska through education, research, and public service programs. As a small institution with personalized attention and generous state

support, Peru State touts itself as offering a private school experience with a public school price tag.

ACCREDITATION

Peru State is institutionally accredited by the Higher Learning Commission (HLC), and the next reaccreditation visit is scheduled for June 2026. Programmatically, the College was most recently reaccredited by the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP) in Fall 2022 for its educator preparation programs.

STRATEGIC PLAN

The new President will have the opportunity to shape a bold vision and strategic direction for Peru State College, ensuring long-term success and sustainability. This plan will align with the [NSCS 2030 Strategic Plan – Our Students Our Strength](#), which centers on four key priorities: (1) affordable excellence for every student; (2) retention-driven excellence and engaged degree attainment; (3) open access and supportive pathways; and (4) workforce development and leadership. Through this alignment, the President will play a pivotal role in advancing the institution’s mission and impact for years to come.

Developed through a collaborative process in 2022, the [2030 Facility Master Plan](#) serves as a strategic blueprint to help leadership address the evolving needs of current and future students, staff, and faculty. Peru State Foundation’s most recent campaign, [Project ROAR](#), began in 2022 with a \$2 million goal for project support. To date, it has secured more than \$14.2 million in state and private monies for the \$15 million project.



CAMPUS & LOCATION

The 131-acre campus features residence halls, academic buildings, athletic facilities and fields, a performing arts center, and the historic Little Red School House. Peru State has enjoyed considerable support from the State, with more than \$95 million in campus renovation projects funded over the last fifteen years. Recent campus renovations include the Oak Bowl Stadium, the campus entrance, the T.J. Majors academic building, W.N. Delzell Residence Hall, the Performing Arts Center, and the addition of the Diamond Building and Oak Bowl Dome. Plans are underway for renovations to AV Larson and the Student Center to support and enhance the student experience and better help serve the region's needs.

The College is located in the community of Peru (estimated population: 755) in the Southeast corner of Nebraska. Established along the Missouri River, Peru has been shaped by the forces of the river since its founding. The College, the city, and the region face those same impacts today as they continue to recover from the devastating floods of 2019. The can-do spirit and strong partnership of the College and the Peru community have been vital to the recovery and critical to securing infrastructure investments needed for the future.

[Southeast Nebraska](#) is rich in history, culture, and charm. Nearby towns like Auburn, Brownville, and Nebraska City provide ample opportunity for shopping, dining, browsing galleries, and outdoor recreation. The region is characterized by small and mid-size enterprises and rich agricultural and residential areas. Located within a one-hour drive to both Omaha and Lincoln and a two-hour drive to Kansas City, Peru State has close access to large urban centers while offering the tranquility of small-town life.

MISSION, VISION & VALUES

MISSION

Peru State College provides students of all backgrounds access to engaging educational experiences to strengthen and enrich communities, Nebraska, and the world.

VISION

Peru State College will be renowned for transforming student lives through personal and engaging educational experiences.

VALUES

Peru State College lives its mission and vision through engagement in the classroom, engagement across campus, and engagement in the region and beyond while valuing:

Pride: proudly celebrating history as Nebraska's first college, heritage of educating all students, and tradition of achievement by students, alumni, faculty, and staff; cherishing the stately *Campus of a Thousand Oaks*.

Excellence: pursuing excellence through best practices and innovation in scholarship, teaching, research, and student development; committed to providing exceptional facilities and resources supporting an engaged collegiate experience.

Resilience: recognizing resilience as a key factor in success; providing support and encouragement to achieve high standards by cultivating passion and perseverance.

Unity: embracing unity as a diverse and inclusive community; believing in the creation of a culture of respect, mutual support, and understanding; leading and modeling this culture on campus, in the region, and around the world.



ACADEMIC PROGRAMS

Peru State is known for its student-centered environment with personalized attention from faculty and staff, relevant coursework, and flexible scheduling options. With a 13:1 student-to-faculty ratio, Peru State features small classes and hands-on opportunities, like internships, practicum, and research activities, that enable students to work closely with faculty and mentors. Peru State is an open-enrollment institution, and the College's 52 faculty and 114 staff members are fully invested in students and committed to their success. The faculty's consistent 98 percent participation rate in reporting academic concerns through regular academic update surveys is a sign of that dedication.

Peru State continually strives to meet students' needs with new programs, flexible course offerings, and unique partnerships that address the workforce demands of the region. The College offers 19 undergraduate degree programs with 38 options, 21 teaching endorsements, 31 minors, 19 pre-professional programs, and five online Master's degrees. Of these, 20 degree programs (15 undergraduate and 5 graduate) are fully available online.

The [School of Arts and Sciences](#) offers undergraduate majors in Fine Arts, Literature and English, Mathematics, and Natural and Social Sciences, and provides preparation for a variety of careers. Pre-professional programs in law, medicine, nursing, pharmacy, physician assistant, and other areas of study prepare students for continuing post-baccalaureate education. The School hosts band, choir, and theatre performances every semester.

The [School of Education](#) provides educator preparation programs in accordance with the guidelines set forth by the Nebraska Department of Education, which is the state accreditor. These programs are also nationally accredited by CAEP. The School offers certification in early childhood, elementary education, middle-level education, secondary education, K-12 education, and special education. In addition to a variety of field, subject, and supplemental endorsements, the School offers a non-teaching degree in Exercise Science. The School has a special relationship with regional schools, which provide an array of opportunities for practicum and student teaching experiences. In addition to baccalaureate programs that prepare educators for initial certification, the

School offers two graduate programs: the Master of Science in Education-Curriculum and Instruction and the Master of Arts in Teaching.

The [School of Professional Studies](#) offers majors and minors in Business, Psychology, and Criminal Justice, emphasizing practical applications. With numerous options available in each major, students are prepared for a wide variety of careers in business, government, and nonprofit organizations. The School also offers a Master of Science in Organizational Management. The School hosts two national award-winning honors fraternities: Future Business Leaders of America (FBLA) and Lambda Alpha Epsilon for Criminal Justice. The School manages the Corrections Leadership Scholarship program, which is funded with roughly \$1 million by the Governor and Legislature. In addition, the School offers four BAS degrees in Healthcare Administration, Leadership, Management, and Public Safety Leadership for individuals who hold an AAS degree and wish to advance professionally.

A majority of the School of Professional Studies degrees, options, and minors are offered entirely online through [Peru State College Online](#), as are the College's five [Graduate Programs](#): a Master of Science in Education-Curriculum & Instruction; a Master of Science in Organizational Management, with three available focus areas in Entrepreneurial & Economic Development, Healthcare Administration, and Strategic Leadership & Communication; and a Master of Arts in Teaching. Fully accredited, accessible, and affordable, Peru State has 20+ years of online experience and a new partnership for delivery.

The [Honors Program](#) promotes advanced study and scholarship for students with strong records of academic achievement. It is available to all students who receive the Board of Trustees Scholarship and those who meet specific requirements. This program provides students with opportunities for in-depth study through small class sizes, frequent interaction within the program, a unique curriculum, and mentored scholarly and research opportunities. Students accepted into the Honors Program may choose to live in the Honors Living Learning Community. This revitalized program has the opportunity to expand into a meaningful and robust program, creating potential growth opportunities for Peru State.

ACADEMIC PROGRAMS (CONT.)

The [Center for Achievement and Transition Services \(CATS\)](#) provides academic assistance that empowers students to reach their educational goals. Offering a range of services that include academic and career advising, counseling resources, disability support, and tutoring, CATS is committed to helping students succeed. The College has also offered a successful TRiO Student Success Services program since 1990 that currently serves more than 230 students annually. The One Stop Office on the second floor of the CATS building serves

as the main resource for assistance with Financial Aid, course additions or withdrawals, major changes, and more for students, parents, and faculty/staff.

Nearly 700 well-qualified high school juniors or seniors participate in the [Dual Enrollment Program](#), earning college credit through either an online course offered through Peru State College Online or their high school classroom with a qualified instructor.

STUDENTS & STUDENT LIFE

Peru State's 2,266 students are comprised of 1,228 undergraduate degree-seeking students, 266 graduate degree-seeking students, and 772 non-degree-seeking students. Across the undergraduate degree-seeking student population, the average age is 25, 59 percent are women, 79 percent are from Nebraska, 62 percent of degree-seeking students take classes on campus (versus 38 percent entirely online), 55 percent are first-generation college students, 52 percent are Pell-eligible, and 23 percent of those reporting come from ethnic/racial minorities. In the graduate degree-seeking student population, 88 percent are from Nebraska, 72 percent are women, and the median age is 34.

Nearly 87 percent of first-time Freshmen live on campus. In keeping with its focus on building community and increasing student retention, Peru State offers freshmen students the opportunity to choose to live in one of five [Living Learning Communities](#). The Living Learning Communities allow students to explore an interest, develop skills, and build connections during their first year on campus. The retention rate for first-time, full-time students has increased over the prior two years to 65 percent for the 2023 cohort.

Peru State has an active and engaging student life program with more than 30 campus [clubs and organizations](#), including academic groups, honor societies, special interest organizations, music ensembles, intramural sports, and religious groups. Students can take the lead in student government, club sports, journalism, theater, and service activities.

Peru State students are committed to giving back to their community, and *Feeding 44*, is one example of students' effort to fight food insecurity in the region. Started in 2013, *Feeding 44* is a student-created, student-led mobile food pantry that, along with the Lincoln Food Bank and local charities, distributes food at an on-campus location.

The [Peru State Bobcats](#) are a member of the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA) and the Heart of America Athletic Conference. Athletics have expanded in recent years to include 11 varsity sports, five varsity reserve sports, and two co-ed competitive teams in cheerleading and dance. Varsity men's sports include football, basketball, baseball, bowling, and cross country; varsity reserve offerings for men are basketball and baseball. Varsity women's

sports include basketball, bowling, cross country, golf, softball, and volleyball; varsity reserve offerings for women are basketball, softball, and volleyball. The new athletic programs have contributed to the enrollment growth strategy, supported student retention efforts, and enhanced on-campus opportunities for engagement.

The Bobcats have been consistently named a "Five Star Champions of Character" institution by the NAIA, recognizing Peru State teams' conduct around integrity, respect, responsibility, sportsmanship, and servant leadership. Peru State College has now earned the highest ranking, Gold, and a perfect score of 100 for six years in a row.





AFFORDABILITY

Accessibility and affordability are at the heart of a Peru State education, and the College offers one of the lowest overall tuition rates in the region. Through its *One Rate, Any State* program, all students can attend for the same low in-state tuition rate, regardless of residency. Additionally, a variety of full- and partial-tuition scholarships and awards are available to eligible students. One such example is the *Nebraska State Colleges Tuition Guarantee*, which ensures that Nebraska students can attend Peru State tuition-free for families earning less than \$65,000 annually.

The [Rural Health Opportunity Program \(RHOP\)](#) is a cooperative program between Peru State and the University of Nebraska Medical Center (UNMC) designed to support students from rural areas who plan to pursue healthcare careers in rural Nebraska. Students receive full-tuition waivers while enrolled at Peru State and are guaranteed admission into their specific program at UNMC, such as pharmacy, physical therapy, medicine, nursing, etc. To strengthen Nebraska's future healthcare workforce, the state invests \$600,000 annually in scholarships for this vital initiative through the State Colleges.

Similarly, the *Rural Law Opportunities Program (RLOP)* is a partnership program between the State Colleges and the University of Nebraska College of Law to recruit future rural lawyers. The program was expanded to include Peru State in 2024.

The [Career Scholarships](#) are state-funded awards designed to strengthen Nebraska's future workforce by supporting students

AFFORDABILITY

\$12,618

the average annual net price to attend Peru State College – the lowest in the System.

87%

of freshmen at Peru State College receive institutional aid.

WORKFORCE

83%

of 2023 Peru State graduates live and work in Nebraska one year after graduation.

at Peru State College pursuing degrees in Business, Education, Criminal Justice, or Computer and Management Information Systems (CMIS). These scholarships help alleviate financial burdens while preparing students for successful careers in high-demand fields. The Nebraska State College System receives \$4.6 million annually from the State of Nebraska to fund these opportunities.

The [Corrections Leadership Scholarship Program](#) provides significant scholarships to criminal justice students who are completing a degree while completing paid internships at a nearby state correctional institution during the school year and summer. The goal of the program is to develop leaders for the Nebraska Department of Correctional Services. Funded by the State of Nebraska, it provides approximately \$1 million annually for scholarships and program administration.

FINANCES

For the fiscal year ending June 30, 2024, Peru State had revenues of \$28.1 million. It receives its funding from various sources, including 47.8 percent from state appropriations, 18.1 percent in tuition and fees, and 18.1 percent from state and federal grants. The auxiliary enterprise accounted for 12.9 percent, and the remaining 3.1 percent came from other revenue sources.

FOUNDATION & ALUMNI SUPPORT

The College is supported by the Peru State College Foundation, a nonprofit organization established to benefit Peru State College and its students, faculty, staff, and programs. The Foundation draws on the support of more than 19,000 alumni and friends, holds in excess of \$21 million in net assets (as of December 31, 2024), and received nearly \$4.2 million in donor contributions over the past three years. It is run by two full-time and two part-time staff and governed by an all-volunteer Board of Directors.



LEADERSHIP & GOVERNANCE

Peru State is a member of the [Nebraska State College System](#). The System is governed by a seven-member Board of Trustees, six of whom are appointed by the Governor and serve six-year terms. The Commissioner of Education serves as an ex-officio member, and the Governor also appoints a non-voting student board member annually from each of the three Colleges. A board-appointed Chancellor leads the System, and the President of Peru State reports directly to the Chancellor.

Faculty and staff from all three Nebraska State Colleges, including Peru State, are represented by three collective bargaining associations: one for faculty, one for professional staff, and one for support staff. The [employment agreements](#) are negotiated at the System level.

PRESIDENTIAL RESIDENCE

Peru State offers on-campus housing for the President and their family as part of the compensation package. An excellent benefits package is provided for the successful candidate.

The President's cabinet at Peru State includes the Vice President for Academic Affairs, Vice President for Administration and Finance, Vice President for Enrollment Management, Associate Vice President for Student Affairs, Director of Human Resources, and Athletic Director. Other leadership bodies include the faculty senate and the staff senate.

LEADERSHIP AGENDA

The Chancellor and Board of Trustees of the Nebraska State College System seek an energetic, devoted, and tireless champion to lead the State of Nebraska's first institution of higher education. The new leader will be expected to prioritize and advance the interests of the College in the following areas:

Build Community, Build the Leadership Team, and Build Belonging

Peru State has a grand history and its impact on the State of Nebraska is significant. One of its cherished qualities is the intimacy and connectedness shared among the faculty, staff, and students. The College offers a sense of community more often associated with private colleges. The President's

responsibility for nurturing this sense of community is vital. Peru State seeks a leader who will build a stronger campus community through active and deep engagement with both campus and community constituencies. The new leader will need to intensify and rebuild the sense of shared governance and trust on campus through transparency and by fostering genuine relationships with faculty, staff, and students, as well as building a strong leadership team that collaborates to advance the College's mission. Additionally, the President must champion efforts to increase access, enhance student outcomes, and build a supportive environment where all students can thrive, including those who have faced challenges in pursuing higher education.

LEADERSHIP AGENDA (CONT.)

Engage, Lead, and Create a Vision & Plan to Grow Peru State College

The State of Nebraska, the Board of Trustees, the Chancellor, and the System Office are all committed to increasing the impact of Peru State. Working within the framework of the [Strategic Plan](#) of the NSCS, the new President must work with the campus community to craft a vision and plan to advance Peru State. The new President will need to bring campus constituencies together to better learn and understand the current assets of the College and to think creatively about how to build upon its strengths through the development of plans that will be implemented successfully and lead to increases in enrollment and student success through improved recruitment, retention, and graduation rates. This includes a focus on diversifying the student population by expanding outreach to non-traditional students, transfer students, and those seeking professional development or upskilling opportunities, ensuring the College meets the evolving needs of the region and state.

Strengthen Financial & Administrative Systems and Resource Development

The President must serve as the chief steward and advocate for Peru State. There is a need for strong financial leadership, and the President will have an opportunity to develop a new chief financial officer. Working with a new CFO, the Vice President for Academic Affairs, and other members of the senior leadership team, the President will need to strengthen administrative systems, practices, and policies to enable data-informed decision making throughout the campus. The President must also work closely with the Peru State College Foundation in advancing priorities and cultivating relationships that will result in increased charitable support through friendraising and fundraising. The new President will need to be a strong and effective administrator who will oversee the critical work needed to provide the management information systems necessary for effective leadership.

Provide Leadership in Academic Excellence and Innovation

The new President will play a pivotal role in shaping the future of academic programming at Peru State College by providing visionary leadership that builds upon the institution's existing strengths. They will foster a collaborative environment to develop and implement strategic plans that enhance academic excellence and innovation. The President will bring experience in both the classroom and the development of new educational initiatives. Their leadership will ensure that new academic programs align with Peru State's mission, while also addressing the workforce development needs in Nebraska and the region. Through this commitment, the President will champion high-quality, forward-thinking programs that prepare students for success in an increasingly complex and evolving global landscape.

Advance Progress in Improving Facilities

There have been important and significant improvements in campus facilities in recent years at Peru State. These include a beautiful new academic quad in the heart of campus that improved access and created attractive new outdoor spaces and major improvements, and additions to athletics facilities that have also improved general recreation space on campus. The Board of Trustees has identified the AV Larson Fine Arts Building as the next priority for facility upgrades. Following the renovations, the building will also function as a new welcome center for arriving students and serve as a centralized location for essential student services. There remain critical priorities necessary to enhance the quality of life for all, but especially for students through renovations to the Student Center and campus residential facilities.

Embrace and Advocate for Peru State College, Peru, Southeast Nebraska, and NSCS

The next President must embrace and advocate for Peru State College, the community of Peru, Southeast Nebraska and the entire State of Nebraska served by the State College System. This includes the ability to articulate the strengths and needs of the institution to important constituents. Peru State requires a president who will inspire and persuasively share with pride the successes of students, faculty, staff, and alumni. The ideal candidate will be a vibrant and dynamic leader who brings enthusiasm, confidence, and a strong presence, complemented by exceptional interpersonal and communication skills. The President of Peru State will collaborate with the Chancellor and presidential colleagues at the other two campuses to champion higher education and the strategic goals of the Nebraska State College System.





DESIRED QUALITIES, CHARACTERISTICS, AND EXPERIENCES

The most competitive candidates for the Peru State College presidency will possess and project many of the following qualities, characteristics, and experiences:

- Experience leading an institution with successful strategies, goals, and measurable results. Success with discerning the big picture. A visionary effective planner who can make difficult decisions, when necessary, in order to move Peru State in a positive and forward motion.
- Success in building strong leadership teams that will collaborate, listen, engage, and implement a shared vision.
- Evidence of genuine support for and success with shared governance, transparency, and accountability in engaging faculty and staff with attention to the development and recalibration of existing and new academic programs to serve the needs of the region and state.
- Demonstrated ability to lead effectively within a system that includes multiple unions and separate negotiated agreements. A leader who fosters positive relationships with faculty and staff, respects established processes, and works collaboratively to align institutional goals with system-wide priorities.
- Evidence of wise financial acumen and accountability that assures a fiscally sound institution. Experience with use of data to make informed and accurate decisions. A strong comfort level with technology and its impact on higher education, including the potential usages of artificial intelligence.
- Experienced leader with an understanding of academic program development, committed to fostering excellence, innovation, and alignment with institutional and workforce needs.
- History of strong enrollment management skills, broad knowledge of the changing landscape of higher education, innovative ideas, and strategic vision. A willingness to embrace traditional, transfer, non-traditional, international, and online student populations.
- Proven record of dynamic, passionate, and enthusiastic communication, inspiring all constituents to embrace the uniqueness of Peru State and its impact on students, faculty, staff, and alumni. A builder of community and a captivating spokesperson.
- A visible student-centered leader who supports student engagement, improves student success and retention, and spends quality time with students. A leader who attends student athletics and campus activities and events and who recognizes the role that co-curricular life plays in attracting and retaining students.
- A successful record of friend-raising and fundraising, including foundations, corporations, donors, government agencies, alumni, and community members. Experience and political skills to work effectively with legislators, government officials, politicians, and foundation board members. Politically astute.
- A collaborative nature to work closely with the Chancellor and presidential colleagues at the other two campuses, fostering a strong partnership to advance shared goals and ensure the continued success of the college and the broader system.
- Ability to make Peru State the cultural hub of Southeast Nebraska, maintaining and growing relationships with its alumni base. An appreciation for the special culture of the rural environment and a genuine ability to reach out and embrace the community.
- A person who possesses integrity, passion, trust, enthusiasm, humility, empathy, energy, positive attitude, and a sense of humor.



APPLICATIONS & NOMINATIONS

Academic Search is assisting Peru State College in this search. Confidential discussions are encouraged and may be arranged by contacting a member of the search team:

Pam Balch at pam.balch@academicsearch.org
Jay Lemons at jay.lemons@academicsearch.org
Jennifer Kooken at jennifer.kooken@academicsearch.org

Applications, nominations, and inquiries may be sent to:
PeruStatePresident@academicsearch.org.

Applications should consist of a detailed letter of interest and a current curriculum vitae. References will be requested later in the search process. The position is open until filled, but full consideration can only be guaranteed to those applications received by **July 25, 2025**.

The Trustees of the Nebraska State College System are committed to providing applicants with the highest level of confidentiality provided by Nebraska law. As a public body, application materials may become public records in the event the applicant is deemed a finalist under Nebraska Revised Statute 84-172.05(15).

The Nebraska State Colleges are equal opportunity institutions and prohibit unlawful discrimination and harassment. Each College has designated an individual to coordinate the Colleges' non-discrimination efforts to comply with regulations implementing Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act, Titles VI and VII of the Civil Rights Act, Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, the Age Discrimination Act of 1975, and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act.

ABOUT ACADEMIC SEARCH

Academic Search is assisting Peru State College in this work. For more than four decades, Academic Search has offered executive search services to higher education institutions, associations, and related organizations. Academic Search was founded by higher education leaders on the principle that we provide the most value to partner institutions by combining best practices with our deep knowledge and experience. Our mission today is to enhance institutional capacity by providing outstanding executive recruitment services, executive coaching, and transition support, in partnership with our parent organization, the American Academic Leadership Institute.

