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## With Rowing Club, Fierro-Chavez finds competition and friendship

by [Matthew Strasburger](#) | University Communication and Marketing ([/written-by/matthew-strasburger-university-communication-and-marketing/](#))



*Courtesy*

Kevin Fierro-Chavez (front) is vice president of the UNL Rowing Club.

A lifelong athlete, Kevin Fierro-Chavez had a competitive itch he needed to scratch alongside the urge to get outside after the COVID-19 shutdowns.

Rowing, admittedly, wasn't at the top of his list when considering new activities to try post-pandemic.

"I'd definitely never heard of anyone rowing in Nebraska," he said. "When I'm out trying to recruit people, they're often like, 'What the heck is rowing? Like kayaking?' It's a completely unique sport, though, and I think that's what's kept me going for so long."

He joined his sophomore year and is now vice president of [UNL Rowing Club](#), which stands as one of the longest-running clubs on campus with over 55 years in existence.



Fierro-Chavez, a senior from Grand Island, Nebraska, understands the group's enduring appeal. It's proven to be a great outlet for his competitive instincts — and an even better one for making new friends. Bolstered by traveling regionally to compete against peer universities, he said he's made some of his best friends in college within the team.

<https://news.unl.edu/sites/default/files/media/Student%20Success.jpg>



[https://news.unl.edu/sites/default/files/240404\\_KevinFierroChavez\\_001.jpg](https://news.unl.edu/sites/default/files/240404_KevinFierroChavez_001.jpg)

Kevin Fierro-Chavez encourages students who, like himself when he first started, have never tried their hand at rowing to come check out the club..

“I was looking for something super competitive, but also a really supportive group,” he said. “The first year I joined, we joked that we weren't really a team as much as a group of friends who happened to row together.”

The learning curve, he admitted, was not without its hurdles. With no prior rowing experience, the construction engineering major found himself in the water as much as in the boat for the first few weeks.

“When I started off, nobody on our team had any experience and we were just flipping our boat constantly — it was a mess,” he said. “It might not seem like much, but it's a very difficult sport that requires a lot of technique.”

Despite needing to learn the ropes, he insisted that anyone, regardless of their past experiences with rowing, is welcome to join.

“I think we're a great fit for anyone who's looking to try something new, and that's what's helped it stick around so long,” he said. “If you were super competitive in high school and looking for something new, or if you're just looking to make new friends, we have levels of rowing that accommodate everyone.”