



New UNK-UNMC building boosts healthcare enrollment

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Healthcare enrollment has grown by 15.5% since 2022, driven by the new UNK-UNMC Rural Health Education Building. This facility generates interest and offers students additional incentives to pursue their studies in Kearney.

As the demand for healthcare professionals increases, the new building will enhance resources to promote student success in this field.

“Over the last two years, the number of students coming to UNK for pre-professional programs has continued to grow,” said Julie Calahan, engagement and retention coordinator for the Health Science Department. “We brought in our largest incoming freshman Kearney Health Opportunities Program class, ensuring those students have a reserved seat at UNMC in their specific college, with the goal of returning to rural Nebraska to practice.”

In 2022, the total enrollment in Health Science degrees was 748 students, including 252 freshmen with 41 of those in

the KHOP program. This year, the total enrollment has grown to 864 students, with 302 freshmen, 72 of which are in KHOP.

The KHOP community and Health Explorers Learning Community provide freshmen with opportunities to engage in simulations and education from UNMC. This includes field trips to the Kearney and Omaha campuses that enhance students’ understanding of healthcare careers. The Health Science Department works with 14 state hospital partners which offer students financial support and experiential learning.

By touring these hospitals and connecting with professionals, students gain real-world experience while considering future clinical rotations and career paths. Additionally, the program focuses on enhancing internal support systems and professional development to assist students in their educational journeys.

“They take us on tours of UNMC and hold quarterly Zoom meetings to help us prepare for life after graduation,” said John Placke, a sophomore in the pre-medicine KHOP

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MADI MISHOU, UNMC NURSING STUDENT



COURTESY PHOTO

Olivia Kvols and Karly Hanna, nursing students, took a field trip to Husker Harvest Days.

program. “These sessions provide valuable pre-professional tips while also giving us first-hand insight into where we’ll be in the coming years.”

UNMC tours benefit current students and play a role in attracting prospective students to UNK. High school students visiting the campus can also explore programs at UNMC, where faculty teach and facilitate simulations.

“The collaboration allows students to gain hands-on experience in UNMC’s simulation lab,” Calahan said. “This enhances their recruitment appeal for UNK by showcasing the extensive health science opportunities available and the seamless transition into UNMC, all within Kearney.”

The new Rural Health Education Building will house the College of Medicine, College of Pharmacy and College of Public Health. This brings all of the UNMC’s programs to

the Kearney campus, except for the College of Dentistry, which is still in progress. The public health program is set to open in December 2025 or January 2026, while the pharmacy program will launch in fall 2025. Due to regulatory accreditation requirements, the medicine program is expected to start in fall 2026.

The expansion of the Rural Health Education Building will increase seating capacity in the College of Nursing, allowing more students to complete their clinical training in Kearney.

“I knew in early high school that I wanted to pursue nursing, and when I saw the new building being built, I realized I could stay in my hometown because of the partnership between UNK and UNMC,” said Madi Mishou, a UNMC nursing student. “That collaboration made the application and transition processes really easy for me, and I got accepted

into UNMC’s nursing program through the Rural Gateway scholarship, which means I’m dedicated to serving as a nurse in rural Nebraska.”

With the expansion of the new building, the UNK Health Sciences Department aims to double student enrollment in pre-professional programs. By collaborating with academic departments such as biology, chemistry and psychology, the department seeks to provide students with a well-rounded education and create a supportive environment to improve retention.

“We focus on what is best for our students, but we also depend on other departments across campus to support them in their academic journey,” Calahan said. “UNK as a whole does an excellent job promoting this collaboration and helping our students thrive.”