

UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA SYSTEM

# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

## JOINT ACCREDITATION OF UNL AND UNMC

11/25/25

**Q: Why would UNL and UNMC pursue joint accreditation?**

**A:** The University of Nebraska-Lincoln (UNL) and the University of Nebraska Medical Center (UNMC) have been officially approved as a single institutional accreditation through the Higher Learning Commission (HLC), which was approved by unanimous decision of the Board of Regents during a special Nov. 21 meeting. This effort marks an important step in strengthening the University of Nebraska's academic standing, aligning with national peers, strengthening student pathways and expanding opportunities for collaboration, while maintaining the individuality and identity of each campus.

As Nebraska's flagship university, UNL provides a broad range of educational programs and research across disciplines. UNMC, as the state's only public academic medical center, is a national leader in health sciences education, research and patient care. Unifying accreditation allows the colleges on both campuses to maintain their distinct missions and identities while providing opportunities for enhanced research, academic integration and a strengthened commitment to the University of Nebraska's land grant mission.

**Q: How does joint accreditation relate to the University's Odyssey to Extraordinary?**

**A:** Our obtaining HLC approval for joint accreditation between the Lincoln and Medical Center campuses is a major step on our Odyssey to Extraordinary. Joint accreditation will enhance collaboration across disciplines, remove unnecessary barriers, enhance our rankings in areas including research expenditures and sponsored awards and ultimately align us more closely with our Big Ten peers.

Joint accreditation will facilitate opportunities for faculty and students to work together—whether that means more seamless pathways for nursing students, or researchers from agriculture and medicine joining forces to address rural health. It will also streamline operations, reduce duplication and raise our national reputation. Most importantly, it represents a cultural shift toward “one university” thinking—stronger together, more efficient, more impactful and well on the way to extraordinary.

**Q: How does joint accreditation align us with our Big Ten and other R1 peers?**

**A:** Most of the Big Ten and peer R1 universities are structured in a way in which their flagship and medical academic programs are jointly accredited. Joint accreditation paints a more accurate picture of our research, teaching and engagement efforts across our research-intensive campuses and significantly raises our national stature when compared with our peers and other institutions.

It is of note that UNL and UNMC shared a single accreditation and reporting structure up until 1968, and the system-wide Graduate College structure already reflects this shared academic foundation.

**Q: Is this step important for recognition/readmittance by the AAU?**

**A:** Joint accreditation means that numerous metrics—from enrollment and degree completion to sponsored research awards, faculty recognition to research expenditures—are reported jointly. The university's

reputation and place in national rankings will see an immediate boost by reporting these metrics together. While not the only step on the path to being considered for possible AAU membership, joint accreditation and combined reporting are important milestones as we strive for enhanced national recognition by the AAU and others.

**Q: How would the University of Nebraska's current metrics and standings change?**

**A:** UNL and UNMC are research-intensive universities that deliver important discoveries to Nebraska and the world. In an increasingly competitive environment, funding agencies—whether businesses, government, or foundations—consider reputational factors in making funding decisions. Research expenditures are a key measure of a university's scope, capacity and resources to conduct impactful work. When their expenditures are combined, UNL and UNMC together rank 55th nationally among U.S. universities in total research spending and 63rd in federal expenditures.

Graduation rates also play a significant role in institutional rankings, and UNL has made steady progress over the past decade. However, in the current structure, students who transfer from UNL into undergraduate health professions programs at UNMC—such as nursing—are counted as non-completers at UNL. This reporting quirk does not affect our peer institutions. A unified accreditation structure would eliminate this discrepancy, leading to a measurable increase in overall graduation rates.

**Q: Will this accreditation change impact shared governance on either UNL or UNMC?**

**A:** Joint accreditation will not impact shared governance policies or structures on either the UNMC and UNL campuses at any level including faculty, staff, undergraduate students and graduate students. It will not change the structure of alumni relations or other community relations programs. As with the shared faculty governance structure of the Graduate College, a mechanism will need to be developed when UNMC and UNL colleges collaborate on combined academic programs.

**Q: How does this impact the structure of UNL, UNMC and the Office of the President?**

**A:** The NU System's joint accreditation for its Lincoln and medical campuses comes at a time when higher education is rapidly evolving—and we must evolve with it. While joint accreditation does not require structural change, it provides an important opportunity to evaluate how we operate and how we can best serve students and the state. Any potential changes to administrative structure would be thoughtfully considered, with a focus on long-term effectiveness, sustainability and mission alignment. If appropriate, that conversation could include our other campuses—UNK, UNO and NCTA—to ensure the entire NU System is positioned for success in the years ahead.

**Q: Will joint accreditation change any of our marks or logos?**

**A:** There is no requirement to rebrand or co-brand and no such change is planned. We have used cobranding historically for shared programs and may explore additional co-branding with specific programs as makes sense.

**Q: Does this increase our competitiveness?**

**A:** Yes, in several ways. First, joint accreditation will allow us to approach opportunities from a place of increased rankings and reputational strength. It will also allow us to work more collaboratively across our UNMC and UNL campuses as we pursue competitive awards, recruit faculty, staff and students and other opportunities. Finally, it will increase our competitiveness in our teaching mission area through enhanced opportunities

for students and unique pathways that draw on the strengths of both institutions, such as combined degree programs, research grants, corporate contracts, national organizations and more.

**Q: What is the timeline for transitioning from two individually accredited campuses to one jointly accredited institution?**

**A:** Earlier this year, the University of Nebraska submitted its application for joint accreditation, with the HLC making visits to the UNL and UNMC campuses in June. The HLC approved the university's application on Nov. 6.

On Nov. 21, the NU Board of Regents unanimously approved a new administrative unit encompassing both UNL and UNMC and granted the NU president the authority to select a date for finalization of the joint accreditation. That date will be selected in order to ensure the smoothest possible transition for student financial aid.

**Q: Why is Varner Hall listed as the main campus on the application instead of UNMC or UNL?**

**A:** The application for joint accreditation requires that one location be designated as the "main campus." The University of Nebraska System Office submitted the application for the administrative home of the newly accredited entity. The address for Varner Hall was used, which is physically adjacent to UNL's East Campus, the UNL College of Law and the UNMC College of Dentistry.

It's important to note that this designation is purely procedural and is not recognized to outside entities beyond the HLC application. It does not change the identity or role of any campus. The University of Nebraska-Lincoln remains the system's flagship campus, and UNMC continues to serve as the university's medical campus. These listings simply reflect how the accreditation is structured to meet the HLC requirements—not how our campuses are led, operate or are regarded within or outside the university system.

**Q: What does this step mean for our UNO, UNK and NCTA campuses?**

**A:** Joint accreditation between UNL and UNMC is an important step in strengthening the University of Nebraska's academic excellence and collaboration across disciplines. While this change directly involves those two campuses, the closer alignment it fosters will create new opportunities for partnership and innovation that benefit the entire university system—including the University of Nebraska at Kearney, the University of Nebraska at Omaha and the Nebraska College of Technical Agriculture. By working together more seamlessly, the campuses can build on shared strengths in research, teaching and outreach to better serve students, communities and Nebraska's workforce. Opportunities to enhance effective and effectiveness across the entire system will be continuously pursued.