



---

# **Planetary Health Report Card (Medicine) 2026: University of Nebraska Medical Center College of Medicine**

---



2025-2026 Contributing Team:

- Students: Denise Torres\*, Grace McManaman, Emma Yackley, Izzy Jones
- Faculty Mentors: Jesse E. Bell, PhD

\*Primary Contact: Denise Torres ([detorres@unmc.edu](mailto:detorres@unmc.edu))

## Land acknowledgment

We acknowledge that the University of Nebraska Medical Center (UNMC) campuses and programs are located on the homelands of the Pawnee, Ponca, Oto-Missouria, Omaha, Dakota, Lakota, Arapaho, Cheyenne, Apache, and Kaw Peoples, as well as the relocated Ho-Chunk, Iowa, and Sac and Fox Peoples. Land acknowledgments do not substitute relationships with Indigenous Peoples, but we want to recognize and honor their formidable relationship with the land and admirable stewardship. We are thankful for the opportunity to work, learn, and grow on this land.

## Summary of Findings

<b>Overall Grade</b>	<b>B+</b>
<b>Curriculum</b>	<b>C</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The UNMC College of Medicine curriculum adequately addresses the link between extreme climate exposures and health in a Phase 1 lecture titled "Climate Change and Medicine." Climate effects on specific organ systems are variably addressed, and a supplemental "Climate Change and Health" enhanced medical education tract is offered.</li> <li><b>Recommendations:</b> UNMC College of Medicine core curriculum contains no mention of how to apply sustainability in clinical practice, and could better emphasize the carbon footprint of healthcare to help encourage resource-conscious decision making. The curriculum can also be modified to further discuss the importance of environmental exposures and the impact of climate change as it applies to individual patient care and population health.</li> </ul>	
<b>Interdisciplinary Research</b>	<b>A-</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>UNMC offers multiple interdisciplinary opportunities for environmental health research with engaged and accomplished faculty through dedicated educational programs mainly housed under the College of Public Health.</li> <li><b>Recommendations:</b> Although UNMC as an institution offers ample interdisciplinary planetary health research opportunities, many of these opportunities are through the College of Public Health. The College of Medicine could expand and enhance college specific planetary health research programs and make existing opportunities more visible to students. Additionally, UNMC could create a process by which Nebraska community members who are disproportionately impacted by climate change and environmental injustice provide input regarding institutional research efforts.</li> </ul>	
<b>Community Outreach and Advocacy</b>	<b>A</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>UNMC shows strong community engagement through partnerships that support sustainable transportation, environmental restoration, litter reduction, and tree planting, while also reducing waste and promoting public health. The institution integrates planetary health into community-accessible education through public lectures, continuing education courses, newsletters, and patient-facing resources that address climate and environmental health risks in clear, practical terms. Training opportunities such as sustainability ambassador programs and online learning modules further support ongoing professional and community education.</li> <li><b>Recommendations:</b> UNMC should make its community outreach and planetary health efforts easier to find and understand by bringing them together under a more visible, centralized communication strategy, such as a monthly sustainability-focused newsletter.</li> </ul>	
<b>Support for Student-Led Initiatives</b>	<b>A</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>UNMC boasts representation of student-led sustainability interests at an institutional level through the Student Senate Sustainability Liaison position, faculty support for the Healthy Earth Alliance - an interdisciplinary student organization, specific research programs for students to engage in planetary health research, and resources for students to engage in sustainability on campus and in the Omaha community.</li> <li><b>Recommendations:</b> UNMC should continue to maintain and assess long-term impact of student led sustainability initiatives. UNMC should also consider opportunities to incorporate cultural arts events related to planetary health, specifically targeting students and community members as the intended</li> </ul>	

audience.

## Campus Sustainability

A-

- UNMC demonstrates a commitment to sustainability and planetary health, particularly in the areas of fossil fuel divestment, sustainable procurement, green building standards, waste diversion, and transportation.
- **Recommendations:** UNMC should strengthen campus sustainability by enforcing existing requirements for recycling on campus and campus vendors, particularly the styrofoam ban, and by formalizing currently voluntary practices such as zero-waste events and composting. Additionally, UNMC should expand on-site renewables or pursue additional renewable energy procurement to further progress toward net-zero emission goals.

# Statement of Purpose

*Planetary health is human health.*

The Planetary Health Alliance describes planetary health as “a solutions-oriented, transdisciplinary field and social movement focused on analysing and addressing the impacts of human disruptions to Earth’s natural systems on human health and all life on Earth.” This definition is intentionally broad, intended to encompass the multitude of ways that the environment can affect health, including water scarcity, changing food systems, urbanisation, biodiversity shifts, natural disasters, climate change, changing land use and land cover, global pollution, and changing biogeochemical flows. The health of humanity is dependent on our environment, and our environment is changing rapidly and in disastrous ways. Although the World Health Organization has called climate change “the greatest threat to global health in the 21st century,” many health professional school’s institutional priorities do not reflect the urgency of this danger to human health.

As future health professionals, we must be prepared to address the impacts of human-caused environmental changes on our patients’ health. This preparation is in the hands of the institutions providing our health professional training. It is imperative that we hold our institutions accountable for educating health professional students about the health impacts of climate change and other anthropogenic environmental changes, generating research to better understand health impacts and solutions, supporting related student initiatives, embracing sustainable practices as much as possible, and engaging with surrounding communities that are most affected by environmental threats. Because climate change and environmental threats disproportionately affect vulnerable populations (for example, communities of colour, older adults sensitive to health threats, and individuals in low-resource settings), these issues are inherently ones of equity and justice.

With the purpose of increasing planetary health awareness and accountability among health professional schools, we have created a Planetary Health Report Card that students internationally can use to grade and compare their institutions on an annual basis. This student-driven initiative aims to compare health professional schools nationally and internationally on the basis of discrete metrics in five main category areas: 1) planetary health curriculum, 2) interdisciplinary research in health and environment, 3) university support for student planetary health initiatives, and 4) community outreach centred on environmental health impacts 5) school campus sustainability.

# Definitions & Other Considerations

## Definitions:

- **Planetary Health:** is described by the Planetary Health Alliance as “the health of human civilisation and the state of the natural systems on which it depends.” For example, topics such as climate change, declining biodiversity, shortages of arable land and freshwater, and pollution would all fall under the realm of planetary health. Both planetary health and traditional ‘environmental health’ examine the relationship between human health and the external environment, including extreme temperatures, chemicals, vector-borne diseases, etc. Planetary health explicitly concerns itself with the potential health harms associated with human-caused perturbations of natural systems. Therefore, the human health focus of planetary health makes the field well-adapted for the context of health professional education. Throughout this report card, we use the term planetary health to refer to this broad swath of topics, but resources do not need to explicitly include the term “planetary health” to satisfy the metric.
- **Sustainable Healthcare:** As defined by the Academy of Royal Colleges, sustainable healthcare involves ensuring the ability to provide good quality care for future generations by balancing the economic, environmental, and social constraints and demands within health care settings. A sustainable healthcare system maintains population health, reduces disease burden and minimises use of healthcare services.
- **Education for Sustainable Healthcare (ESH):** is defined as the process of equipping current and future health professionals with the knowledge, attitudes, skills and capacity to provide environmentally sustainable services through health professional education, thus working to decrease the enormous environmental impact of the healthcare industry. Planetary Health Education is an integral part of this education rather than an end in itself. This is because knowledge on Planetary Health is required to be able to fully understand the necessity of sustainable healthcare as well as being part of the broader knowledge needed to fully protect and promote health. In summary, ESH is covered by the three Priority Learning Outcomes of the Centre of Sustainable Healthcare below, and Planetary Health Education is embraced in the first learning objective and is a fundamental requirement to achieve learning outcomes 2 and 3:
  1. Describe how the environment and human health interact at different levels.
  2. Demonstrate the knowledge and skills needed to improve the environmental sustainability of health systems.
  3. Discuss how the duty of a doctor to protect and promote health is shaped by the dependence of human health on the local and global environment.
- **Medical School/Department vs. Institution:** When “Medical school” is specified in the report card, this only refers to curriculum and resources offered by the School/department of Medicine and does not include offerings from other parts of the university (e.g. undergraduate departments (USA), other related departments (e.g. Public Health, Population Health departments). In contrast, when “institution” is specified in the report card, we are referring to the university more broadly including all of its campuses. Any resource reasonably accessible by medical students, no matter where in the institution the resource comes from or if it is

specifically targeted for medical students, can meet this metric.

- **Environmental history (Curriculum Section):** This is a series of questions students are taught to ask during medical encounters that elicits patients' exposures and environmental risk factors. Historically, this has included consideration of exposures like pesticides, asbestos, and lead, though in the modern era shaped by climate change, it can be expanded to include things like wildfire smoke exposure, air pollution and mould after flooding. Key components include place of residence over the lifecourse, occupational history, food and water sources (e.g. meat from industrial feeding operations, regular fishing in contaminated water, access to clean drinking water), and exposure to air pollution. Please be as specific as possible when providing evidence for this metric.
- **Elective:** The word "elective" refers to an optional course or lecture series that a student can opt to take part in but is not a requirement in the core curriculum. Generally, these elective courses take place in the preclinical curriculum but vary by school.
- **Core Curriculum:** This refers to the taught material that is delivered to the entire cohort of students in one year.
- **Clerkship / Outreach:** This is a term used in the USA to refer to placements that medical students go on e.g. Pediatrics, General medicine, Psychiatry. In the UK these are referred to as rotations, outreach or placements. This is a relatively short (approximately 4-8 weeks) period of study and patient-centred clinical experience that takes place as part of the undergraduate programme.
- **Clinical rotation:** This is a term used to refer to placements that students go on (e.g., ophthalmology, surgery, cardiology).
- **Physiotherapy vs Physical Therapy:** For the purposes of this report card these terms are considered interchangeable. However, physiotherapy will be used primarily.
- **Community organisations:** For most institutions, there are existing groups that are not directly affiliated with the university and exist as a product of what the community the institution exists in cares about or needs. These specific community organisations relevant to this report include those that are focused around some aspect of climate and health preservation. These community organisations can include but are not limited to local mutual aid initiatives, underserved-resource distribution groups, clean-up and nature conservation groups, community gardeners, and other environmental-related organisations. If your institution does not have access to local volunteerships with community groups, please report any community organisations your institution or school has collaborated with.
- **Climate justice:** The idea that certain population groups and geographical locations which are disproportionately more impacted by climate change are already economically and socially disadvantaged. This double vulnerability sits alongside pre-existing social justice concerns and should therefore shift policy and practice to mitigate the inequitable effects of the climate crisis.
- **Extractivism:** The removal of natural resources typically in large quantities. Within anthropology this term is often used in the context of colonialism to refer to

the historic seizing of natural resources, a practice which has developed business models tied to ecological degradation and loss of biodiversity.

- **Global South:** Nations that often have less economic and industrial development and are typically in the southern hemisphere. These nations have been found to be disproportionately impacted by the climate crisis.
- **Low socioeconomic status (SES):** An individual or geographical area that across a variety of socioeconomic factors (e.g., income, education, race/ethnicity) is considered vulnerable. This vulnerability has been correlated to more adverse health outcomes often as a consequence of encountering more barriers in accessing and receiving healthcare.
- **Low and Middle-Income Countries (LMIC):** Countries that have lower degrees of economic affluence.
- **Anthropogenic:** Created through human activity
- **Marginalized communities:** Groups excluded from mainstream economic, educational, social, and/or cultural experiences due to race, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, physical ability, language, and/or immigration status (Sevelius et al., 2020).

### Scoring Matrix

- Elective coursework (1 point): This score applies to material that is actively selected by the students such as a module choice, or additional lecture series. By implication, only a given proportion of the cohort will receive this taught material.
- Brief coverage in the core curriculum (2 points): This score applies where a topic is covered only briefly in a core curriculum session. This implies that the entire cohort receives the same material. At minimum brief inclusion would qualify as inclusion in a single lecture slide in a single year.
- In depth coverage in the core curriculum (3 points): This score applies where a topic is taught in significant detail or where a topic is repeatedly brought up in different years. This might look like several dedicated lecture slides, or inclusion of the same topic in different lectures and teaching formats.

### Other considerations:

- If there are more than one “tracks” at your institution with two different curricula (for example, Harvard Medical School has a Pathways and HST curriculum track), you can choose to fill out a report card for each track, or fill out just one report card and average the scores received by each track in cases where the scores are different (see the 2021 Harvard or Oxford report cards as examples). Where possible please indicate the proportion of students that are on each track.

Updated in 2025, a complete literature review by metric is available for the 2024/25 Medicine Report Card Template. This largely translates across disciplines although we are hoping to expand this process across all of our covered disciplines. A link to the 2025 literature review by metric is available [here](#).

# Planetary Health Curriculum

***Section Overview:*** This section evaluates the integration of relevant planetary health topics into the medical school curriculum. Today's health professional students will be on the frontlines of tackling the health effects of climate and other environmental changes. Therefore, it is critical that students are trained to understand the health effects of these changes, as well as planetary health issues and principles more broadly. Topics like the changing geography of vector-borne diseases, the health consequences of air pollution, environmental health inequities, and disaster response principles must be part of every medical school's core curriculum.

## *Curriculum: General*

<b>1.1. Did your <u>medical school</u> offer elective courses (student selected modules) to engage students in Education for Sustainable Healthcare or Planetary Health in the last year?</b>	
Yes, the medical school has offered <b>more than one</b> elective whose primary focus is ESH/planetary health in the past year. (3 points)	
Yes, the medical school has offered <b>one</b> elective whose primary focus is ESH/planetary health in the past year. (2 points)	
The medical school does <b>not</b> have any electives whose primary focus is ESH/planetary health, but there are one or more electives that include a <b>lecture</b> on planetary health. (1 point)	
No, the medical school has <b>not</b> offered any electives on planetary health or electives that include ESH/planetary health topics in the past year. (0 points)	
Score Assigned:	2
<i>Score explanation:</i> The University of Nebraska Medical Center College of Medicine offers an elective “Climate Change and Health” enhanced medical education track. This is a longitudinal program that students can apply for during their first semester and if accepted, continues throughout their medical education. This program exposes students to different types of research related to climate change and health and culminates with a final capstone project in their final year of medical school.	

## *Curriculum: Health Effects of Climate Change*

<b>1.2. Does your <u>medical school</u> curriculum address the relationship between extreme heat, health risks, and climate change?</b>	
This topic was explored <b>in depth</b> by the <b>core</b> curriculum. (3 points)	
This topic was <b>briefly</b> covered in the <b>core</b> curriculum. (2 points)	
This topic was covered in <b>elective</b> coursework. (1 point)	
This topic was <b>not</b> covered. (0 points)	

Score Assigned:	3
<p><i>Score explanation:</i> The UNMC College of Medicine Phase 1 core curriculum includes a lecture in the Fundamentals block titled: “Climate Change and Medicine” which features extensive discussion on historical temperature change, the health effects of extreme heat, and defines at-risk populations. In the Musculoskeletal block, there is also an objective to identify the relationship between climate change and infectious/inflammatory/autoimmune processes. Additionally, lectures such as “Drug and Climate Induced Kidney Injury” outline the role of environment and climate change on the pathophysiology/prevalence of diseases such as kidney injury.</p>	

<p><b>1.3. Does your <u>medical school</u> curriculum address the impacts of extreme weather events on individual health and/or on healthcare systems?</b></p>	
<p>This topic was explored <b>in depth</b> by the <b>core</b> curriculum. (3 points)</p>	
<p>This topic was <b>briefly</b> covered in the <b>core</b> curriculum. (2 points)</p>	
<p>This topic was covered in <b>elective</b> coursework. (1 point)</p>	
<p>This topic was <b>not</b> covered. (0 points)</p>	
Score Assigned:	3
<p><i>Score explanation:</i> The University of Nebraska Medical Center College of Medicine Phase 1 curriculum includes a lecture in the Fundamentals block titled: “Climate Change and Medicine.” This lecture discusses extreme weather events, such as heavy downpours, floods, droughts, and major storms and their various health impacts. The lecture includes discussion of Hurricane Maria and the 2019 flood of the Missouri River and its impact on hospitals, long term care facilities, and access to care. This lecture also discusses the mental health effects of drought on farmers.</p>	

<p><b>1.4. Does your <u>medical school</u> curriculum address the impact of climate change on the changing patterns of infectious diseases?</b></p>	
<p>This topic was explored <b>in depth</b> by the <b>core</b> curriculum. (3 points)</p>	
<p>This topic was <b>briefly</b> covered in the <b>core</b> curriculum. (2 points)</p>	
<p>This topic was covered in <b>elective</b> coursework. (1 point)</p>	
<p>This topic was <b>not</b> covered. (0 points)</p>	
Score Assigned:	3
<p><i>Score explanation:</i> The impacts of climate change on infectious disease is introduced in the “Climate Change and Medicine” lecture in the Fundamentals block in Phase 1, which contains several slides outlining the connection between increasing temperatures and the spread of vector-borne diseases such as Lyme and West Nile Virus. Additionally, Phase 1 Blood, Defenses, and Invaders block includes lectures such as “Protozoan Parasitic Infectious Diseases” and “Fungal</p>	

Pathogens” that discuss the impact that climate change has on wildlife habitats and the shifting geographic distribution of disease-causing microorganisms.

**1.5. Does your medical school curriculum address the respiratory health effects of climate change and air pollution?**

This topic was explored **in depth** by the **core** curriculum. (3 points)

This topic was **briefly** covered in the **core** curriculum. (2 points)

This topic was covered in **elective** coursework. (1 point)

This topic was **not** covered. (0 points)

Score Assigned:

2

*Score explanation:* The impacts of heat on respiratory health are briefly discussed in Phase 1 of the core curriculum. Several lectures in the Respiratory block, including “Asthma and Allergy” and “Obstructive Lung Disease,” discuss the association between climate change and increased incidence of environmental allergies and asthma exacerbation. In the Blood, Defenses, and Invaders block, the “Hypersensitivity Type 1” lecture lists exposure to air pollutants as a factor that impacts allergy development.

**1.6. Does your medical school curriculum address the cardiovascular health effects of climate change, including increased heat?**

This topic was explored **in depth** by the **core** curriculum. (3 points)

This topic was **briefly** covered in the **core** curriculum. (2 points)

This topic was covered in **elective** coursework. (1 point)

This topic was **not** covered. (0 points)

Score Assigned:

0

*Score explanation:* The medical curriculum at the University of Nebraska College of Medicine does not cover the relationship between cardiovascular health and climate change.

**1.7. Does your medical school curriculum address the mental health and neuropsychological effects of environmental degradation and climate change?**

This topic was explored **in depth** by the **core** curriculum. (3 points)

This topic was **briefly** covered in the **core** curriculum. (2 points)

This topic was covered in **elective** coursework. (1 point)

This topic was <b>not</b> covered. (0 points)	
Score Assigned:	3
<p><i>Score explanation:</i> Within UNMC’s Phase 1 curriculum there is a dedicated learning objective to “illustrate the effects of climate conditions on psychiatric conditions” which is emphasized across several lectures including “Trauma and Stressor Related Disorders” and “Anxiety”. These lectures contain slides detailing climate anxiety and the link between climate change and mental health. Further, the “Climate Change and Medicine” lecture in the Fundamentals block of Phase 1 at the University of Nebraska College of Medicine discusses how the increased frequency and severity of extreme weather events can affect mental health, providing the example of how drought causes increased stress in farmers. Air pollution was also listed as a non-traditional stroke risk factor in a lecture titled “Stroke Syndromes” in the Neurosciences block.</p>	

<b>1.8. Does your <u>medical school</u> curriculum address the relationships between health, individual patient food and water security, ecosystem health, and climate change?</b>	
This topic was explored <b>in depth</b> by the <b>core</b> curriculum. (3 points)	
This topic was <b>briefly</b> covered in the <b>core</b> curriculum. (2 points)	
This topic was covered in <b>elective</b> coursework. (1 point)	
This topic was <b>not</b> covered. (0 points)	
Score Assigned:	2
<p><i>Score explanation:</i> Within UNMC’s Phase 1 Fundamental block, the “Climate Change and Medicine” lecture briefly discusses the relationships between health, food and water access, and ecosystem health and climate change. Specifically, topics included an extensive discussion on historical temperature change, the health effects of extreme heat, and defining at-risk populations. Extreme weather events, such as heavy downpours, floods, droughts, and major storms and their various health impacts were also described, such as Hurricane Maria and the 2019 flood of the Missouri River and its impact on agriculture and access to care.</p>	

<b>1.9. Does your <u>medical school</u> curriculum address the outsized impact of climate change on marginalised populations such as those with low SES, women, communities of colour, Indigenous communities, children, homeless populations, and older adults?</b>	
This topic was explored <b>in depth</b> by the <b>core</b> curriculum. (3 points)	
This topic was <b>briefly</b> covered in the <b>core</b> curriculum. (2 points)	
This topic was covered in <b>elective</b> coursework. (1 point)	
This topic was <b>not</b> covered. (0 points)	
Score Assigned:	0

*Score explanation:* Inequitable stratification of climate change impacts on vulnerable populations is not covered in the UNMC College of Medicine Curriculum.

**1.10. Does your medical school curriculum address the unequal regional health impacts of climate change globally?**

This topic was explored **in depth** by the **core** curriculum. (3 points)

This topic was **briefly** covered in the **core** curriculum. (2 points)

This topic was covered in **elective** coursework. (1 point)

This topic was **not** covered. (0 points)

Score Assigned:

0

*Score explanation:* The unequal regional health impacts of climate change globally is not covered in the University of Nebraska Medical Center College of Medicine Curriculum.

***Curriculum: Environmental Health & the Effects of Anthropogenic Toxins on Human Health***

**1.11. Does your medical school curriculum address the reproductive health effects of industry-related environmental toxins (e.g. air pollution, pesticides, microplastics)?**

This topic was explored **in depth** by the **core** curriculum. (3 points)

This topic was **briefly** covered in the **core** curriculum. (2 points)

This topic was covered in **elective** coursework. (1 point)

This topic was **not** covered. (0 points)

Score Assigned:

3

*Score explanation:* Within UNMC's Phase 1 Endocrinology block, there is a learning objective to understand "Environmental pollutants and hormone functions. Discussion of endocrine disrupting compounds and their pathophysiology in relation to endocrine function." This learning objective is discussed in the lecture: "Endocrine Physiology: Pituitary and Adipose Tissue Hormones", which described how endocrine disrupting compounds in everyday consumables and pesticides that can cause epigenetic alterations leading to endocrine malfunctions for generations. Additionally, the Fundamentals block contained the lecture: "Early Development of Embryo II", which contained several slides discussing a common herbicide used in the Midwest United States known as Atrazine, and its association to midline defects. The slides included maps depicting Atrazine use in the US and the predicted concentration of atrazine in groundwater in the US. Lastly, in the Genitourinary and Reproductive block, there was a lecture on "Teratogens" that included slides on the impact of occupational exposures to pesticides, organic solvents, lead, ect., in development.

**1.12. Does your medical school curriculum address important human-caused environmental threats that are relevant to the university's surrounding community?**

This topic was explored <b>in depth</b> by the <b>core</b> curriculum. (3 points)	
This topic was <b>briefly</b> covered in the <b>core</b> curriculum. (2 points)	
This topic was covered in <b>elective</b> coursework. (1 point)	
This topic was <b>not</b> covered. (0 points)	
Score Assigned:	2
<p><i>Score explanation:</i> There are several lectures that mention anthropogenic environmental threats in the surrounding Omaha community in phase 1 and phase 2 core curriculum. Phase 1 lectures include "Minerals in Diet" and Early Development of Embryo II" which contain several slides discussing the Omaha lead smelting industry and associated Superfund Sites, as well as the teratogenic herbicide Atrazine which is present in high concentrations in the groundwater supplying the midwest region and local community, respectively. Additionally, in Phase 2 curriculum, a lecture on "Rural Medicine" mentions chemical exposures in the Nebraska agricultural industry that predispose agricultural workers to respiratory disease, cancer, or other illnesses.</p>	

<b>1.13. To what extent does your <u>medical school</u> emphasise the importance of Indigenous knowledge and value systems as essential components of planetary health solutions?</b>	
This topic was explored <b>in depth</b> by the <b>core</b> curriculum. (3 points)	
This topic was <b>briefly</b> covered in the <b>core</b> curriculum. (2 points)	
This topic was covered in <b>elective</b> coursework. (1 point)	
This topic was <b>not</b> covered. (0 points)	
Score Assigned:	0
<p><i>Score explanation:</i> The medical school curriculum at the University of Nebraska Medical Center does not address the importance of Indigenous knowledge and value systems as essential components of planetary health solutions.</p>	

<b>1.14. Does your <u>medical school</u> curriculum address the outsized impact of anthropogenic environmental toxins on marginalised populations such as those with low SES, women, communities of colour, children, homeless populations, Indigenous populations, and older adults?</b>	
This topic was explored <b>in depth</b> by the <b>core</b> curriculum. (3 points)	
This topic was <b>briefly</b> covered in the <b>core</b> curriculum. (2 points)	
This topic was covered in <b>elective</b> coursework. (1 point)	
This topic was <b>not</b> covered. (0 points)	
Score Assigned:	2

*Score explanation:* Within UNMC’s Phase 1 curriculum, the overlap between the Omaha Superfund site for lead contamination and historically red lined neighborhoods is discussed within the lecture "Minerals in Diet". Contaminated surface soil from smelter air emissions impacts numerous zip codes in Omaha, disproportionately impacting colored communities in Omaha. These slides contain maps that depict the overlap of the superfund sites in Omaha and the location of redlined zones, emphasizing environmental health as a social determinant of health. Additionally, the lecture “Systemic Diseases with Rheumatic Manifestations” contained several slides describing the association between unequal exposure of coloured communities to environmental contaminants and sarcoidosis. There is also a phase 3 non-clinical elective course: “Intensive Spanish Language and Social Determinants of Health” that covers practical applications of social determinants of health, including environmental exposures, in South Omaha.

***Curriculum: Sustainability***

**1.15. Does your medical school curriculum address the environmental and health co-benefits of a plant-based diet?**

This topic was explored **in depth** by the **core** curriculum. (3 points)

This topic was **briefly** covered in the **core** curriculum. (2 points)

This topic was covered in **elective** coursework. (1 point)

This topic was **not** covered. (0 point)

Score Assigned:

2

*Score explanation:* In the phase 1 curriculum the medical school curriculum briefly discusses the health benefits of a vegetarian diet in 2 “Nutrition” lectures in the Endocrine block of Phase 1. There is also a phase 3 clinical elective proctored by the Family Medicine department: “The Role of Nutrition in Patient Care” that is a comprehensive study of the role of nutrition in patient care, and covers vegetarian and plant-based diets. However, the curriculum does not discuss the environmental benefits of a vegan or vegetarian diet.

**1.16. Does your medical school curriculum address the carbon footprint of healthcare systems?**

This topic was explored **in depth** by the **core** curriculum. (3 points)

This topic was **briefly** covered in the **core** curriculum. (2 points)

This topic was covered in **elective** coursework. (1 point)

This topic was **not** covered. (0 points)

Score Assigned:

0

*Score explanation:* The University of Nebraska Medical Center College of Medicine curriculum does not discuss the carbon footprint of healthcare systems.

1.17. Does your <b>medical school</b> curriculum cover these components of sustainable clinical practice in the <b>core</b> curriculum? (points for each)	Score
The health <b>and</b> environmental <b>co-benefits</b> of <b>avoiding</b> over-medicalisation, over-investigation and/or over-treatment (2 points)	0
The environmental impact of <b>pharmaceuticals</b> and over-prescribing as a cause of climate health harm. Alternatively teaching on <b>deprescribing</b> where possible and its environmental and health co-benefits would fulfil this metric. (2 points) .	0
The health <b>and</b> environmental <b>co-benefits</b> of <b>non-pharmaceutical management</b> of conditions where appropriate such as exercise or yoga classes for type 2 diabetes; social group activities such as gardening for mental health conditions; active transport such as bicycle schemes. This is commonly known as social prescribing in the UK. (1 point)	0
Environmental impact of <b>surgical</b> healthcare on planetary health and the climate crisis, and how can it be mitigated. (1 point)	0
The impact of <b>anaesthetic</b> gases on the healthcare carbon footprint and ways to reduce anaesthesia's environmental impacts, such as total intravenous anaesthesia or choosing less environmentally harmful anaesthetic gas options with reduced greenhouse gas emissions. (1 point)	0
The impact of <b>inhalers</b> on the healthcare carbon footprint and the environmental benefit of dry powdered inhalers over metered dose inhalers. (1 point)	0
<b>Waste production</b> within healthcare <b>clinics</b> and strategies for reducing waste in clinical activities (e.g. single use items in the inpatient or outpatient setting) (1 point)	0
<i>Score explanation:</i> The medical curriculum does not integrate strategies to decrease waste generated as a result of clinical care.	

*Curriculum: Clinical Applications*

1.18. In training for patient encounters, does your <b>medical school's</b> curriculum introduce strategies to have conversations with patients about the health effects of climate change?	
Yes, there are strategies introduced for having conversations with patients about climate change in the <b>core</b> curriculum. (2 points)	
Yes, there are strategies introduced for having conversations with patients about climate change in <b>elective</b> coursework. (1 point)	
No, there are <b>not</b> strategies introduced for having conversations with patients about climate change. (0 points)	
Score Assigned:	0
<i>Score explanation:</i> The medical curriculum does not integrate strategies to have conversations with patients about climate change and health effects.	

**1.19. In training for patient encounters, does your medical school's curriculum introduce strategies for taking an environmental history or exposure history?**

Yes, the **core** curriculum includes strategies for taking an environmental history. (2 points)

Only **elective** coursework includes strategies for taking an environmental history. (1 point)

No, the curriculum does **not** include strategies for taking an environmental history. (0 points)

Score Assigned:

2

*Score explanation:* The Phase 2 clinical curriculum contains a learning objective detailing that students demonstrate competency in obtaining a complete history including occupational history and “exposures to toxins”, which is assessed in the internal medicine, family medicine, and pediatric clerkship assessments. Further, the didactic phase 1 curriculum also contains specific learning objectives in the Respiratory block on how to take an environmental history and occupational history–“Recognize the risk factors and the importance of occupational and other environmental exposures in the development of respiratory disease” and “Describe how to perform an environmental health risk assessment”. These objectives are extensively discussed in the lectures titled “Restrictive Lung Diseases” and “Dyspnea Evaluation.

***Curriculum: Administrative Support for Planetary Health***

**1.20. Is your medical school currently in the process of implementing or improving Education for Sustainable Healthcare (ESH)/planetary health education?**

Yes, the medical school is currently in the process of making **major** improvements to ESH/planetary health education. (4 points)

Yes, the medical school is currently in the process of making **minor** improvements to ESH/planetary health education. (2 points)

No, there are **no** improvements to planetary health education in progress. (0 points)

Score Assigned:

0

*Score explanation:* At the University of Nebraska Medical Center, there was a student-led initiative to integrate planetary health education into the medical school curriculum in 2023. After review of the curriculum, students wrote a proposal that indicated where topics of climate change and its health impacts can be incorporated into each block of the Phase 1 education. This proposal was well received by school administrators and approved by the curriculum committee and new learning objectives addressing the impact of climate change were added in 2024. However, there have been no further changes to the curriculum and no new education opportunities regarding sustainable healthcare.

**1.21. How well are the aforementioned planetary health/Education for Sustainable Healthcare topics integrated longitudinally into the core curriculum?**

Planetary health/ESH topics are **well integrated** into the core medical school curriculum. (6 points)

Some planetary health/ESH topics are appropriately integrated into the core medical student curriculum. (4 points)	
Planetary health/ESH is not integrated and is primarily addressed in <b>(a) standalone lecture(s)</b> . (2 points)	
There is <b>minimal/no</b> education for sustainable healthcare. (0 points)	
Score Assigned:	4
<i>Score explanation:</i> At the University of Nebraska Medical Center there is a stand-alone lecture—"Climate Change and Medicine" that covers the majority of planetary health topics. In addition to this lecture that occurs at the beginning of phase 1 didactic curriculum, planetary health discussions and concepts are integrated throughout some of the organ system blocks, such as the Respiratory block, Neurosciences Block, Endocrine Block, Blood/immunology/infectious block. While these blocks lack dedicated lectures regarding the impact of climate change and sustainability, they do possess scattered lectures where it is acknowledged.	

<b>1.22. Does your <u>medical school</u> employ a member of faculty to specifically oversee and take responsibility for the incorporation of planetary health and sustainable healthcare as a theme throughout the course?</b>	
Yes, the <b>medical school</b> has a specific faculty/staff member responsible for overseeing curricular integration of planetary health and sustainable healthcare. (1 point)	
No, the <b>medical school</b> does <b>not</b> have a specific faculty/staff member responsible for overseeing curricular integration of planetary health and sustainable healthcare. (0 points)	
Score Assigned:	0
<i>Score explanation:</i> The medical school does not have a specific faculty/staff member responsible for overseeing curricular integration of planetary health and sustainable healthcare.	

<b>1.23. Does your health professional curriculum include teaching on civic engagement/advocacy to address the environmental and structural determinants of health?</b>	
This topic was explored <b>in depth</b> by the <b>core</b> curriculum. (3 points)	
This topic was <b>briefly</b> covered in the <b>core</b> curriculum. (2 points)	
This topic was covered in <b>elective</b> coursework. (1 point)	
This topic was <b>not</b> covered. (0 points)	
Score Assigned:	3
<i>Score explanation:</i> The UNMC curriculum contains a Health Systems Sciences coil that is present throughout all 4 years of medical school which aims to incorporate "purposeful learning	

experiences with appropriate assessments in new and emerging competencies (e.g., quality improvement, population health, patient safety, health systems, etc.) required of 21st Century physicians”. ([https://catalog.unmc.edu/medicine/curriculum/.](https://catalog.unmc.edu/medicine/curriculum/)) The HHS coil contains lectures such as “Introduction to Community Engagement” that explore and discuss how to initiate and sustain community partnerships. Civic engagement and advocacy is also addressed in Phase 2 clinical curriculum, as there are learning objectives built into the pediatric and family medicine clerkships that reinforce students’ ability to “advocate for advancing health equity for patients especially those who are often marginalized by developing care plans that assess and address the impact of social determinants of health on diagnosis, treatment, and health outcomes.”

**Section Total (36 out of 75)**

**48.00%**

Back to Summary Page [here](#)

# Interdisciplinary Research

***Section Overview:*** *This section evaluates the quality and quantity of interdisciplinary planetary health research at the broader institution. Interactions between health and the environment are complex and multifactorial. While climate change has been extensively studied from an environmental science perspective, planetary health is an emerging field. As leading health institutions with talented researchers and research resources, institutions should fund research studying the health effects of climate change and anthropogenic environmental toxins. This obligation is particularly strong because the public and policymakers are more attentive to climate change when its implications for human health are emphasised.*

<b>2.1. Are there researchers engaged in planetary health research and healthcare sustainability research at your <u>institution</u>?</b>	
Yes, there are faculty members at the <b>institution</b> who have a <b>primary</b> research focus in planetary health <b>or</b> sustainable healthcare/vetcare. (3 points)	
Yes, there are individual faculty members at the <b>institution</b> who are conducting research <b>related</b> to planetary health or healthcare sustainability, <b>OR</b> are part of a national/international sustainability working group, but it is not their primary research focus. (2 points)	
There are sustainability researchers at the <b>institution</b> , but not specifically associated with healthcare/vetcare. (1 point)	
No, there are <b>no</b> planetary health and/or sustainability researchers at the <b>institution</b> at this time. (0 points)	
Score Assigned:	3
<p><i>Score explanation:</i> The <a href="#">faculty</a> at the <a href="#">Environmental, Agricultural and Occupational Health Department</a> under the College of Public Health at UNMC conduct applied, translational, and basic science research focusing on environmental, agricultural, and occupational health and toxicology. The <a href="#">Water, Climate, and Health Program</a> under the College of Public Health at UNMC serves to address environmental health challenges through interdisciplinary research, education, and collaboration with the Daugherty Water for Food Global Institute at the University of Nebraska and the Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. This program is directed by <a href="#">Dr. Jesse Bell</a>, whose work is focused on understanding the impacts of climate change on natural and human processes. He has held inter-agency positions between the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, was a lead author for a previous U.S. Global Change Research Program report released by the White House, served on the White House Pandemic Prediction and Forecasting Working Group to assist with forecasting dengue fever outbreaks, was a contributing author on the United Nations Water Scarcity in Agriculture Working Group report regarding drought resilience and COVID-19, and is an editor for the annual Lancet Countdown: Tracking Progress on Health and Climate Change. Additionally, he mentors students interested in integrating planetary health into their medical education through the <a href="#">“Climate Change and Health” Enhanced Medical Education Track</a>, a partnership between the UNMC’s College of Medicine and the Water, Climate, and Health program of UNMC’s College of Public Health.</p>	

**2.2. Is there a dedicated department or institute for interdisciplinary planetary health research at your institution?**

There is **at least one** dedicated department or institute for interdisciplinary planetary health research. (3 points)

There is **not currently** a department or institute for interdisciplinary planetary health research, but there are **plans** to open one in the next 3 years. (2 points)

There is an **Occupational and Environmental Health department**, but no interdisciplinary department or institute for planetary health research. (1 point)

There is **no** dedicated department or institute. (0 points)

Score Assigned:

3

*Score explanation:* The [Environmental, Agricultural and Occupational Health Department](#) within the College of Public Health at the UNMC is dedicated to addressing issues related to “agricultural health and safety, climate and health, and emerging infectious disease training for the public health workforce in the Midwest” through multi-disciplinary research and collaborations. The Environmental, Agricultural and Occupational Health Department also houses the [Central States Center for Agricultural Safety and Health](#), [National Emerging Special Pathogen Training and Education Center](#), and the [Water, Climate and Health Program](#).

**2.3. Is there a process by which communities disproportionately impacted by climate change and environmental injustice give input or make decisions about the research agenda at your institution?**

Yes, there is a process in which community members impacted by climate and environmental injustice have **decision-making power** in the climate + environmental research agenda. (3 points)

Yes, there is a process in which community members impacted by climate and environmental injustice **advise** the climate + environmental research agenda. (2 points)

**No**, but there are **current efforts** to establish a process for community members to advise or make decisions on the research agenda. (1 point)

There is **no** process, and **no** efforts to create such a process. (0 points)

Score Assigned:

0

*Score explanation:* There is no process that currently exists or is being developed at UNMC where communities disproportionately impacted by climate change and environmental injustice give input or make decisions about the institutional research agenda.

**2.4. Does your institution have a planetary health website that centralises ongoing and past research related to health and the environment?**

There is an <b>easy-to-use, adequately comprehensive</b> website that <b>centralises</b> various campus resources related to health and the environment including all of the following: upcoming events, leaders in planetary health at your institution, and relevant funding opportunities. (3 points)	
There is a website that <b>attempts to centralise</b> various campus resources related to health and the environment, but it is hard-to-use, not updated, or not adequately comprehensive. (2 points)	
The <b>institution</b> has an <b>Office of Sustainability website</b> that includes <b>some</b> resources related to health and the environment. (1 point)	
There is <b>no</b> website. (0 points)	
Score Assigned:	3
<p><i>Score explanation:</i> UNMC has multiple web pages that centralize various campus resources related to health and environment. For example, the Water, Climate and Health Program housed under UNMC’s College of Public Health has a <a href="#">website</a> that highlights campus leaders in planetary health and the program’s <a href="#">recent publications</a>, <a href="#">currently funded research projects</a>, <a href="#">research funding opportunities</a>, <a href="#">educational and training opportunities</a>, and <a href="#">news and events</a> related to environmental health, including water and air quality, extreme weather and heat, and climate change. Additionally, the <a href="#">Office of Sustainability’s page</a> compiles recent campus sustainability-related updates, <a href="#">metrics</a>, resources, and <a href="#">involvement opportunities</a>.</p>	

<b>2.5. Has your <u>institution</u> recently hosted a conference or symposium on topics related to planetary health?</b>	
Yes, the <b>institution</b> has hosted at least one conference or symposium on topics related to planetary health in the past year. (4 points)	
Yes, the <b>institution</b> has hosted at least one conference or symposium on topics related to sustainable healthcare/vetcare in the past year. (3 points)	
Yes, the <b>institution</b> has hosted a conference on topics related to planetary health / sustainable healthcare/vetcare in the past three years. (2 points)	
The <b>institution</b> has not hosted any conferences directly, but they have provided financial support for a local planetary health event. (1 point)	
No, the <b>institution</b> has not hosted a conference on topics related to planetary health in the past three years. (0 points)	
Score Assigned:	4
<p><i>Score explanation:</i> On October 7, 2025, the <a href="#">Midwestern Symposium on Environmental Determinants of Pediatric Cancer and Congenital Anomalies</a> gathered regional researchers, health care professionals and other stakeholders to collaborate and exchange insight to ultimately advance research on the environmental contributors to pediatric cancer and congenital anomalies. The Midwestern Symposium on Environmental Determinants of Pediatric Cancer and Congenital Anomalies took place on the UNMC campus and was hosted by UNMC’s College of Public Health, the Child Health Research Institute, and the Fred &amp; Pamela Buffett Cancer Center. Additionally, the UNMC Center for Global Health and Development in UNMC’s College of Public Health</p>	

organized its third annual [World Health Day](#) on April 30, 2025, a virtual event highlighting global health diplomacy, environmental health and workforce well-being. UNMC's [World Health Day](#) included a presentation titled "Planetary Health: Health in the Anthropocene." Additionally, in February 2024, UNMC's College of Public Health's Water, Climate and Health Program cohosted the "[Harnessing the Heartland: Utilizing Earth Data for Improved Environmental Health](#)" conference with the Daugherty Water for Food Global Institute, the University of Nebraska-Lincoln School of Natural Resources, and NASA, where climate and health experts throughout the Midwest collaborated to address regional climate-related public health challenges.

**2.6. Is your institution a member of a national or international planetary health or ESH/ESV organisation?**

Yes, the institution is a member of a national or international planetary health **or** ESH/ESV organisation. (1 point)

No, the institution is **not** a member of such an organisation. (0 points)

Score Assigned:

1

*Score explanation:* UNMC's College of Medicine and College of Public Health are [Global Consortium on Climate and Health Education member institutions](#).

**Section Total (14 out of 17)**

**82.35%**

Back to Summary Page [here](#)

## Community Outreach and Advocacy

***Section Overview:*** This section evaluates a school's engagement in community outreach and advocacy efforts associated with planetary health. Researching and teaching planetary health is necessary but not sufficient. It is critical that institutions also directly engage with communities most affected by environmental health harms. Although climate change is a problem largely created by those with power and resources, its impacts fall disproportionately on under-resourced populations and communities of colour. Institutions should partner with local communities affected by climate change and pollution to share information about environmental health threats, advocate together for change, and provide opportunities for students to be a part of this work.

<b>3.1. Does your <u>institution</u> partner with community organisations to promote planetary and health?</b>	
Yes, the <b>institution</b> meaningfully partners with <b>multiple</b> community organisations to promote planetary and environmental health. (3 points)	
Yes, the <b>institution</b> meaningfully partners with <b>one</b> community organisation to promote planetary and environmental health. (2 points)	
The <b>institution</b> does not partner with community organisations, but participates in community focused events relating to planetary health. (1 point)	
No, there is <b>no</b> such meaningful community partnership. (0 points)	
Score Assigned:	3
<p><i>Score explanation:</i> UNMC collaborates with the Community Bike Project of Omaha through an annual recycling initiative that collects and refurbishes unused bicycles (in addition to electronic waste and paper shredding) for redistribution within the community, supporting waste reduction and sustainable transportation. Through the TravelSmart program, the institution partners with the Omaha Metro to provide free public transit access and promote walking and bicycling commutes, reducing air pollution while encouraging healthy lifestyles. The institution also works with the Nebraska Environmental Trust to restore native prairie ecosystems on campus property, enhancing biodiversity and climate resilience. Additional partnerships with Keep Omaha Beautiful, the Blue Bucket Project–Omaha, and the Nebraska Association of Resources Districts support litter cleanups and tree planting initiatives.</p>	

<b>3.2. Does your <u>institution</u> offer community-facing courses or events regarding planetary health?</b>	
The <b>institution</b> offers community-facing courses or events at least once every year. (3 points)	
The <b>institution</b> offers courses or events open to the community at least once per year, but they are not primarily created for a community audience. (2 points)	

The <b>institution</b> has promoted community-facing courses or events, but was not involved in planning those courses or events. (1 point)	
The <b>institution</b> has not offered such community-facing courses or events. (0 points)	
Score Assigned:	3
<p><i>Score explanation:</i> The Department of Psychiatry hosts Grand Rounds such as Shrinkwrapped: How Plastics Harm Brain Health, an event explicitly focused on the mental health impacts of plastics pollution across the full plastics life cycle. The learning objectives emphasize public health relevance, including recognition of fossil fuel derived plastics as neuropsychiatric hazards, understanding environmental pollution as a driver of mental health outcomes, and identifying plastics reduction as a preventive public mental health strategy. Participants are also encouraged to select concrete actions to reduce plastics pollution, reinforcing practical, community applicable outcomes.</p> <p>In addition, the UNMC College of Public Health serves as a co-host of the Water, Climate, and Health Program, which has sponsored and hosted poster sessions highlighting work on water quality, climate change, and health impacts in Nebraska. While academically grounded, these events are open to community members and provide accessible opportunities for public engagement with planetary health topics that directly affect local populations.</p>	

<b>3.3. Does your <u>institution</u> have regular coverage of issues related to planetary health and/or sustainable healthcare in university update communications?</b>	
Yes, all students <b>regularly</b> receive communication updates dedicated to planetary health and/or sustainable healthcare. (2 points)	
Yes, planetary health and/or sustainable healthcare topics are regularly included in communication updates to <b>some courses</b> . (1 point)	
Students <b>do not</b> receive communications about planetary health or sustainable healthcare. (0 points)	
Score Assigned:	1
<p><i>Score explanation:</i> Planetary health and sustainable healthcare issues are often mentioned and focused upon within articles in the daily newsletter (UNMC Today) and the weekly digest (UNMC Vitals). However, there is no dedicated planetary health related communication source.</p>	

<b>3.4. Does the <u>institution</u> or <u>main affiliated hospital trust</u> engage in professional education activities targeting individuals post-graduation with the aim of ensuring their knowledge and skills in planetary health and sustainable healthcare remain up to date during their professional career?</b>	
Yes, the <b>institution</b> or <b>main affiliated hospital trust</b> offers multiple in-person or online courses relating to planetary health and/or sustainable healthcare for post-graduate providers, including at least one with a primary focus of planetary health. (2 points)	

Yes, the <b>institution</b> or <b>main affiliated hospital trust</b> offers one course relating to planetary health and/or sustainable healthcare for post-graduate providers. (1 point)	
There are <b>no</b> such accessible courses for post-graduate providers. (0 points)	
Score Assigned:	2
<p><i>Score explanation:</i> The UNMC Center for Continuing Education offers a <a href="#">recurring course</a> on agricultural health and safety for medical and safety professionals that examines environmental and occupational health risks affecting rural and agricultural communities. The course addresses topics such as environmentally mediated respiratory diseases, pesticide related health effects, migrant and immigrant worker health, and broader environmental hazards in agriculture, and is accessible in person, via live stream, or online to support continued professional learning.</p> <p>In addition, post graduate providers have the opportunity to serve as <a href="#">LiveGreen Ambassadors</a> through the Nebraska Medicine sustainability program. Ambassadors participate in ongoing training and workshops designed to integrate sustainability into clinical and departmental practice, remain informed about institutional sustainability initiatives, and disseminate relevant planetary health information to colleagues. The institution also supports continued learning through online education, including a <a href="#">self paced e module</a> offered by the UNMC Office of Interactive E-learning that introduces climate change and its impacts on human health and communities. Together, these offerings demonstrate a structured commitment to continuing professional education in planetary health and sustainable healthcare.</p>	

<b>3.5. Does your <u>institution</u> or its <u>affiliated teaching hospitals</u> have accessible educational materials for patients about environmental health exposures?</b>	
Yes, the <b>institution</b> or <b>all affiliated hospitals</b> have accessible educational materials for patients. (2 points)	
<b>Some</b> affiliated hospitals have accessible educational materials for patients. (1 point)	
<b>No</b> affiliated medical centres have accessible educational materials for patients. (0 points)	
Score Assigned:	2
<p><i>Score explanation:</i> The UNMC College of Public Health hosts publicly available resources through its Water, Climate, and Health program that address environmental exposures affecting community health, including educational materials on nitrite contamination of drinking water and associated health risks.</p> <p>In addition, patient facing educational materials are available through the <a href="#">Advancing Health</a> website, supported by Nebraska Medicine. These materials provide clear, accessible information on a range of environmental health exposures, including toxic metals such as lead, air quality and lung health, heat related illness, and other environmentally mediated health risks.</p>	

<b>3.6. Does your <u>institution</u> or its <u>affiliated teaching hospitals</u> have accessible educational materials for patients about the health impacts of climate change?</b>
---

Yes, the <b>institution</b> or <b>all affiliated hospitals</b> have accessible educational materials for patients. (2 points)	
Some affiliated hospitals have accessible educational materials for patients. (1 point)	
No affiliated hospitals have accessible educational materials for patients. (0 points)	
Score Assigned:	2
<p><i>Score explanation:</i> Educational resources are made publicly available through the <a href="#">Advancing Health</a> website, a patient facing health education platform supported by the Nebraska Medicine health system. These materials address climate related health risks using clear, accessible language, including how excessive heat affects the body, recognition and prevention of heat stroke, preparation for cold weather power outages, and the effects of weather variability on conditions such as headaches.</p>	

<b>Section Total (13 out of 14)</b>	<b>92.86%</b>
-------------------------------------	---------------

Back to Summary Page [here](#)

# Support for Student-Led Planetary Health Initiatives

**Section Overview:** This section evaluates institutional support for student-led planetary health initiatives, such as funding, fellowships, programming, and student groups. Planetary health is a young field and, as young people facing a future deeply shaped by climate change, students are often some of the first at an institution to engage with it. Institutions should provide support for students to engage in sustainability quality improvement (QI) initiatives, discover mentors in their area of interest, and receive funding for planetary health projects.

4.1. Does your <b>institution</b> offer support for students interested in enacting a sustainability initiative/QI project?	
Yes, the <b>institution</b> <i>either</i> offers grants for students to enact sustainability initiatives/QI projects <i>or</i> sustainability QI projects are part of the core curriculum. (2 points)	
The <b>institution</b> encourages sustainability QI projects (to fulfil clerkship or longitudinal requirements) and offers resources to help students succeed in these projects, <b>but</b> there is no student funding available and there is no requirement to participate. (1 point)	
No, the institution does not offer opportunities or support for sustainability initiatives or QI projects. (0 points)	
Score Assigned:	2
<p><i>Score explanation:</i> <a href="#">UNMC's Healthy Earth Alliance</a> student organization has received funding through UNMC's <a href="#">Benefitting Organizations through Student Senate</a> funds and support from the Office of Sustainability to fulfill sustainability initiatives and events, such as <a href="#">zero waste events</a>, Earth Week activities, and campus/neighborhood walking path clean ups.</p>	

4.2. Does your <b>institution</b> offer opportunities for students to do research related to planetary health and/or sustainable healthcare/vetcare?	
The <b>institution</b> has a <b>specific</b> research program or fellowship for students interested in doing planetary health/sustainable healthcare/vetcare research. (2 points)	
There are research opportunities for students to perform research related to planetary health/sustainable healthcare, but these <b>require student initiative</b> to seek them out and carry them out in their spare time. (1 point)	
There are <b>no opportunities</b> for students to engage in planetary health/sustainable healthcare research. (0 points)	
Score Assigned:	2
<p><i>Score explanation:</i> The <a href="#">Claire M. Hubbard Water, Climate and Health Fellowship</a> through UNMC's College of Public Health is available for students researching topics that link water, climate and health. Additionally, UNMC's College of Public Health's Environmental, Agricultural and Occupational Health Department offers multiple <a href="#">academic programs</a> in which students can conduct planetary health research such as a Master of Public Health with an Environmental and</p>	

Occupational Health concentration and a PhD in Environmental Health, Occupational Health and Toxicology. Furthermore, UNMC's College of Medicine offers a [“Climate Change and Health” Enhanced Medical Education Track](#) which provides medical students a longitudinal opportunity to engage in interdisciplinary planetary health research.

**4.3. Does the institution have a webpage where students can find specific information related to planetary health and/or sustainable healthcare/vetcare activities and mentors within the institution? For example, projects achieved, current initiatives underway at the medical school and/or contact of information of potential mentors.**

The institution has a webpage with specific information related to planetary health or sustainable healthcare/vetcare that includes up-to-date information on relevant initiatives and contact information of potential mentors. (2 points)

There is an institution webpage that features some information on projects and mentors within planetary health and sustainable healthcare within the institution, but it lacks key information. (1 point)

There is **no institution** specific webpage for locating planetary health and/or sustainable healthcare projects or mentors. (0 points)

Score Assigned:	2
-----------------	---

*Score explanation:* UNMC's College of Public Health's Water, Climate and Health Program's [website](#) includes details about institutional planetary health [news and events](#), [publications and ongoing research](#), and [specific educational programs and opportunities](#) with links to contact potential mentors.

**4.4. Does your institution have registered student groups dedicated towards fostering a culture of planetary health engagement, scholarship, and advocacy on campus, supported by faculty advisors?**

Yes, there is a student organisation **with faculty support** at my institution dedicated to planetary health or sustainability in healthcare. (2 points)

Yes, there is a student organisation at my institution dedicated to planetary health or sustainability in healthcare but it **lacks faculty support**. (1 point)

No, there is **not** a student organisation at my institution dedicated to planetary health or sustainability in healthcare. (0 points)

Score Assigned:	2
-----------------	---

*Score explanation:* [UNMC's Healthy Earth Alliance \(HEAL\)](#) is an interdisciplinary registered student organization with a faculty sponsor dedicated to promoting planetary health and sustainability on campus. HEAL works closely with the UNMC's Office of Sustainability, UNMC's Student Senate Sustainability Liaison, and students in the “Climate Change and Health” Enhanced Medical Education Track and is affiliated with Medical Students for a Sustainable Future.

<b>4.5. Is there a student liaison representing sustainability interests who serves on a <u>department or institutional</u> decision-making council to advocate for curriculum reform and/or sustainability best practices?</b>	
Yes, there is a student representative who serves on a department or institutional decision-making council/committee. (1 point)	
No, there is no such student representative. (0 points)	
Score Assigned:	1
<i>Score explanation:</i> <a href="#">UNMC's Student Senate</a> is the student-led governing body of the institution, where a student annually holds the Sustainability Liaison position and works with the Office of Sustainability to represent student planetary health interests.	

<b>4.6. In the past year, has the <u>institution</u> had one or more co-curricular planetary health programs or initiatives in the following categories? (1 point each)</b>	<b>Score</b>
Projects where students are able to gain experience in organic agriculture and sustainable food systems, such as gardens, farms, community supported agriculture (CSA), fishery programs, or urban agriculture projects.	1
Panels, speaker series, or similar events related to planetary health that have students as an intended audience.	1
Events in which students learn directly from members of a local environmental justice community about the climate and environmental challenges they face, and how health professionals can partner with their community to address these exposures and impacts.	1
Cultural arts events, installations or performances related to planetary health that have students as an intended audience.	0
Local volunteer opportunities related to building community resilience to anthropogenic environmental impacts.	1
Wilderness or outdoors programs (e.g., that organise hiking, backpacking, kayaking, or other outings for students)	1
<i>Score explanation:</i> UNMC has a <a href="#">community garden</a> that has grown significantly since its establishment in 2023 and allows students to volunteer, with fresh produce directly donated to local community groups, such as the Ronald McDonald House and Kountzee Commons Community Outreach Center. The Healthy Earth Alliance (HEAL) student organization partners with local organizations, such as <a href="#">Keep Omaha Beautiful</a> , and hosts a variety of volunteer opportunities and speaker events for students. HEAL speaker events in the last year include an overview of campus sustainability initiatives, building sustainability culture across the graduate student community, importance of urban canopies, and presentations by UNMC College of Public Health's Environment, Agriculture, and Occupational Health department faculty candidate presentations regarding planetary health. HEAL volunteer events in the last year include storm drain clean up and	

markings, assisting with waste diversion at other student organizations' events to make them [zero waste events](#), trail clean ups, and local tree planting events. Additionally, UNMC's Psychiatry department also hosted Dr. Elizabeth Rynzar to present "Shrinkwrapped: How Plastics Harm Brain Health" during Psychiatry Grand Rounds in October 2025. [UNMC's Student Alliance for Global Health](#) group also hosts a monthly volunteer opportunity at Clair Memorial United Methodist Church in which students help harvest and maintain a community garden whose produce is used at the church's drive-thru foodbank. Wilderness and outdoor programming available at UNMC include the [Wilderness Medicine Interest Group](#), where students learn how to manage medical emergencies in the wilderness, and the [Climb. Relax. Adventure. Gather \(CRAG\) club](#), where students can gather for rock climbing and local hikes.

**Section Total (14 out of 15)**

**93.33%**

Back to Summary Page [here](#)

# Campus Sustainability

**Section Overview:** This section evaluates the support and engagement in sustainability initiatives by the institution. The healthcare industry is a major contributor to greenhouse gas emissions as well as pollution that harms local, regional, and global ecosystems. While healthcare is, by nature, a resource-intensive endeavour, the healthcare sector is well poised to lead the world to a more sustainable future. This will involve scrutinising every aspect of how our systems operate, from where we source our energy, to how we build our infrastructure, to what companies we invest in. Our institutions, clinics, and hospitals must set the standard for sustainable practices, and show other sectors what is possible when it comes to minimising environmental impact.

5.1. Does your <u>institution</u> have an Office of Sustainability?	
Yes, there is an Office of Sustainability with multiple full-time staff dedicated to campus sustainability. If the Office of Sustainability serves the entire campus, there is <b>at least one designated staff member</b> for sustainability at the hospital. (3 points)	
There is an Office of Sustainability with one or more full-time staff dedicated to campus sustainability, but <b>no specific staff member</b> in charge of hospital sustainability. (2 points)	
There are <b>no salaried sustainability staff</b> , but there is a sustainability task force or committee. (1 point)	
There are <b>no staff members or task force</b> responsible for overseeing campus sustainability. (0 points)	
Score Assigned:	3
<p><i>Score explanation:</i> UNMC maintains a well-established Office of Campus Sustainability. As UNMC is exclusively health focused and not associated with an undergraduate campus, sustainability efforts are led by at least one full-time staff member and supported by an executive sustainability council.</p>	

5.2. How ambitious is your <u>institution's</u> plan to reduce its own carbon footprint?	
The institution has a <b>written and approved plan</b> to achieve carbon neutrality by <b>2030</b> (5 points)	
The institution has a <b>written and approved plan</b> to achieve carbon neutrality by <b>2040</b> (3 points)	
The institution has a stated goal of carbon neutrality by <b>2040</b> but has <b>not created a plan</b> to reach that goal or the <b>plan is inadequate</b> (1 point)	
The institution does <b>not</b> meet any of the requirements listed above (0 points)	
Score Assigned:	5
<p><i>Score explanation:</i> UNMC demonstrates strong institutional commitment through its goal of net-zero building emissions by 2030. The university maintains defined sustainability metrics that</p>	

document achievements to date and outline planned initiatives. Progress is transparently tracked and publicly available through a dashboard with quarterly updates, accessible [here](#).

**5.3. Do buildings/infrastructure used by the institution for teaching (not including the hospital) utilize renewable energy?**

Yes, institution buildings are **100%** powered by renewable energy. (3 points)

Institution buildings source **>80%** of energy needs from off-site and/or on-site renewable energy. (2 points)

Institution buildings source **>20%** of energy needs from off-site and/or on-site renewable energy. (1 point)

Institution buildings source **<20%** of energy needs from off-site and/or on-site renewable energy. (0 points)

Score Assigned:

1

*Score explanation:* UNMC installed 1,487 solar panels in January 2019, which can generate 500 kW of power. This is the largest rooftop solar installation in Nebraska and produces approximately 0.2% of the institution’s electricity. The remaining electricity requirements are purchased through Omaha Public Power District, whose [energy portfolio](#) is roughly 30% derived from wind/solar power.

**5.4. Are sustainable building practices utilised for new and old buildings on the institution’s campus, with design and construction of new buildings and remodelling of old buildings conforming to a published sustainability rating system or building code/guideline?**

Yes, sustainable building practices are utilised for new buildings on the institution’s campus and the **majority** of old buildings **have been retrofitted** to be more sustainable. (3 points)

Sustainable building practices are utilised for new buildings on the institution’s campus, but most old buildings have **not been retrofitted**. (2 points)

Sustainable building practices are **inadequately or incompletely** implemented for new buildings. (1 point)

Sustainability is **not considered** in the construction of new buildings. (0 points)

Score Assigned:

3

*Score explanation:* UNMC employs sustainable building practices for both new and existing facilities through its published [Design Standards](#), which guide architects, engineers, planners, and external partners in all construction work. Major projects over \$5M must meet the sustainability criteria outlined in Division 01.81.13, addressing topics such as low-carbon material selection, construction waste diversion, energy modeling, water efficiency, solar readiness, and indoor

environmental quality. These standards ensure that new buildings and significant renovations follow a structured, measurable framework aligned with best-practice green building principles.

In addition to forward-looking construction guidelines, the institution continues to upgrade existing buildings to improve energy and emissions performance. The current pace of upgrade initiatives varies on the building, but campus-wide initiatives include LED lighting retrofits, enhanced envelope sealing and insulation, installation of high-efficiency elevator systems, and operational tuning of building energy use based on occupancy.

**5.5. Has the institution implemented strategies to encourage and provide environmentally-friendly transportation options for students and reduce the environmental impact of commuting?**

Yes, the institution has implemented strategies to encourage and provide **environmentally-friendly transportation options** such as safe active transport, public transport, or carpooling and these options are well-utilised by students. Alternatively, the campus location is not amenable to unsustainable forms of transportation by default. (2 points)

The institution has implemented **some** strategies to provide environmentally-friendly transportation options, but the options are **unsatisfactorily** accessible or advertised. (1 point)

The institution has **not** implemented strategies to encourage and provide environmentally-friendly transportation options. (0 points)

Score Assigned:

2

*Score explanation:* UNMC actively supports environmentally-friendly transportation, with [38%](#) of students, faculty, and staff walking, biking, carpooling, taking transit, or working remotely. The [TravelSmart program](#) incentivizes sustainable transportation by offering free bus access, indoor bike parking, lockers and showers, free carpool passes, and flexible low-cost parking for occasional drivers, and is promoted through student orientation and annual campus events. Additional strategies include EV charging stations (four total stalls), collaboration with Omaha’s Rapid Bus Transit (ORBT) system for high-frequency service to campus, and prior availability of Heartland Bike Share passes for students.

**5.6. Does your institution have an organics recycling program (compost) and a conventional recycling program (aluminium/paper/plastic/glass)?**

Yes, the institution has **both** compost **and** recycling programs accessible to students and faculty. (2 points)

The institution has **either** recycling **or** compost programs accessible to students and faculty, but not both. (1 point)

There is **no** compost or recycling program at the institution. (0 points)

Score Assigned:

2

*Score explanation:* The institution has a long history of recycling that dates back to the 1990's. The med center operates a [recycling program](#) accessible to students and faculty that targets the following streams: all mixed paper, rigid plastics, metals, cardboard. There are programs for recycling of many non-conventional materials including aerosol cans, alkaline batteries, lab coats, toner cartridges, pens, mechanical pencils, dry-erase markers, and sharpies as explained [here](#). UNMC piloted a composting program in several buildings across campus in Spring of 2023 including the main building for medical student education, the Michael F. Sorrell Center for Health Science Education. However, it was cost prohibitive to move forward with further implementation for the rest of the university/hospital. If participating in a zero waste event, the toolkit provides a compost bag that can be dropped off at a campus site to be composted by [local organisations](#). The med center is a drop-off location for members of the "[Compost Club](#)," where individuals pay for the ability to commercially compost their waste. Discounts are provided to certain populations including students.

**5.7. Does the institution apply sustainability criteria when making decisions about the campus food and beverage selections (e.g. local sourcing, reduced meat, decreased plastic packaging)?**

Yes, the institution has **adequate** sustainability requirements for food and beverages, including meat-free days or no red-meat, and **is engaged** in efforts to increase food and beverage sustainability. (3 points)

There are sustainability guidelines for food and beverages, but they are **insufficient or optional**. The institution **is engaged** in efforts to increase food and beverage sustainability. (2 points)

There are sustainability guidelines for food and beverages, but they are **insufficient or optional**. The institution is **not** engaged in efforts to increase food and beverage sustainability. (1 point)

There are **no** sustainability guidelines for food and beverages. (0 points)

Score Assigned:

2

*Score explanation:* In 2016, UNMC passed a [ban on styrofoam use](#) for campus food and beverage resulting in compostable to-go containers replacing styrofoam clamshells in the cafeteria and paper coffee cups replacing styrofoam cups at departmental seminars. Additionally, some departments encourage people to bring their own coffee cups to seminars. However, a few onsite food vendors and departments do not follow this sustainability requirement and still serve coffee in styrofoam cups at department seminars. Plant-based food options through onsite vendors and at the cafeteria are limited, but "Meatless Mondays" at Nebraska Cafe's Mindful Station offers a plant-based menu. A "[MeatOut](#)" day has been held to showcase plant-based diets and their benefits in reducing risks of health problems and protecting the environment. Participation in these initiatives is optional.

**5.8. Does the institution apply sustainability criteria when making decisions about supply procurement?**

Yes, the institution has **adequate** sustainability requirements for supply procurement **and is engaged** in efforts to increase sustainability of procurement. (3 points)

There are sustainability guidelines for supply procurement, but they are <b>insufficient or optional</b> . The institution is <b>engaged</b> in efforts to increase sustainability of procurement. (2 points)	
There are sustainability guidelines for supply procurement, but they are <b>insufficient or optional</b> . The institution is <b>not engaged</b> in efforts to increase sustainability of procurement. (1 point)	
There are <b>no</b> sustainability guidelines for supply procurement. (0 points)	
Score Assigned:	3
<p><i>Score explanation:</i> <a href="#">Target 4</a> of the University of Nebraska System sustainability goals is to reinforce a culture of sustainable procurement. One pillar of the UNMC green labs program is procurement and purchasing as explained <a href="#">here</a>. A recent <a href="#">scorecard</a> deemed UNMC’s purchasing excellent in comparison to other campuses in that a strong percent of the budget was spent on environmentally preferred products. The recent progress includes completion of a Scope 3 inventory for the institution for fiscal year 24 with the intention of leveraging this information to drive sustainable procurement decisions going forward.</p>	

<b>5.9. Are there sustainability requirements or guidelines for events hosted at the institution?</b>	
Every event hosted at the institution <b>must</b> abide by sustainability criteria. (2 points)	
The institution <b>strongly recommends or incentivizes</b> sustainability measures, but they are <b>not required</b> . (1 point)	
There are <b>no</b> sustainability guidelines for institution events. (0 points)	
Score Assigned:	1
<p><i>Score explanation:</i> UNMC hosts a campus wide BBQ event each year and there is significant effort to make this , and other campus events, zero-waste. There is a <a href="#">toolkit</a> available on UNMC’s sustainability website to create a zero-waste event if other departments are inclined to do so, but it’s not supported or mandated by policy. The only required sustainability measure of campus events is for them to be styrofoam free, based on a <a href="#">2016 campus resolution</a>.</p>	

<b>5.10. Does your <u>institution</u> have programs and initiatives to assist with making lab spaces more environmentally sustainable?</b>	
Yes, the institution has <b>programs</b> and <b>initiatives</b> to assist with making lab spaces more environmentally sustainable. (2 points)	
There are <b>guidelines</b> on how to make lab spaces more environmentally sustainable, but not programs or initiatives. (1 point)	
There are <b>no</b> efforts at the institution to make lab spaces more sustainable. (0 points)	
Score Assigned:	2

*Score explanation:* At UNMC, there is a [Green Labs program](#) to provide a common-sense and obtainable approach for laboratory and research spaces to achieve excellence in innovation and safety by driving meaningful reductions in energy, water, and waste, and promoting responsible lab purchasing.

**5.11. Does your institution's endowment portfolio investments include fossil-fuel companies?**

The institution is **entirely divested** from fossil fuels **and** has made a **commitment to reinvest divested funds** into renewable energy companies or renewable energy campus initiatives. (4 points)

The institution is **entirely divested** from fossil fuels. (3 points)

The institution has **partially divested** from fossil fuel companies **or** has made a **commitment to fully divest**, but **currently** still has fossil fuel investments. (2 points)

The institution has **not divested** from fossil-fuel companies, but faculty and/or students are **conducting organised advocacy** for divestment. (1 point)

Yes, the institution has investments with fossil-fuel companies and there have been **no efforts** to change that. (0 points)

Score Assigned:

3

*Score explanation:* University of Nebraska has [no direct investments](#) in fossil fuel companies. After a campaign led by students, the University of Nebraska divested its endowment from the fossil fuel industry.

**Section Total (27 out of 32)**

**84.38%**

Back to Summary Page [here](#)

# Grading

## Section Overview

This section focuses on the grading of the report card. The institution received a grade for each of the individual sections as well as an overall institutional grade. Section point totals were tallied, divided by the total points available for the section, and converted to a percentage. The overall institutional grade is a weighted average of the section grades, with curriculum receiving a higher weight owing to its larger number of metrics. Letter grades for each section and the institution overall were then assigned according to the table below.

Letter Grade*	Percentage
A	80% - 100%
B	60% - 79%
C	40% - 59%
D	20% - 39%
F	0% - 19%

*\*Within each grade bracket, a score in the top 5% ( \_5 to \_9%), receives a “+”, and a score in the bottom 5% ( \_0- \_4%) receives a “--”. For example, a percentage score of 78% would be a B+.*

## Planetary Health Grades for the University of Nebraska Medical Center School of Medicine.

The following table presents the individual section grades and overall institutional grade for the University of Nebraska School of Medicine on this Planetary Health Report Card.

Section	Raw Score %	Letter Grade
<b>Planetary Health Curriculum (30%)</b>	$(36/75) \times 100 = 48.00\%$	C
<b>Interdisciplinary Research (17.5%)</b>	$(14/17) \times 100 = 82.35\%$	A-
<b>Community Outreach and Advocacy (17.5%)</b>	$(13/14) \times 100 = 92.86\%$	A
<b>Support for Student-led Planetary Health Initiatives (17.5%)</b>	$(14/15) \times 100 = 93.33\%$	A
<b>Campus Sustainability (17.5%)</b>	$(27/32) \times 100 = 84.38\%$	A-
<b>Institutional Grade</b>	$(48.00 \times 0.3 + 82.35 \times 0.175 + 92.86 \times 0.175 + 93.33 \times 0.175 + 84.38 \times 0.175) = 76.16\%$	<b>B+</b>

# Report Card Trends

## Section Overview

This graph demonstrates trends in overall and section grades for the years in which the University of Nebraska Medical Center College of Medicine has participated in the Planetary Health Report Card initiative.

