

KEARNEY — The University of Nebraska at Kearney is ranked as a Top 10 Public Regional University in the Midwest by U.S. News & World Report.

The top-10 ranking is a first for the campus, which is welcoming back students today.

With its rank of ninth, UNK is the only Nebraska university on the Top 10 list in the magazine's annual Best Colleges edition. UNK was ranked the No. 15 public university in the same category for the past two years.

UNK also moved up from number 62 to 43 in the full list of 107 Best Regional Public and Private Universities in the Midwest, a category defined last year as best master's-level universities.

In addition to Nebraska schools, the list of 107 schools includes universities in Ohio, Michigan, Indiana, Illinois, Wisconsin, Missouri, Iowa, Minnesota, Kansas, North Dakota and South Dakota.

"There is only one way to describe UNK these days," said Chancellor Doug Kristensen. "We're making progress on all fronts. But it is especially gratifying that our academic indicators — as reported consistently by U.S. News & World Report — are also steadily improving."

Kristensen said he is proud that UNK's retention and graduation rate scores are among the very best among peer institutions.

"It helps confirm that we are doing a lot of things right to ensure a quality educational experience for our students," he said.

The overall ranking score is a composite of scores in several specific categories. UNK measures equal to or better than the average of its board of regents-defined peer group in 10 of these 11 scores, an improvement from eight scores above average on last year's chart.

UNK's improvement in the U.S. News & World Report rankings will help boost the university among parents and prospective students, said Senior Vice Chancellor for Academic and Student Affairs Charles Bicak.

"While some may disagree with the criteria for ranking, the reality is that the indicators are telling. Students and their parents pay attention to the rankings and have come to rely on them at least in beginning the search for a college or university," Bicak said,

"Although not perfect," Bicak continued, "U.S. News has become an important and popular barometer for university quality in this country, and we at UNK are very pleased to be moving steadily up the line. To be in the top 10 among a prestigious group of peers is certainly a tribute to all our faculty, staff and students."