



UNIVERSITY RELATIONS
News Services

300 PCO, Suite 370
Iowa City, Iowa 52242-2500
319-384-0023
Fax 319-384-0024

University of Iowa News Release

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UI breaks ground on Campus Recreation & Wellness Center

The University of Iowa broke ground today (Friday, Oct. 19) for construction of a 215,000-square-foot Campus Recreation & Wellness Center on the main UI campus.

The project is expected to cost an estimated \$69 million and should be completed in late fall 2009. The facility will be located at the southwest corner of Burlington and Madison streets in Iowa City. It was designed by RDG Planning & Design of Des Moines.

Upon completion, the center will serve as the home of Recreational Services, the men's and women's swimming and diving teams, Health Iowa and UI Wellness. Highlights of this student-centered facility will be a 54-foot climbing tower, 50-meter competitive swimming pool with separate diving well, a leisure swimming pool, 20,000 square feet of fitness space, three multi-purpose gymnasium courts, a one-ninth mile jogging track and a 9,000-square-foot wellness center.

"Our recreational facilities are significant to the mission of the University of Iowa," said UI President Sally Mason. "Our primary mission is the development of the mind, but we also must be dedicated to the total well-being of our students. Physical fitness and recreation play a crucial role in keeping our minds, bodies, spirits -- and our entire community -- healthy."

The center was planned in response to a student survey that defined the need for better recreational facilities on campus. An analysis conducted by the facility planning firm Brailsford and Dunlavey in 2004 showed that "70 percent of student respondents expressed that it was 'very important/important' for the university to improve recreation facilities."

"The facility will be a welcome benefit to UI students. Not only will the location be better suited to students living on either side of the river, but the fitness and aquatic areas will be a big improvement over the current offerings, said Phillip E. Jones, vice president of student services and dean of students at the UI.

The 20,000 square feet of fitness space will greatly reduce waiting time for exercise equipment. The separate leisure swimming pool will ensure that there will be more open swim time. A major goal of this facility was to offer additional late-night activities. The features in the leisure swimming pool and the 54-foot climbing tower are sure to be well received during these special events.

While the center was designed as a student recreation facility, it offers much more than recreation. The competitive swimming and diving pool will serve as the new home of the men's and women's varsity athletic swimming and diving teams.

The current Field House pool was built in 1927 and no longer meets USA Swimming and Diving regulations, which are required when hosting regional and national swim meets. The new facility will allow for 25-yard, 25-meter and 50-meter competitions. In addition, the separate diving tank will have two 1- and 3-meter boards and 1-, 3-, 5-, 7.5-, and 10-meter platforms. The state-of-the-art facility will also include enough off-deck spectator seating to host nearly any major swimming competition including Big Ten and NCAA events.

"The impact of the new center will be measured far beyond the Iowa campus and will change the culture of recreational and competitive swimming and diving throughout the state and Midwest," said Marc Long, UI men's and women's head swimming coach. "This project has tremendous, positive implications and will allow us to train and attract elite students and athletes to the University of Iowa."

Campus wellness programs -- including those of UI Wellness, Health Iowa and Recreational Services -- will also be housed in the new building. The wellness center was designed to facilitate collaboration between Recreational Services wellness programs as well as the student and faculty/staff wellness departments.

"Our collaborative efforts in programming will strengthen the university's commitment to a healthy campus culture and expand the scope of services available to all members of our university community," said Joni Troester, director of UI Wellness.

The construction of the Campus Recreation & Wellness Center follows a national trend of updating and constructing recreation facilities on college campuses. The University of Illinois just completed the expansion of its Campus Recreation Center-East and is in the midst of renovating its Intramural Physical Education building. And Ohio State University completed its 569,459-square-foot, comprehensive recreation facility in early 2007.

"Updating our recreation offerings will allow us to better compete with other Big Ten institutions when recruiting and retaining students," said Harry Ostrander, director of Recreational Services.

STORY SOURCE: University News Services, 300 Plaza Centre One, Suite 370, Iowa City, Iowa, 52242

MEDIA CONTACTS: Harry Ostrander, Recreational Services 319-335-9293, harry-ostrander@uiowa.edu; Wayne Fett, Recreational Services, 319-335-9293, wayne-fett@uiowa.edu; George McCrory, University News Services, 319-384-0012, george-mccrory@uiowa.edu

PHOTOS: For a high-resolution image of the center see: http://news-releases.uiowa.edu/2007/october/images/101607rec_center_exterior-hirez.jpg

OTHER INFORMATION: Fact sheet:
<http://www.recserv.uiowa.edu/geninfo/construction/eastcampus.htm>