

Wednesday, March 14, 2012

UE Announces New Facilities Master Plan

The University of Evansville today announced the completion of a campus facilities master plan, which will guide the University's building projects and renovations over the next decade.

The plan was reviewed by the Board of Trustees at its February meeting, and announced by President Thomas A. Kazez at an 11:30 news conference.

"Our strategic plan, adopted in February 2011, called for a comprehensive update of the facilities master plan — determining how to address our existing needs and identifying new facilities that will be essential to our growth as an institution," said Kazez. "After seeking input from various campus constituencies, we're very excited to announce the new plan, and we look forward to the ways it will transform the campus environment in coming years."

The plan was developed through an assessment of needs, led by architects with Hafer Associates and Mackey Mitchell Associates, which included interviews and focus group sessions for UE students, faculty members, staff and administrators, and alumni. The most crucial needs that emerged were improved academic buildings; student housing; fitness, recreational, and athletics facilities; and campus environs and streetscapes.

Several academic buildings were identified as opportunities for substantial interior redesign. Such enhancements will create more flexible and interactive learning environments and support an innovative faculty and curriculum. Student housing would be addressed through targeted replacements of existing residences and potential construction of new residence facilities, and significant attention will be given to the broader campus environment, including the major streets surrounding and traversing the campus.

The first phase of the plan's implementation will be a men's and women's basketball practice facility, the Fifth Third Bank Basketball Practice Facility, on the west side of the Carson Center. The \$3.3 million project will be entirely funded through donations, 80 percent of which has already been raised.

In addition to gymnasiums for the men's and women's teams, the practice facility will include players' lounges and offices for basketball coaching staff. It is the first capital improvement for basketball since the construction of the Carson Center in 1962, and is the first capital improvement to campus athletic facilities since the Charles H. Braun Stadium (baseball) and James and Dorothy Cooper Stadium (softball) opened in 2002.

"The need for a practice facility became evident after the men's and women's basketball programs moved to the Ford Center," said John Stanley, UE director of athletics. "With fewer opportunities to practice on their home court, the teams needed more time in Carson Center facilities, which were already being utilized by other athletics teams. The resulting scheduling challenges showed us that we simply need more space to accommodate the full range of our athletics, fitness, and recreational activities."

“While the Fifth Third Bank Basketball Practice Facility will help us recruit outstanding athletes and support the men’s and women’s basketball players already enrolled, the new facility will truly impact all students at the University of Evansville,” Stanley added. “The additional practice gyms will free up the existing Carson Center for other activities, such as intramurals, recreational sports, and non-athletic activities that require gym space. The Fifth Third Bank Basketball Practice Facility will allow us to better serve the needs of all UE students.”

“Fifth Third Bank is proud to support the University of Evansville in this exciting endeavor that will impact students, faculty, the University, and the community for years to come,” said John N. Daniel, Jr., President and CEO of Fifth Third Bank, Southern Indiana and chairman of the Athletics Committee of UE’s Board of Trustees. “The Fifth Third Bank Basketball Practice Facility will play a vital role in developing players and coaches, taking Aces athletics to a whole new level.”

The 25,000-square-foot project is expected to break ground in April, with an estimated completion date of mid- to late October.

“Now that we have determined the first phase in our new facilities master plan, we will continue to examine and prioritize the other needs that emerged in our assessment,” said Kazee. “Over the next decade, the new construction and renovation projects will ensure that the University of Evansville’s facilities continue to reflect its outstanding academic quality.”