

Athletic complex takes shape at Hood College

President: New building will 'link the past and future'

by Angie Cochrun, Staff Writer

Smells of sawdust and concrete permeate the site of the new Hood College athletic complex along Seventh Street. With sounds of saws, hammers and beeping echoing through the unseasonably crisp air on Friday, Hood College President Ron Volpe and Chuck Mann, the college's vice president of finance and treasurer beamed with pride at the large structure rising next to neighboring Frederick Memorial Hospital.



Tom Fedor/The Gazette Work continues on the indoor arena which is part of the \$10 million athletic complex under construction at Hood College in Frederick.

Volpe motioned to the view from what will be the cardio area on the second floor of the fitness center pointing out a new softball field and a bright green artificial turf lacrosse, field hockey and soccer field.

The need for the facility has been apparent for a while.

"The college has been talking about this for 40 years," Volpe said.

The plan worked out for the roughly \$10 million, 50,000-square-foot complex was designed by Frederick-based Zavos Architecture + Design and constructed by Frederick's Warner Construction.

Mann said the project could take about nine months from start to finish.

When complete, the athletic complex will have a free weight area, cardio fitness center and offices. The college also plans to use the gym for commencement ceremonies, political rallies, concerts and dances. The new gym will hold about 1,600 people in bleachers, but also an additional 500 on the floor if needed.

"It's much more than an athletic facility. It's a multipurpose facility," Volpe said. ".And I suspect under some circumstances there will be some community events that will be held there."

Volpe said commencements in recent years have jumped to two ceremonies to accommodate the growing enrollment and were in the residential quad.

"Right now everything is outside," Volpe said. "Once we have the gym if we want to, we can have them indoors now."

And if all goes according to plan, the college could begin hosting commencement indoors beginning with the class of 2012 if they wanted.

"They're on schedule and on budget," Volpe said, saying the building dedication is set for Nov. 4. Construction is estimated to wrap up sometime in October.

Volpe said the ultimate goal of the building is to be a combination of functionality while also keeping the traditional look of the college.

"I want this on the one hand to look like a resident hall that's been here forever and I also want an area that looks like a futuristic building," he said. "I want to link to the past and the future."

The new athletic complex is just one part of a two year \$30 million campus renovation.

The overall project includes a new campus boiler system, renovated roads and sidewalks, plazas, landscaping, lighting and sprinkler systems in residence halls.

As part of the project, The Hodson indoor pool closed its doors permanently Feb. 28 after being open more than 50 years. The four-lane pool was 20 yards long, was used for lap swimming, swim team practice, swimming lessons and pool parties.

The school's NCAA outdoor pool, which is covered with an inflatable bubble in the winter to allow continued use, was closed in May for renovations and will reopen next month. The pool was planned to also have renovations, replacing a locker room, the pool deck and the "bubble" top, but they were pushed back to next summer.

Also on the deck are new tennis courts.

"Right now we use Baker Park for tennis," said Volpe, pointing out the old courts now used for parking, along with the future site.

Mann said the new athletic complex meets all LEED certification, but the process to be certified was too costly.

Though Volpe said there might be possibilities in the community for use, initially the complex and fitness facility would be solely open for student, staff and faculty use.

"It will not be open to the public for membership initially, but I suspect there will be an opportunity that the public will use that facility on occasion," he said.

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