University Breaks Ground for New Wellness Center

The University broke ground Wednesday, March 7 for the construction of a $21 million state-of-the-art wellness center that will meet the needs of students, faculty and staff and serve as an enticement for future students considering attending the Island University.

Construction of the facility was made possible by a $1 million private gift from Dr. Jack Dugan and his family, who are longtime contributors to the University. The remaining construction costs will be financed by student fees. In the last week of March, a student referendum will be held to vote on a student fee increase to finance the cost of facility operations.

"These types of facilities always generate a lot of excitement among students, faculty and staff," said Robert Lovitt, executive vice president for Finance and Administration, "in addition to what this means to the campus community as a whole, our athletics programs will benefit from having additional practice space."

When completed next year, the 67,000-square foot complex will include two regulation NCAA basketball courts, weight and cardio areas, locker rooms, including two for those with special needs, and group exercise rooms. Other support areas include laundry facilities, offices for Athletics and Recreational Sports personnel and separate public restrooms near the entrance to the building.

The University's existing facilities at the Glasscock Fitness and Wellness Center were built in the 1960s for an enrollment of 800 students. With more than 8,000 students, as well as faculty and staff on campus in 2007 the current facilities cannot meet the needs of all those desiring to use them. Approximately $17.5 million will be used for construction of the wellness center. An additional $3.5 million in University funds will be used for construction of a partial third floor that will house a new emergency operations center.