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University Proposes Athletics Facility

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In addition to the new business school and science buildings, Georgetown may see another structure erected in the next decade.

The university recently proposed the construction of a new athletic practice facility, which, if approved by the local Advisory Neighborhood Commission next month, may bring Georgetown's largely criticized athletic facilities closer to being on par with those of its Big East competitors. The proposal comes after months of discussions between university administrators concerning the plans.

University spokesperson Julie Bataille said the university plans to erect a 90,000-square-foot, five-story facility on the site of the university's tennis courts, near McDonough Gymnasium. The facility would house locker rooms, a sports medicine department, weight-training facilities, coaches' and administrative offices and a basketball court, University Architect Alan Brangman said during a recent Advisory Neighborhood Commission meeting, according to *The Georgetown Current*.

The facility would primarily be used by the men's basketball team and would help to consolidate the athletic department, Brangman said.

"There's a strong belief that we would do much better if the locker rooms and offices were all located in one building, rather than subdivided," Brangman said in the article.

The proposal is set to be voted on by the ANC on Oct. 2 and D.C.'s Zoning Commission on Oct. 22.

The university anticipates that construction of the project would commence after the completion of the new science facility, which is tentatively scheduled for 2010. Georgetown hopes to be granted a Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design certificate, which is awarded to the owners of environmentally friendly buildings, the article said.

The project is still in its preliminary stages, as it still requires several rounds of approval, said Mex Carey, the athletic department's sports information director.

The tennis courts would be relocated to an alternate location on campus, but the practice facility would have no impact on the location or image of the Multi-Sport Facility.

Some believe men's basketball Head Coach John Thompson III's future on the Hilltop is closely tied to the construction of a new practice facility. Thompson signed a five-year contract prior to the 2004-2005 season, and neither he nor the university's athletic department has made any announcement about the coach's fate beyond the 2008-2009 season, when his deal is set to expire. Thompson and his father, legendary Georgetown Coach John Thompson Jr., have both been outspoken in support of improving Georgetown's basketball facilities. At last February's 100 Years of Hoya Hoops Gala, Thompson Jr. said he would urge his son to coach elsewhere if the university community did not increase its support of the men's basketball program.

League rival Marquette opened a \$31 million practice facility in 2003, while Louisville just recently opened a \$15 million practice gym. Historic basketball power Kentucky opened a \$30 million facility of its own in January.

The university tried to revamp its basketball facilities in 2000, when then-Head Coach Craig Esherick released a plan to renovate McDonough Gymnasium and add upwards of 7,000 seats. The plan never left preliminary stages.

The proposed facility is linked to the 2004 Georgetown University Athletics and Recreation Master Plan. The campus plan, as outlined by the contracted architecture firm, Brailsford and Dunlavey, included a prospectus for an additional strength, conditioning and practice facility, which they expect to "support the full experience of varsity student-athletes and recreational student involvement."