

Clark Hall Shows Its Age

JAYSON JOHNSON - Staff Writer

Clark Hall has been a home for UB athletics and intramurals for over 70 years, and little has changed since it was built in 1937. So little, in fact, that the nostalgia isn't necessarily a good thing.

With recent improvements and renovations at Alumni Arena, fewer students are using the aging South Campus facilities, but those who still do are complaining about its deteriorating condition.

Constructed in two phases beginning in 1982, Alumni Arena is almost five times larger than Clark Hall in terms of gross square footage, and at \$26.3 million, it cost more than seven times as much to build.



The Clark Hall gymnasium facilities on South Campus are considered by some to be inferior to the newer, larger Alumni Arena.

According to Marcus Hutchins, director of Recreational Services, Alumni Arena is home to UB's Division I athletics program, justifying its higher building expenses and size. Current funding, which still leans towards the North Campus facilities, is also based largely on popularity.

"The usage of the facilities is equivalent to the amount of funding it receives," Hutchins said.

Some students say, however, that Clark Hall isn't as popular as Alumni Arena because the South Campus facilities are in need of some overdue refurbishing.

"I prefer Alumni because the facility is bigger and the basketball courts are spacious," said Kevin Chang, a freshman business management major who plays intramural basketball. "Clark, on the other hand, needs to be renovated and upgraded."

While many students prefer the facilities in Amherst - and the majority of on-campus housing is located there - Clark Hall is far from forgotten.

"Even though Clark is outdated, it's still convenient to the residents on South Campus," said Shawn Quail, a freshman physical therapy major. "I also think there should be more events to attract students."

According to Hutchins, updates have been part of ongoing efforts for Clark Hall. The pool was renovated a few years ago, and the addition of a community outreach center, which would attract more students as well as local residents, is also in the works.

"They could also extend the closing time of the gym (at Clark Hall)," said Michael Boateng, a freshman exercise science major.

Alumni Arena is open from 6 a.m. until 11:30 p.m. on weekdays, whereas Clark Hall is only open from noon until 9:30 p.m. Both gyms are open from noon until 5:30 p.m. on Saturday and Sunday.

While both Alumni and Clark Hall are used for intramurals, Clark's facilities have largely remained the same for at least a decade. Aside from regular maintenance, including re-grouting the swimming pool, painting and roof work, Clark has largely had the same lockers and facilities for years. Clark also had asbestos removed in 2004.

The issue involving Clark Hall and Alumni Arena is not just a recent matter but also a past concern. In Fall 2002, the firm of Brailsford and Dunlavey conducted a survey of UB's athletic facilities. According to the survey, 44 percent of the students surveyed rated Alumni Arena as "good," whereas only 6.89 percent rated Clark Hall as "good."

Many students, like Maranda McCray-Dixon, said they feel Clark Hall could easily be improved with minor changes.

"Clark caters more to sport athletes," said Maranda McCray-Dixon, a junior nursing student. "Clark also leaves out the cardiovascular aspect of the gym. Although they have a fair amount of treadmills, they only have two elliptical machines which are in high demand."

"I was part of the boxing club and I really enjoyed it," McCray-Dixon added. "The racquet ball rooms are also nice, but the place needs to be redone because the building smells like it has lead embedded in the paint."

The survey mentioned some slight renovation that allegedly took place. The renovations included an upgrade with new windows and required roof repair. The other improvements included electrical upgrades and new mechanical systems that attend to the handicap accessibility requirements.