

IOWA CITY Press-Citizen

Survey: Students Want Rec Facility

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By Kristen Schorsch

University of Iowa students gave the school a green light to increase fees for campus recreational facilities, survey results showed Tuesday.

Of 3,130 online surveys completed in December, 70 percent of UI students said the need for recreational facility improvements was "very important," according to a report compiled by Brailsford & Dunlavey, a Washington, D.C.-based consulting firm that conducted the survey.

Students also would favor renovating UI's 80-year-old Field House, coupled with building a new east campus recreation center, and would pay up to \$110 a semester in fees for the improvements, the survey said. UI students now pay \$2 a semester in student fees while non-students pay per activity.

Harry Ostrander, UI director of recreational services, said he was pleased with the results in light of dwindling state funding and increasing tuition.

Field House renovations and a new east campus recreation center would cost \$60 million. A comprehensive facility, which would replace the Field House, is estimated to cost \$70 million to \$80 million.

The consulting firm conducted focus groups on campus in November with students, faculty and staff. It also analyzed the recreational facilities of comparable Big Ten schools. UI provides 12.17 square feet a student while the average among comparable schools provides 15.7 square feet a student, reports show. Iowa State provides more than double the space at 25.16 square feet a student.

Those in the focus group criticized the Field House for its hard floors, a bad pool, an inadequate track and a confusing building.

Ostrander said UI officials have not decided possible renovations but might by next fall. UI has hired an outside firm that is looking at nine possible sites - half of which are large enough for a comprehensive facility, meaning a brand-new building and no renovations to the Field House.

Possible recreational center sites include the area across from the Iowa Memorial Union at Hubbard Park, at the corner of Burlington and Madison streets and Halsey Hall, whose parking lot would be replaced and built three floors high with a recreation center on top of it.

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