

THE SPOKESMAN-REVIEW

WSU Regents OK Bond Sale for Student Rec Center

Students at WSU Will Pay \$100 More Per Semester for Facility

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By Andrea Vogt, Staff Writer

Washington State University regents approved the sale of up to \$ 48 million in bonds Wednesday for a state-of-the art student recreation center.

It was the last hurdle for the 145,000-square-foot center. When the doors open in January 2001, every WSU student will pay \$ 100 more per semester.

"I know students are excited about this," Associated Students Vice President Steve Wymer said after the regents met in Seattle.

College students nationwide are agreeing to tax themselves for top-quality workout facilities. In 1997 referendums, University of Idaho and WSU students showed strong support for such centers, despite student fee hikes attached to the proposals.

Recognizing their recruitment value, administrators have helped students organize support for the centers.

WSU paid Washington, D.C., consultants Brailsford & Dunlavey \$ 50,000 for planning help. An additional \$ 15,000 in student fee money was spent on an "Exercise Your Vote" campaign before the student referendum. The UI also hired Brailsford & Dunlavey for its promotion and planning.

But since WSU students approved the center last April, university officials have scaled back the project because of lower enrollment predictions.

Students will still be saddled with the \$ 100 per semester fee, but instead of the eight racquetball courts described in the brochure they got before voting, there will be four. Plans for a climbing wall also have been scrapped.

But there will be seven gymnasiums, three pools, multipurpose rooms, a staffed wellness center and a 15,000-square-foot weight-training area.

The plans have won the approval of students like 21-year-old Cody Rickert of Portland, who complains of having to wait 45 minutes to get into WSU's weight rooms.

"It will be nice for the students to have a nice new facility and not just the athletes," Rickert said.

Because Pullman is isolated, WSU students tend to exercise and play sports more on campus, said Tim McCarty, WSU activities director. The school has one of the highest intramural sports participation levels in the West.

Because students also will want to socialize at the center, the open, multilevel design includes a juice-and-coffee bar with big-screen televisions and lounge areas.

"Pullman is certainly a place where students have fewer attractions outside the classroom than other larger urban areas," McCarty said. "They wanted the social interaction."