

GAME ON

Courting active students, UF will create rec center

By Suzanne Wilcox English M '09

While The University of Findlay has continued its strong tradition of intercollegiate athletics, intramural athletic and recreational opportunities for the student body as a whole have grown by leaps and bounds over the past decade.

The growth began when the University hired Bryan Golding, a former student-athlete who had worked steadily in UF sports management while earning a bachelor of science in economics and then an MBA in organizational leadership. In July 2001, Golding became UF's first director of recreational services.

"When I was a student there were two intramural sports — volleyball and basketball — and that was it. Intramurals were not a high priority," he said. His first year was spent researching what local colleges and universities provided in the way of intramurals, with 15 activities offered to gauge student interest. At the end of the year, Golding surveyed the student body, something he has continued every year. Today, students can choose from 25 intramural sports and activities, including everything from traditional sports to ping pong and billiards. "We offer pretty much everything students want. If a program is not going well, we eliminate it and offer something else, based on students' wants and needs."

An example would be accommodating the interests of UF's large international population. A group of Indian students approached him about including intramural cricket, which is *(continued, next page)*

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now offered as a weekend program — with rounds of play going the entire weekend — twice in the fall and once in the spring.

The greatest growth in the recreation area has come from the addition of the cardio center in the Koehler Fitness and Recreation Complex, which offers 16 treadmills equipped with personal TVs, 20 weight machines, 10 natural runners, eight bikes, two stair-steppers, 12 plyo balls, 10 stretching

mats, a set of dumbbells, a set of medicine balls, jump ropes and stretching bands. Televisions and an upbeat radio station play in the background.

Usage has grown tremendously, from 17,000 visits the first year to nearly 51,000 visits by students, faculty and staff in the past academic year. Membership was opened last year to alumni, who pay only \$100 per year — \$150 for a non-alumni spouse — for the use of the center, and 85

have taken advantage of the offer so far. Expanding to alumni “has gone very, very well. I have alumni from the classes of early 1950s all the way up to last year’s class,” Golding said. “One couple when they joined said it was their first time back on campus in 35 years — and they live right here in town.”

During the winter months, the facility averages 450 to 500 patrons per day; those numbers drop during nice weather and in the

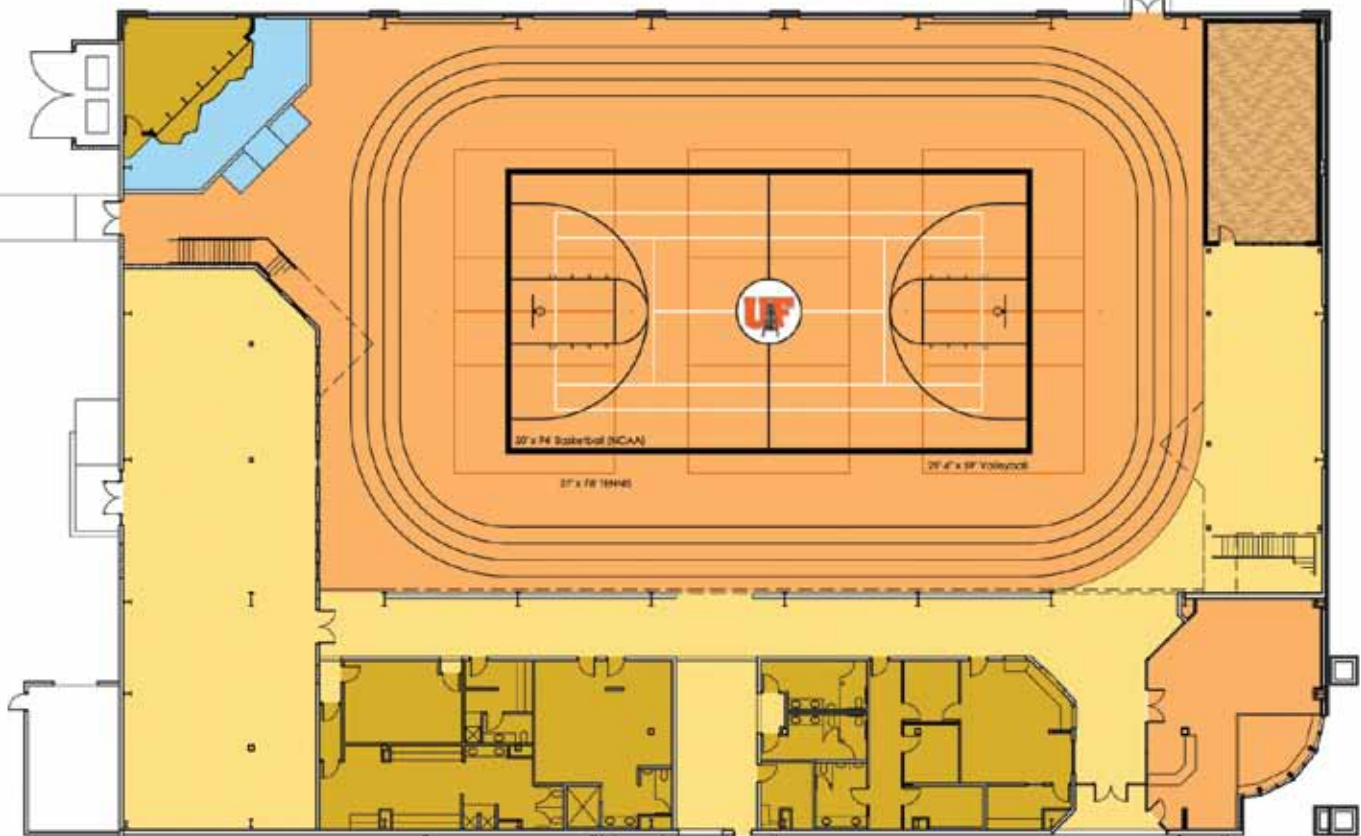
summer months. Golding sees the cardio center as a big plus for students who may not be inclined to, or have the time for, team activities: “If students aren’t participating in intramurals, they’re still getting exercise.”

And members of the campus community can look forward to another major change: the ice arena is being converted to a student recreation center, with the center expected to be operational by the start of classes in August 2010.

Top left, Sharon Milligan works with a student in the cardio center, while a student, right, takes aim during a game of dodgeball. At bottom left, basketball remains a favorite sport for Findlay students, while water polo, at right, takes on a whole new look in the Sink Natatorium.



Photography by Rebecca Cross '10



Proposed Renovations to the Claus Ice Arena

The decision to convert the facility was based on 2008 student surveys that showed a majority of the students — 75 percent — never used the ice rink. The conversion was announced in 2009 with the delay to allow time for community users to secure other venues.

The new student recreation center will include basketball, volleyball and tennis courts, several multipurpose areas, a three-lane running/jogging track, a rock climbing wall, a racquetball/wallyball court, an equipment checkout room, student lounges, a game room and a juice bar as well as a weight room for both varsity athletes and general use.

In addition, the existing cardio center lobby will become a room where students and others can teach and practice yoga, Pilates and the martial arts.

The facility will also be fitted with appropriate electrical wiring, lighting and exit options to allow it to serve as a venue for mid-sized events.

“This building can be a very big feature on campus for prospective students,” he said. “This is the students’ building — their area, where they can do pretty much anything they want to do.”

Golding emphasized that the philosophy behind the change is to serve student needs: “The overall goal, not just for recreational services, but for the University as a whole, is to attract and retain students.”

At top, a floor plan lays out the transformation into a new student recreation center. The large central area will provide space for basketball, volleyball or tennis, surrounded by a running track. A climbing wall, upper left, will challenge adventurous students, with a varsity weight room adjoining on the first floor and a golf simulator and entertainment center on the second floor. At right on the first floor will be a racquetball court, pool tables, game room and juice bar, top to bottom, with additional game room space on the second floor.

