

# New Athletic Complex as Part of Campus Master Plan

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Rendering of the Cowell Stadium at UNH as it is expected to appear after a \$25 million improvement plan. (Courtesy art)

With a focus on meeting its strategic priorities, the University of New Hampshire is moving forward with fundraising and planning for a new athletic complex that will benefit the university, Durham and the Seacoast region, and the state. Athletic facilities and venues, including a new stadium, were identified as a priority in the campus' master plan to improve recruitment, student satisfaction, and overall visibility in an increasingly competitive marketplace.

Expected to cost \$25 million and open in late 2015, the facility, which is referred to as the West Stadium, will offer increased and improved seating, state-of-the art broadcast and WiFi capability, concessions, restrooms, and a special student section. The original concrete section of the current East Side facility dates to the 1930s.

Plans for a new athletic complex were reviewed with the University System of New Hampshire Board of Trustees at its meeting Jan. 30, and the university will make a more detailed request at the April meeting.

"These initial steps are exciting for not only our students but for the greater Durham community and the state," said UNH President Mark Huddleston. "A new athletic complex will help us build spirit and pride in the state's flagship public university and directly benefit the local economy."

Academic buildings remain the university's highest priority and are consistently part of the university's long-term planning, Huddleston stressed. Many science and technology buildings have been renovated over the last decade and Hamilton Smith is next on that list. Currently McConnell Hall is under renovation to upgrade classrooms and house the university's sociology and psychology departments. Other academic buildings recently renovated include Parsons, James and DeMeritt halls, all academic buildings.

"A new venue with a lighted field will allow us to host more state, regional, and national competitions and events like Special Olympics, concerts, and high school championship games," said UNH Athletic Director Marty Scarano. "Currently we have one of the most out-of-date stadiums in the entire nation. In looking at the new stadiums built at our peer institutions in the last decade, we found most all were funded with a combination of fundraising and internal financing."

The new athletic complex will offer increased seating capacity of more than 10,000, a new home side on the opposite side of the existing field, and gathering and social spaces. The project will only move forward when the university raises \$5 million in donations and the final project cost is no more than \$25 million. The university plans to seek internal borrowing for the additional \$20 million. The cost of this project will be absorbed within the university's current five-year financial planning model.

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