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## UNH Athletics Announces Plans for Student-Athlete Center for Excellence

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*UNH Athletic Communications*

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## Media Relations

April 29, 2014

### UNH Athletics Announces Plans for Student-Athlete Center for Excellence

DURHAM, N.H. — The University of New Hampshire will build a \$1.9 million Student-Athlete Center for Excellence at the Field House for its Division I and Northeast Passage student athletes. Funded entirely on private donations, the center will support individual and team-based programs for personal growth, life skills, academic support, career planning, networking, and community service. Construction will begin in early summer 2014 with a targeted opening of late fall.

The center, which will occupy space on the second floor where the decommissioned squash courts are located, will support all students who strive to balance the challenges of representing UNH as students and as Division I athletes. It will enhance the university's ability to attract talented and dedicated student-athletes, provide them with the tools they need to succeed, give them access to mentoring and networking services, and assist them in finding internships, employment, and/or post-graduate opportunities.

"We've always had great academic support staff, but the facility -- a tiny dark room in the basement -- was not supportive of our goal to graduate every student-athlete," said Heather Barber, associate professor of kinesiology and the university's NCAA faculty athletic representative. "We want our student-athletes to achieve as much academically as they do athletically, and having all of the services in one area will be a huge benefit for these young people. At UNH we take pride in the fact that our students excel in balancing their academic pursuits with their athletic ambitions."

Barber noted that just recently 58 junior and senior student-athletes were inducted into an honor society for having a cumulative GPA above 3.5. In the America East Academic Cup, UNH finished second for the third time in the last four years by achieving a 3.18 cumulative grade point average. It is UNH's highest GPA in the 18-year history of the award.

"This center will help all of our athletes move in that direction," Barber said. "It will support our top students, but also the students who have to work very hard to meet our requirements. The services will all be in one area and will allow them to make academics a priority."

The center, which will include complete wireless Internet capability, will create a welcoming environment similar to the university's Dimond Library reading rooms where student-athletes will enjoy a comfortable, well-equipped and quiet study space staffed by advisors or tutors to assist them in optimizing their time. It will provide UNH Athletics with the functionality and programming space required to reach a greater number of student-athletes and make a difference in the development of the "whole person." The center will include a functional resource room and quiet study space in addition to breakout rooms and team/group meeting space in the main reading room that can fit up to 72 individuals.

"The Student-Athlete Center for Excellence was identified as a major priority in our department's strategic plan," said Marty Scarano, athletic director at UNH. "Without the philanthropic support of a small, distinguished group of our most ardent supporters, this center would not have come to fruition. The continued generosity of our loyal and committed benefactors helps keep UNH nationally competitive."

A new elevator connecting a renovated first-level lobby near Lundholm Gymnasium to the second level of the Field House will make the center readily accessible for UNH student-athletes with disabilities as part of the UNH

Athletics/Northeast Passage partnership.

For more information on UNH Athletics, visit [www.unhwildcats.com](http://www.unhwildcats.com). To learn how to invest in UNH's future, contact Diane Metcalf, Director of Athletics Development, at (603) 862-3149, [diane.metcalf@unh.edu](mailto:diane.metcalf@unh.edu) or visit [www.foundation.unh.edu](http://www.foundation.unh.edu).

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