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"A student survey showed that the current set-up in the DakotaDome was unsatisfactory to students," Nielsen said during a short program held before the groundbreaking ceremony. Students noted that the facilities in the Dome are too crowded, are not inviting, and not available at times that are convenient.

"I'm confident the committee did their job in creating a wellness plan for the campus and thus producing the building that's being constructed today. This building will be able to handle the expected usage patterns, it will offer convenient times, and it will be a beautiful building, serving as a show-piece for everyone entering from the north end of the campus," Nielsen said.

When completed, the building will offer state-of-the-art workout equipment, a multi-story climbing wall and a Multipurpose Activity Court (MAC). It will also have a large open workout space with treadmills, exercise bicycles, elliptical machines, stretching mats and a weight room space with free weights and strength-training equipment.

In addition to two racquetball courts, the facility will include multiple recreation courts for basketball and volleyball; group fitness studios for aerobics, Pilates and yoga; a three-lane walking/jogging track, locker rooms, and offices for the wellness center staff.

"There will be over 60,000 square feet of fun," Nielsen said.

Recruitment of new students and retention of those already attending USD are two critical goals of the institution, he added, and the new building will assist with both.

Nielsen praised Abbott's vision for helping to make the new facility a reality. It's a notion the USD president brushed aside, pointing out that students are responsible for this latest addition to campus.

"To be perfectly honest, my vision had very little to do with this," Abbott said. "The students had all of the vision — each and every ounce of it."

Abbott noted that he had proposed remodeling the



Dig in! Monday's program featured groundbreaking for the new University of South Dakota wellness center, but construction is already under way. Taking a turn with shovels are (from left) USD President Jim Abbott; Eric Schuler, project manager with the Henry Carlson Company; Paul Klein with RDG Planning and Design; Kirsten Company, USD associate dean of students; Ryan Budmayr, former USD Student Government Association (SGA) president; Rich Van Den Hul, USD vice president for finance and administration; and USD athletics director Joel Nielsen. Company and Nielsen co-chaired the wellness center planning committee. (Photo by Randy Dockendorf/Yankton Media Inc.)

17,000 square foot Continuing Education Center, a campus building without any load-bearing walls in its interior, and transform it into a student fitness center.

"Our students, after politely listening to what I had to say, said 'Absolutely not. This is not what we want. We want a state-of-the-art building that allows us to do everything that we want to do,' and thanks to the students, that's exactly what we're going to have," he said.

This groundbreaking, Abbott said, is symbolic of efforts to make the University of South Dakota an extraordinary university, both academically and in terms of facilities.

"The wellness center is a major addition, but its function is just the same as is every building on this campus — to serve our students," he said. "We're looking forward to the completion of this facility, and thanks to the diligence of a committed campus community, especially our students, those very same students will have their own state-of-the-art fitness center."

Ryan Budmayr, former Student Government Association (SGA) president, helped communicate student input about the new building to the South Dakota Board of Regents last year. He toured wellness facilities at peer institutions to see firsthand what features were popular.

Budmayr noted that USD students will still be able to enjoy the many amenities of the DakotaDome, including the university's Division I athletic contests, with the addition of the new wellness facility that will offer more hours, more space and double the equipment that is currently offered in the DakotaDome's fitness facilities.

"The one thing that I'm most proud of is the role that students played in making this wellness center not only a reality, but also in helping to create what it will become," he said. "Students either came up with the ideas, or were involved in the decision-making process."

"Not only did they take part in the physical planning of the facility, they also played a crucial role in the

campaign to inform students by creating flyers and opening up student government meetings," Budmayr said. "We also had an incredible student turnout at our meeting in Madison during finals week last winter. We helped to convince the Board of Regents that this was a truly a project that students could not live without."

He praised the assistance that students received from Abbott, Nielsen and Kirsten Company, associate dean of students at USD. "These folks were on our side throughout the whole process, and we cannot thank them enough."

As Budmayr spoke, earth-moving equipment was busy behind him, preparing the ground for the foundation of the new structure.

"Considering I'm standing in front of what will be the new student wellness center, across from Coyote Village, not far from the new Muenster University Center, while skipping my 11 o'clock class at the new Beacom School of Business," he said, "I think I can say without hesitation, it's a great day to be a Coyote."

The \$15 million center is almost entirely being paid for by students through a \$9.75 per credit hour hike in tuition.

The city of Vermillion and the university have also entered into a membership use agreement for the center, calling for the city to contribute \$340,000 over five years beginning in the fall of 2010.

"The initial commitment that the city has taken is to be involved in Phase 1, which we are completing right now," Nielsen said. "That commitment itself will allow future involvement in the future development for our remaining phases, primarily Phase 2."

The second phase of wellness center construction, which likely won't be implemented for several years, includes the construction of indoor and outdoor swimming facilities.

"With the situation coming up soon in the next half-a-dozen years or so at Prentiss Park," Nielsen said, referring to the city's aging swimming pool, "I know there is some maintenance and repairs and

some significant upgrades that need to be considered at some point. There may be interest (by the city) in partnering with the university to put an indoor and outdoor pool here (at the wellness center) and make it more of a community-based project."

RDG Planning and Design, the architectural firm that designed the center, left room for growth in the structure's plans.

"They designed it with a footprint of about a 125,000 square feet," Nielsen said. "What we're building today is 61,000, roughly."

The design allows for the future construction of additional gymnasiums, and wellness facilities in addition to the pool facilities. It will be a facility that can grow in the future to meet the needs of both the university and the Vermillion community.

"That's why we've partnered with the city," Nielsen said. "The city has been involved in conversations with us since day one. The city has been great partners with us all along, and we certainly hope that Phase 2 can be built sooner rather than later."

Students will pay approximately 97 percent of the new building's construction costs, and will be given free access to the facility.

"That will not prohibit faculty and staff and community members from enjoying it. A lot of the same features that students enjoy are also enjoyed by others in the community," Nielsen said. "Students will use it for free, and every other user group will have to pay to have access to the center."

It's this predicted community-wide use of the facility that prompted designers to include the ability to expand the building as the need for more space arises.

All student-athlete practice, training and competition will stay in the DakotaDome. That doesn't mean, however, that student athletes will be prohibited from using the new facility.

"They are helping to pay for it; they are paying fees just like any other student," Nielsen said. "But there won't be any organized activities at the new wellness center."

## School/ from page 1

the school to delegate out the responsibility of delegating out information by freeing up the time of the traditional webmaster."

Jason Gault is currently filling that role for the Vermillion School District.

"Now, Jason is actively involved in not only managing the information, but also in helping to post that information online," Targoff said. "With SOCS, anyone can post information as long as they have the appropriate credentials, because SOCS is easy to use. That allows school districts to say to teachers, to administrators, and even to students and parents, that if you want to create information online, you can do so, and therefore help generate a very robust and dynamic set of information for your constituents."

As he talked, Targoff demonstrated on the television monitor features that are included in every Web site produced by SOCS. Those features include school logos, rotating photo images of student activities, calendars of events and articles about different school and classroom happenings.

SOCS allows parents to sign into its Web pages with a password and receive electronic newsletters that push the information of interest to them.

"You can also eliminate, or potentially reduce the amount of hard paper that you are creating for your newsletters, and therefore potentially reduce some costs," he said.

Targoff also pointed out individual pages that teachers themselves include on

SOCS sites. These individually teacher-created pages, he said, allow the instructors to keep parents informed of the activities going on in their children's classrooms.

School districts who use SOCS' services enter into a three-year license and pay \$5,000 annually.

"That is something that frankly we would be interested in getting up and running, because you would be our first client in South Dakota," Targoff said. "We have, I believe, quoted a very reasonable price. That fee includes unlimited support, unlimited training, and unlimited space (on the Web page)."

The board made no decision following the presentation.

Gault told the board that program offered by SOCS would do a better job of keeping people updated about different happenings in the Vermillion School District.

"It's going to allow the ability to have more than just one person with the expertise of all that's involved in not only creating the Web pages, but also adding content to them," he said. "So we can distribute some of that responsibility out to the different buildings and the different teachers."

"The other thing it allows is a secure area where we can put things, for example, that you just want teachers to access," Gault said. "I don't have the capability to do that."

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