

# FCS ADACORNER



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Building top-quality athletics facilities is a priority for university and athletics administrators everywhere. Regardless of the division, we all want great facilities.

Over the years at the University of Montana, we invested heavily in building wonderful competition facilities. Washington-Grizzly Stadium and Dahlberg Arena at the Adams Center are great venues to watch the Grizzlies compete. These facilities generate the vast majority of our revenue and are enjoyed by hundreds of thousands of patrons each year. However, we all know student-athletes spend very little of their overall time in actual competition. The vast majority is spent in practice, academic centers, locker rooms, weight rooms, and meeting rooms.

We knew there was a need to build facilities focused on student-athlete development – physical and academic. In an enlightening conversation with a potential donor early in our drive to build a new football support facility, he asked a simple, but necessary question: “How does this facility fit in to your overall master plan?”

In a rush to get things going, we had not spent the time looking at our needs and space from a high level. There was great momentum and excitement among our donors to get a facility built. We wanted to get things done! However, slowing down and thinking the process through was the right move. This donor made a sizeable gift and said, “go build a thoughtful and complete master plan.”

With help from Pam Scott and Joel Leider from SportsPLAN Studios, a thorough master plan emerged. It was a tedious, but enlightening exercise as we deliberately looked at various questions. How big could the football stadium become? Where does it make sense to expand training and equipment room facilities? How do we keep with the feel of campus and preserve behind-the-scenes movement of the student-athletes? Where is the best location for a new complex in preparation for the addition of softball? How do we make sure we do not build a beautiful facility only to see that facility altered, or worse, torn down when an expansion of a competition facility was necessary?

On our campus, topography presents unique challenges. Our athletics facilities sit in some of the most scenic areas of the western U.S. However, it brings obstacles as well. We have a river to our north, a mountain to our east, and campus surrounding us to the south and west. We started big, looked at available locations, and then worked our way down to detailed phases of expansion that were doable and realistic

with defined priorities and donors that matched those priorities.

First came the Eric and Blair Sprunk Student-Athlete Academic Center, and then the Bill Ruegamer Indoor Golf Facility. Next, a 1,000-seat softball field with all artificial turf and indoor hitting facilities to support cold weather training. Up next, the recently completed \$14 million Washington-Grizzly Champions Center. This 51,000-square-foot facility houses a 19,000-square-foot student-athlete strength and conditioning and nutrition center, an 8,000-square-foot locker room for football, a football team meeting room, five smaller meeting rooms for all programs and a football coaches’ locker room.

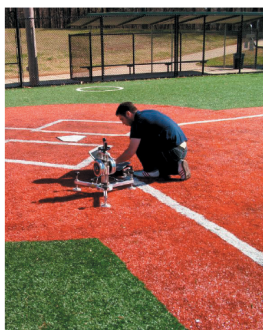
Next up in the plan is renovation to the athletic training center, relocation of the equipment center with subsequent upgrades to men’s basketball, women’s basketball and volleyball support facilities, an improved women’s soccer field, and renovated locker room facilities for track and field and soccer. An indoor practice facility is the capstone piece of the master plan, and as the planning process played out, a location for this large-scale project clearly emerged.

As stated in the beginning, we all want great facilities. We also want them now! However, I certainly learned, despite there being great momentum to get something done quickly, a more thorough and thoughtful approach brings the best and most long-lasting results.

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