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## Capital Projects

When a department is planning for future capital projects, there are many moving pieces that can help make the process successful. Two very important components involved in the process include utilizing cross-campus relationships and incorporating the future project into budgeting models. Ryan Varley, associate athletics director of business services at the University of Pittsburgh, shares why those components are so critical in planning for capital projects in an athletics department.

## How important are cross-campus relationships when discussing capital projects?

Cross-campus planning and relationship building is essential in every aspect of our business and cannot start simply when you are planning for a capital project. Building relationships with campus partners must be part of a continual, intentional, and symbiotic effort to foster collaboration across the entire institution.

## How do you begin building those relationships on campus with the athletics department?

It often begins with leadership encouraging those collaborations to occur. How can we utilize joint buying power across campus to negotiate better prices? How can we share expertise and experience across campus groups to assist in different areas? Working together early and often helps build those relationships before going to ask for money or support for a particular capital project. If you make collaboration part of your day-to-day culture, it helps establish those stronger relationships over time.

## How do you build “buy-in” from the rest of campus?

Understanding that athletics is a part of the larger institution and the impact that the capital project may have on the entire community is essential. Athletics cannot and should not operate in a silo; the impact of the actions we take extend far beyond the athletics department. A capital project

for the athletics department is a capital project for the institution as a whole.

## How is budget planning impacted by capital projects?

At Pitt, the budget process is not viewed strictly within a one-year window. We look out prospectively over a number of years, especially when planning for larger capital projects. When you plan for capital projects in conjunction with your multi-year operating budget plan, it helps to show where there are opportunities to fund these larger projects and where there may be gaps.

## How can a department prioritize capital projects?

There will always be a desire from teams, coaches, and staff to improve facilities. We choose to prioritize our capital projects based on the anticipated competitive/experiential impact they will have, how well the projects align with our strategic plan, and the resources they will require/generate. We grade our projects each year based on these factors, and as a result of that exercise, there inevitably will be certain projects that emerge as higher priorities than others.

Planning and executing successful capital projects for an athletics department is an institution wide effort that relies on strong campus relationships and prospective budget planning. Among the many moving pieces of capital project planning, following through on these two components will prove to be essential throughout the process.



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