Upgrades at MSU create fitness opportunities

Todd Pflingsten, director of campus recreation, is looking forward to turning what is now an open field into improved recreation opportunities for Minnesota State University students.

Fit on campus

By Dan Nienaber
Free Press Staff Writer

MANKATO — Students will have many more options for getting out of their dorms and apartments and into intramural sports at Minnesota State University next fall.

Work is scheduled to start this summer on several projects that will add football and softball fields, sand volleyball and basketball courts, an outdoor ice rink and even a lacrosse field to campus.

Most of the improvements, which will cost about $7 million, will be in what now looks like an open field between the Gage dormitories and the university’s astronomy building.

The upgrades, which will include field lights to expand the hours they can be
FITNESS: Paved trail to have exercise stations

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used in the spring and fall, are being paid for with student activity fees. Students have been paying $2.50 per credit, up to a maximum of $50 per semester, to cover the costs.

Eric Andersen is graduating and won't be at MSU next year to enjoy the new recreation opportunities, but he's happy for the students who will be there. He's been an avid ultimate Frisbee player while attending MSU and believes the new facilities will be a selling point for prospective students.

"I think it enhances student life and the feeling of the campus," he said. "There's just more things to do."

A highlight of the improvements, which should be popular even for students who don't want to play organized sports, is a paved fitness trail with exercise stations, said Todd Pfingsten, director of campus recreation.

Students also will be able to use the trail for jogging, biking or inline skating, he said.

"It's really going to be a nice upgrade," Pfingsten said. "We're just excited for our students, that they're really going to get some new fitness opportunities. They'll be meeting people and staying healthy. Hopefully, that means they'll be performing better in the classroom, too."

About 60 percent of the work is expected to be completed before school starts this fall, he said. The remaining work will be done as soon as classes are finished at the end of the coming school year.

The university originally had planned to make about $22 million in improvements, including a new indoor hockey rink, but that proposal was stopped when a student referendum failed. Pfingsten used softball as an example to explain why the improvements are needed. There were 27 intramural slow-pitch teams when he arrived at the university in 1999. There are now 80 to 90 teams playing, and people playing new sports that compete for the space.

"It's going to be nice," he said.

For a layout plan, visit http://www.mnmsu.edu/campusrec/ and click on Outdoor Recreation Facilities Layout.

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