

Why does UAA need a sports arena?

Currently the only space on our campus for athletic, recreation, intramural, and physical education is the Wells Fargo Sports Complex (WFSC). This facility consists of one basketball court, a pool, a practice hockey rink, and a small weight training area converted out of racquetball courts. Additionally, there are very limited locker rooms and administration offices. WFSC opened in 1978 as a recreational facility for a community college with no college athletics or physical education academic program. At that time there was also no on-campus housing.

Today there are 14,000 commuter students, 1000 on-campus student residents, 300 Health, Physical Education, and Recreation (HPER) academic program students, 11 college Division I and Division II athletic teams, 168 men and women student-athletes, seven head coaches, 14 assistant coaches, 19 other athletic staff personnel, and thousands of community members trying to share this space. This small facility is used every available hour of every day. It can handle up to 2000 customers a week and would easily attract another 2500-3000 customers a week if it had the space.

Due to the inadequacies of this facility, many of our athletic teams must rent space in other venues to practice and play their games. Storage space is also severely lacking. Gymnastics equipment, for example, must be stored in an unheated outdoor container, and transported to the sports complex prior to every home meet.

UAA needs a college standard athletic facility. The proposed UAA Sports Arena, Phase 1 answers that need. It is a 130,000 square foot facility featuring a three-court gymnasium that can be transformed into a 3,500 seat performance gym for basketball, volleyball, and other university and community events. The facility will also house a gymnastics facility, and a two-court auxiliary gym for additional student, academic, and community use. A one-eighth mile running track will circle the performance gymnasium. The facility will also house a fitness center, training room, locker rooms, academic classrooms, and administration offices and storage.

The 2003 UAA Master Plan included a sports arena to provide for UAA athletics, recreation, academic, and community needs. This project, Phase 1, will meet all these needs except for one: a new hockey arena (Phase 2). UAA rents the Sullivan Arena for hockey games and the Great Alaska Shootout and must compete against many other users, including the Anchorage Aces. UAA has begun discussions with the Municipality exploring possible partnerships for an improved Sullivan Arena or a new hockey arena.

The construction of a Sports Arena will reduce the current pressure on the WFSC and allow it to become, once again, primarily a recreational facility for students, staff, and community members.