

## University breaks ground on E. L. Wiegand Fitness Center

*Donors, students and University partners mark the start of construction and focus on campus health and fitness with an official kick-off ceremony and remarks*

RENO, Nev. – Officials at the University of Nevada, Reno, along with key donors and a community of supporters that includes the E. L. Wiegand Foundation and the Gabelli Foundation, broke ground on the [E. L. Wiegand Fitness Center](#) Wednesday, June 17, in a ceremony showcasing the focus of the facility on student health and wellness.

Scheduled for completion in early 2017, this 108,000 square-foot facility, envisioned as a hub of campus fitness and recreation, will offer weightlifting, training, a variety of fitness classes and activities, as well as an indoor 1/8th mile running track and three courts for basketball and other indoor multi-use court sports.

Construction of the E. L. Wiegand Fitness Center exemplifies the University's commitment to a culture of student success and a campus culture that values health and wellness.

"Health and wellness significantly contributes to the success of our students and their journey toward their future careers and lives as citizens," University President Marc Johnson said. "We are deeply appreciative to the foundations and donors who join us in furthering our commitment to a healthier campus community and to the future success of our students."

At the ceremony, the individuals and organizations responsible for bringing the vision for the E. L. Wiegand Fitness Center to life were recognized, including students, donors, Nevada System of Higher Education regents and community leaders.

Donors honored at the event included the E. L. Wiegand Foundation for their \$8 million naming gift, represented by Foundation Chair Raymond "Skip" Avansino, Jr., Foundation President Kristen Avansino and several of the Foundation's trustees, advisory committee members and staff; and Mario Gabelli and the Gabelli Foundation for a \$1.5 million gift. The Gabelli gift will be recognized by the naming of the Mario J. Gabelli Plaza outside the E. L. Wiegand Fitness Center.

"It is an honor and a privilege to stand here on behalf of my mentor, E. L. Wiegand, and his foundation," Skip Avansino said. "It is a joyous occasion. I've observed [President] Marc [Johnson] and Kristen [Avansino] and others shaping this facility into a facility of wellness so students can recognize for themselves that wellness is the prerequisite to all else."

The E. L. Wiegand Fitness Center will ensure the University campus more fully integrates student wellness by offering an easily accessible fitness facility in the heart of campus.

"There is a tremendous amount of research and data that connects student fitness levels to improved cognitive function, academic performance, social networks and engagement on campus, plus a decrease in stress and anxiety," Jim Fitzsimmons, the University's director of campus recreation and wellness and the Lombardi Recreation Center, said.



Surveys have shown that as many as 30 percent of students based their selection of a college or university on the fitness and wellness resources available. As many as 75 percent of students state that recreation and fitness facilities contributed to their decision to remain at an institution and successfully persist through graduation.

Total project cost is estimated at \$46 million dollars, to be funded through \$16 million in private gifts, student fees and the University's capital-project bonding capacity. The University of Nevada, Reno Foundation has provided \$3 million in matching gifts and several donors have responded to this offer as the University continues its philanthropic efforts to raise the remaining funds from private donations.

Worth Group is the primary architect for the fitness center. They are working with Hasting + Chivetta, a national firm with a concentration on recreational facilities. Q&D Construction, Inc. has been selected as the general contractor. Approval to proceed with construction of the E. L. Wiegand Fitness Center was granted by the Board of Regents Oct. 18, 2013.

The E. L. Wiegand Fitness will join Lombardi Recreation Center, the University's current fitness center, in providing a complete complement of fitness and recreation settings to support a range of sports, fitness and recreation programs. Built in 1974 to serve a student body of 4,000, Lombardi Recreation was designed to primarily support physical education programs rather than training, fitness and wellness offerings. Due to space constraints, 350 people currently are turned away weekly from fitness and recreation offerings in which they wish to participate.

Once the E. L. Wiegand Fitness Center opens, Lombardi Recreation will continue to support academic programs offered through the School of Community Health Sciences and intramural programming, plus serve as the training site for intercollegiate women's swimming and diving and men's and women's basketball. Usage of these fitness facilities will be open to undergraduate students through an annual fitness fee approved by a vote of undergraduate students and paid through registration. Usage of the facilities will be available to graduate students, faculty and staff through a separate membership fee structure.

With the launch of construction on the E. L. Wiegand Fitness Center on the parking lot south of Lawlor Events Center and next to the Joe Crowley Student Union where there are currently 203 metered spaces, [parking improvement plans](#) are being implemented. The latest E. L. Wiegand Fitness Center Fitness Center design incorporates approximately 85 parking spaces on the bottom level to help offset the loss of metered-parking spaces currently in this location, and a new parking lot, the East Stadium Green lot, was recently created where the unused outdoor tennis courts once stood east of Mackay Stadium, providing an additional 195 parking spots.

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**Photo Cutline: (from left to right)** E. L. Wiegand Foundation Chair Raymond "Skip" Avansino, Jr., Foundation President Kristen Avansino and University of Nevada, Reno President Marc Johnson at the groundbreaking of the E. L. Wiegand Fitness Center June 17, 2015. The E. L. Wiegand Fitness Center is slated to open in early 2017.

**Rendering downloads available here:** <http://newsroom.unr.edu/?p=15517>.

*Founded in 1874 as Nevada's land-grant university, the University of Nevada, Reno ranks in the top tier of best national universities by U.S. News and World Report. With nearly 20,000 students, the University is driven to contribute a culture of student success, world-improving research and outreach that enhances communities and business. Part of the Nevada System of Higher Education, the University has the system's largest research program and is home to the state's medical school. Bringing outreach and education programs to all Nevada counties and home to one of the largest study-abroad consortiums, the University extends across the state and around the world. For more information, visit [www.unr.edu](http://www.unr.edu).*

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