

E L Wiegand Fitness Center

Groundbreaking: University of Nevada, Reno

(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.

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.

The 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.

"The E. L. Wiegand Fitness Center will be a pivotal piece of the student-centered mid-campus development that reflects the mind, body and spirit," Shannon Ellis, Vice President Student Services, said in her opening remarks. "Our goal is to enhance student success by encouraging students to not just challenge their minds, but also their physical strength. This continuum of care for our students is made possible by those of you here today."

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.

Ellis recognized other major donors, including the William N. Pennington Foundation, Jerry and Roxie Enneking, Jeffrey Rodefer, Paul Bible and his late wife, Judy, John K. Carothers, and President Marc Johnson and Karen Penner-Johnson.

"I would like to thank our lead donor, the E. L. Wiegand Foundation," Ellis said. "As a generous benefactor for many years, the E. L. Wiegand Foundation's generous commitment is certain to not only affect the lives of our students during their time at the University of Nevada, Reno but will help many commit to a lifetime of healthy living."

Through its impressive gifts, the E. L. Wiegand Foundation has left an indelible imprint on the region's arts, education, health and wellness and community services. Edwin L. Wiegand was a successful entrepreneur and inventor who made Reno his home in 1971. He died in 1980 at the age of 88, and the E. L. Wiegand Foundation was established in Reno in 1982 for general charitable purposes.

"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 ceremony included a ceremonial bench press for which each of the attending dignitaries filled a weight plate with



a scoop of dirt from the groundbreaking site and signed them. The bench press and plates will be moved to the construction site and buried with the foundation of the building.

Following the ceremony, University President Marc Johnson counted down from ten, and Skip and Kristen Avansino depressed the plunger on a construction detonator, setting off a pyrotechnics display as an excavator raised a banner skyward.

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.

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.

"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.

The E. L. Wiegand Fitness Center will nearly double the space dedicated to fitness and recreation at the University. The four-story facility will offer more than 108,000 square feet of multi-use space for fitness and recreation. The building's total square footage, including the garage, will exceed 150,000.

The ground floor will be a parking garage with approximately 85 spaces.

The first floor will be the main entry level, with a lobby, men's and women's locker rooms, administrative offices, and two multi-purpose rooms. The majority of the floor space will be dedicated to an open strength training space and functional training zone. The stadium stairs begin at this level.

The second floor continues the stadium stairs, and holds five multi-purpose rooms for fitness classes such as yoga, Pilates, aerobics, and Zumba. There will be additional restrooms on this floor.

The third floor features the gymnasium with three multi-use courts and a cardio zone with exercise machines such as stationary bikes and treadmills. There will also be an additional smaller strength training room complementing the first floor's offerings.

The fourth floor will hold the 1/8th mile running track and include some areas for stretching, and the stadium stairs will end at this level.

All floors incorporate open spaces and high walls and ceilings to promote a sense of spaciousness in what will be a high-use facility.

Once the E. L. Wiegand Fitness Center opens, Lombardi 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, 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 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.

Short-term hourly parking is now located at the Brian J. Whalen Parking Complex at \$1.50 per hour, with a four-hour maximum, providing visitors close proximity to frequently visited campus buildings. Daily parking is now available on the top floor of the West Stadium Parking Complex, accessed off of 16th Street.

Total project cost for the E. L. Wiegand Fitness Center 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. Approval to proceed with development of the new proposed E. L. Wiegand Fitness Center was granted by the Board of Regents Oct. 18, 2013. 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.

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