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University approves \$44.8M for building projects

By [Rachel Weick](#)

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A university's board of trustees has approved \$44.8 million for building projects to address the school's growing capacity needs.

Grand Valley State University said last week that it will construct an approximately 145,000-square-foot housing and academic building and a roughly 16,900-square-foot addition to the existing Recreation Center at its Allendale campus.

Construction on housing and academic building should begin in March and be completed by August 2016.

The rec center addition should be completed by August 2016.

Freshman "living-learning center"

Andy Beachnau, associate vice provost of student affairs at GVSU, said in the last couple of years, the university had strong enrollment numbers for first-year students and was at capacity in freshman housing centers.

"We were assigning first-year students to upper-class areas, but now, creating a new first-year building, we are able to put first-year students with other first-year students," Beachnau said.

The \$37-million project to build the housing and academic building also includes the demolition of the existing Icie Macy Hoobler Living Center on the northeast side of the Allendale campus, behind Mackinac Hall and Robinson Field. The Icie Macy Hoobler Living Center was built in 1987 and has 50 beds.

The new housing building will accommodate 498 students in traditional-style bedroom units.

The building will feature various elements: laundry facilities; game room; outdoor recreational space; and an Einstein's Bagel food service.

The building will also feature several academic spaces as a "living-learning center": study and lounge area; three classrooms; computer lab; media room; and three faculty offices.

"The concept we have been using is a learning-living center," Beachnau said. "It is a hybrid building where you have students living together and have classes and faculty offices. The method is to bring in the academics and the social into the home, which is what we call the living-learning center. It maximizes both the academic and social experience."

Firms and funding for dorm

Designed by [Fishbeck, Thompson, Carr and Huber](#), the housing and academic building will be built by [Erhardt Construction](#) in Ada.

GVSU said funding for the \$37-million project is allocated from university-issued bonds, the University General Fund and the Housing Capital Reserve Fund.

Recreation Center addition

The \$7.8-million project at the Recreation Center will add approximately 16,900 square feet on the south end of the facility, bringing its total square footage to roughly 88,900.

The center was built in 1995 with 54,000 square feet, before having roughly 18,000 square feet added in 2002.

“We were finding we were at capacity for some of our weight and cardiovascular equipment, and we needed some additional room,” Beachnau said. “We made the decision if we are going to have maximum use, we need to increase the opportunity for students to have individual workouts.”

The addition will create more space for cardio and strength-training equipment: treadmills, elliptical trainers, free weights, weight machines and more.

The project will also include basic renovations to an 11,500-square-foot space in the Recreation Center that’s used for cardio and weight exercises.

Kate Harmon, director of Campus Recreation at [GVSU](#), said as a “student-centered institution,” it’s the university’s “job to reduce barriers that prevent our students from experiencing the benefits of exercise.”

“College students do better academically when they visit their campus recreation centers,” Harmon said. “Exercise improves memory retention, increases focus and concentration, relieves stress and helps improve mood.”

Firms and funding for rec center

[Integrated Architecture](#) in Grand Rapids, St. Louis-based [Hasting+Chivetta Architects](#) and [Erhardt Construction](#) in Ada will work on the rec center addition.

Financial support for the roughly \$7.8-million project will be funded by the Campus Development Fund.



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