

Indoor Training Facility: The Initiative for the Future of Air Force Athletics

The United States Air Force Academy is an NCAA Division One school with more than two dozen intercollegiate teams. While this may not be unique in light of the many other colleges in America with this designation, athletics directly supports the larger mission of the Academy: to educate and train men and women to become officers of character who will lead the United States Air Force in service to our nation. Athletics is given equal standing with academics, military training and character development as foundations for excellence.

Therefore, *every* young man or woman who attends the Air Force Academy is a dedicated student-athlete, a sharp distinction from most colleges. The competitive spirit that drives every athlete is utilized and refined at the Academy to forge tomorrow's leaders of character through the mental and physical challenges of today.

However, determination, commitment and hard work can only go so far without adequate support. The Air Force Academy's athletics program now encompasses an intensive year-round training and competition schedule, which includes 27 intercollegiate sports, 14 intramural sports and numerous physical education classes. The athletics program has far exceeded the capacity of the current indoor field facilities; more than 4,400 cadets train daily in a building that was constructed in 1968. The rigors of modern athletics require a new indoor training facility to ensure the outstanding program integrity associated with the Academy.

The proposed 92,000 square-foot indoor training facility will house a regulation-sized field that can accommodate football, lacrosse, and soccer, in addition to many other athletic activities. The direct and immediate benefits to cadets provided by the new facility will include: increased practice time and flexibility in preparation, improved performance, fewer injuries, decreased weather delays, and better replication of game conditions.

Improved athletic training also provides long-term benefits to cadets, instilling perseverance, resilience, integrity, commitment, and the willingness to make sacrifices to succeed. Athletic participation acts as a "real-time leadership lab," pushing cadets to their mental and physical limits in stressful, challenging conditions. They learn to balance competing demands on their time and resources, enduring countless hours of training, heavy class loads, and the difficulties of playing while injured or in recovery. For our student-athletes, victory is not limited to the athletic field; through participation at the intramural and intercollegiate levels, they acquire the tools and traits to pursue success for the rest of their military and civilian lives.

Currently, the Air Force Academy is the only service academy and one of only three institutions in the Mountain West Conference without a dedicated indoor training facility. West Point and Annapolis have both added indoor practice facilities to their campuses in the last five years. And since attracting outstanding candidates is a critical function of the Academy vital recruiting efforts, the existence of campus facilities on par with, or exceeding, those of competing colleges is a key component of supporting the Academy's mission of developing leaders of character. Additionally, the appeal of a strong athletics program attracts a broader range of candidates, supporting diversity in recruiting.

The new indoor training facility is destined to become a landmark of private philanthropy as the largest privately-funded capital project in the Academy's history. It is the first large-scale, on-campus capital project primarily funded by graduates. Graduates are actively taking on the responsibility of raising the next generation of leaders at USAFA, utilizing their unique experience and understanding to carefully invest their resources and effectively provide the greatest benefit to cadets.

The surrounding community will also benefit from the indoor training facility, acting as a premier venue for amateur community athletic events year-round. The facility's versatility ensures a wide variety of indoor recreational opportunities to the public. The building will be accessible to all members of the community, including those with disabilities, providing an area for physical challenge and valuable social interaction. Usage by local and national organizations (such as the State Games of America, the Colorado Special Olympics, and ACIS Fitness National Championships) will positively impact the economic health of the local community, supporting restaurants, hotels and other local businesses. This can only further enhance the Academy's status as a national tourist destination.

To make these benefits a reality, the USAFA Endowment, at the request of the Air Force Academy, is actively seeking private support for the construction of this regulation-sized indoor athletic training facility.