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FMU trustees approve \$8.5 million to build new athletic complex

FLORENCE – Francis Marion University President Luther F. Carter and the FMU Board of Trustees are moving ahead with plans to build a new athletic complex.

During its quarterly meeting Friday (Nov. 6), the board unanimously approved an \$8.5 million bond issue to build the complex on the west side of the campus. The new facility will consist of baseball, softball and soccer fields and track and field components. The complex will be situated on more than 100 acres of university property.

“This facility will provide us a superb venue for hosting intercollegiate and intramural events,” said Carter. “It’s an essential addition for moving our athletic programs forward.”

Construction will be completed in increments and paid for through three primary sources: student activity fees, bonds and private donations. Last year, the board approved the naming of the new baseball stadium after longtime supporters of the university, the Sparrow family of Lake City.

The arena will be called the Henry Booker and Nellie Cooke Sparrow Baseball Stadium. It will seat approximately 2,500 fans with a growth potential of accommodating an additional 2,500 and features paved parking for nearly 400 cars.

In other business, the Executive Director of the S.C. Commission on Higher Education Garrison Walters, and Chairman of the S.C. Commission on Higher Education Ken Wingate, made an appeal to Carter and the board concerning the higher education study, “Leveraging Higher Education for a Stronger South Carolina: The Action Plan Framework.”

The Action Plan Implementation for the study outlines four goals (listed below) for higher education and provides clear direction through a series of specific strategies and recommendations to ensure the future success and competitiveness of South Carolina.

- Making South Carolina one of the most educated states
- Increasing research and innovation in South Carolina
- Increasing workforce training and educational services in South Carolina
- Realizing South Carolina’s potential resources and effectiveness

The two asked that the university lend its support to the plan which they said confirms and quantifies the belief that investments in higher education yield bountiful economic and societal returns for the state.

During his report, Carter said university officials will gear up for fundraising in the spring to provide additional scholarships to students.

“Private scholarships make a crucial difference to the sons and daughters of Pee Dee residents who are in dire need of financial assistance,” said Carter. “A substantial part of increasing educational opportunities for our students resides with our ability to generate additional scholarships.”

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