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UMaine Today



Board authorizes \$14 million investment in UMaine women's athletic facilities

January 25, 2022

Orono, Maine — The University of Maine System Board of Trustees has approved up to \$14 million to implement priority 1 athletic field improvements to the University of Maine varsity soccer, softball and field hockey venues starting this spring, and to continue planning and design of the [UMaine athletics facilities master plan](#).

The improvements are donor-funded and part of the \$240 million commitment the Harold Alfond Foundation has made to the University of Maine System. The projects, organized as the [UMS TRANSFORMS Initiative](#), included a \$90 million investment in UMaine athletics to fund upgrades to facilities in the state's only Division I athletics program. The university is working to raise an additional \$20 million in donations to match the foundation's grant to athletics.

The Harold Alfond Foundation grant to UMS and the people and students of Maine was the eighth largest grant in the history of American public higher education when it was awarded in fall 2020.

"UMaine's commitment to competitive excellence and equity attracted the significant Alfond investments that will benefit students and athletes from all over Maine and beyond," says Chancellor Dannel Malloy. "And our improved facilities will make our flagship campus a preferred destination for educational and community programs, and athletic competitions. Learners and athletes of all ages and from all corners of Maine will benefit."

"Black Bears everywhere are grateful for the strong support of the Harold Alfond Foundation and the donations that have followed to provide our athletic programs and student athletes of all ages with access to first-class facilities here in Orono," says UMaine President Joan Ferrini-Mundy. "Investments authorized by the Board advance our vision for competitive excellence for UMaine athletics, our commitments to gender equity, and our plans to bring tens of thousands of Mainers to their flagship university every year to participate in our programs and visit our venues."

The construction and improvements to the field hockey, soccer and softball facilities will be the first step of a multiyear upgrade to the athletic department footprint. Construction is anticipated to begin in spring 2022.

"We are extremely grateful and excited for the opportunity to play on our new field next year," UMaine softball student-athlete Caitlyn Fallon says. "The renovations being done are going to elevate our program and we are so excited to be one of the first teams to experience it all."

"This move will allow us to meet our stated goals of compliance with gender equity regulations, improved accessibility and community engagement. It is also providing quality, competitive facilities our varsity programs need to be successful in Division I," Director of Athletics Ken Ralph says.

"We are thrilled the Board of Trustees has approved the construction of these three important facilities," says Ralph. "These class-leading venues will set the stage for the further build-out of our athletics facility master plan and will be a point of pride for all of Black Bear Nation."

"The soccer stadium project is transformational for our program," UMaine women's soccer head coach Scott Athlerley says. "The fact that we are among the first approved projects of the athletics facilities master plan is a testament to our administration's commitment to gender equity and providing our women's soccer student-athletes with a first-class Division I experience. In a short time, we will be showcasing arguably the finest playing facility in the America East Conference and northeast region. The impact that this will have on our ability to attract and recruit championship-caliber student-athletes to our program will be profound."

"The importance of new facilities for our program cannot be overstated," UMaine field hockey head coach Josette Babineau says. "To give fans a place to come and not only enjoy watching us play, but to be able to learn about our sport is so key to our program and our goals. We see this as just the beginning of what we can accomplish following up our America East Championship and NCAA tournament appearance. Having these facilities will allow us to give our athletes everything they need and deserve as a part of our program, while also showing potential recruits that the future is very bright for not only field hockey at UMaine, but athletics as a whole. We are grateful for the opportunity to be able to build upon what we have created, and thankful to the Harold Alfond Foundation and the University of Maine for providing the funding for these upgrades."

UMaine Athletics partnered with JLG Architects to develop the 10-year facilities master plan, designing it as a way to best enhance the student-athlete and fan experience at university events. The plan was carefully constructed to develop facilities to also support a variety of campus programming such as, but not limited to, large academic conventions, music and arts events, and ROTC activities. The facilities will add much-needed space for the university's robust recreational sports programs, including all club and intramural sports. UMaine will be working with architects WBRC (Bangor, Maine) and Crawford & Associates (Kansas City, Missouri) to complete the athletics facilities master plan.

"We are very grateful that our new facilities have been approved and that we will be breaking ground this spring," UMaine softball head coach Jordan Fitzpatrick says. "It's been a long time since our field has been upgraded and it's much needed. I'm honored to have been a part of this process and happy that our program will be able to benefit from a state-of-the-art facility this fall."

These state-of-the-art facilities will be tailored to host a variety of youth and high school events. The UMaine Athletics footprint will be equipped to host high school championships, youth club sports and other regional events as UMaine strives to be the premier destination for youth activities in the state.

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Division of Marketing and Communications
5703 Alumni Hall
Orono, ME 04469-5703

Tel: 207.581.3743
Fax: 207.581.3776

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