

**Publication:**The Dominion Post;**Date:**May 14, 2009;**Section:**Area News;**Page Number:**21

## WVU renews pledge for \$20M wellness center

### Student facility may be ready by 2011

BY CASSIE SHANER The Dominion Post

WVU officials renewed their commitment to construct a \$20 million wellness center near the Student Recreation Center by 2011 on Wednesday.

They are still seeking funding for the facility. It would further integrate and improve health resources on campus by combining medical care, mental health, psychiatry, health education and wellness services under one roof, officials said.

"We like to say that we are a student-centered university," interim WVU President C. Peter Magrath said. "If we are a student-centered university ... it is absolutely imperative that we have an integrated student health center where thousands and thousands of men and women who are students here can go and get friendly, good service for their health needs."

WVU's Division of Student Affairs hosted a strategic planning retreat with WVU students, faculty and staff at the Mountainlair on Wednesday to discuss plans for the wellness center and other health initiatives.

Ken Gray, vice president of student affairs, said WVU's health care programs have operated independently in the past, but they were incorporated into the Division of Student Affairs several months ago to integrate health care services. A flow chart detailing the new structural organization was presented to attendees at the retreat.

Cathy Yura, interim assistant vice president of student health and wellness, reports to Gray and oversees WVU's Student Health Service, mental health, psychiatric services and health promotions programs.

She noted that students have already expressed their dedication to health and wellness by using the Rec Center and crafting a campuswide wellness initiative — called WELL WVU — that was presented to administrators last fall. Now it's up to WVU's faculty and staff to focus on health care, she said.

"It's of the utmost importance that we work together to provide comprehensive health care for our students," Yura said.

Lisa Costello, a WVU medical student, reminded attendees that good health is essential for a good education, and health lessons extend beyond WVU's classrooms and the Morgantown community.

"By teaching our students — most of whom are West Virginia residents like me — about the importance of health, we secondarily disseminate that information back into the student's community, thus fulfilling a purpose of our landgrant mission," Costello said.

Yura said the wellness center will likely cost \$20 million or more, and administrators hope to have it built by 2011.

No funding has been identified for the project, but Delegate Barbara Evans Fleischauer, D-Monongalia, said Monongalia County's legislators are "thinking creatively" to identify funding opportunities.

Fleischauer said local legislators plan to contact federal lawmakers for assistance, and they are looking into tobacco settlement money, federal grants and bonding, among other options. She's not sure if the project could be completed by 2011, however.

"I think it would be wonderful if we could get there," Fleischauer said. "I don't know if it's a feasible goal. We have a lot of work to do."

Magrath noted that running and regular exercise have helped him feel more strong and alert. He will return to Washington, D.C., after WVU President-elect James P. Clements takes over June 30, but he said he will try to return to Morgantown for the wellness center's ribbon-cutting.

“Everybody needs to push for this,” Magrath said. “It’s good for WVU. It’s good for the citizens of this state.”