

Strom Thurmond Center to open March 1

BY ALEXIS STRATTON
THE GAMECOCK

The Strom Thurmond Fitness and Wellness Center is scheduled to open March 1, but parts of it may open early, said Jerry Brewer, director of student life.

"During the month of February it will be open on some limited basis," Brewer said. But March 1 is "the day we've been working with for two or three years."

Herbert Camp, director of campus recreation, said that the basketball courts, and possibly the indoor track, would be included in these early openings if construction on them is completed.

Camp also said that nearer to the opening date there will be an open house for students, but no date has been set.

They are planning a visit from Strom Thurmond as well, said

Brewer, but it has not been scheduled.

The Wellness Center has been under construction since September 2000 and will include the newest technology and resources.

"It's a total upgrade to what you're looking at now," Brewer said. "Just think of the best facility you've ever been to and multiply that by five times and that will be the one available to you March 1."

"The number of pieces of equipment is through the roof," Brewer said. "They're the most modern pieces of equipment available."

The third floor is devoted to cardiovascular exercise. It has a track one-seventh of a mile long as well as treadmills equipped with video screens and DVD players.

Also available to students, are indoor and outdoor pools, a sand volleyball court, a Jacuzzi and sauna, several racquetball and

squash courts, basketball courts and a 52-foot tall rock-climbing wall.

Student groups and clubs will be able to reserve some spaces for banquets and gatherings, including the outdoor pool area.

Despite the amount of work being done to the wellness center, Brewer said the construction is on schedule.

"Each time I bring someone down here they say, 'You're going to open March 1?' Well, you should've seen it two weeks ago," Brewer said. "You would've thought I was crazier than I am, but we're going to be open March 1."

Devon Hawkins, a second-year sports and entertainment management student, said he is anxious for the center to open.

"The Strom Thurmond Center will be nicer because it's closer to where I live," Hawkins said.

Third-year statistics student

Lindsey Martin said she works out with the crew team every morning and does not like how overcrowded the Blatt PE Center is.

"I've never seen so many people in one place in my entire life," Martin said.

"I think it's going to be much bigger, have more equipment and be much nicer than the old PE center," said Shandall Johnson, a third-year exercise-science student. "I think it's going to add a lot to the university."

"When this opens in March, there will not be a better building of this type on a college campus," Brewer said. "This will be the best, from an aesthetic standpoint and from a functioning standpoint."

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Tuition

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phants fight, it's the ground that suffers. So basically we are the ones suffering for things that we cannot control."

Student Government President Ankit Patel said that the reason students have failed in the past is they have taken their frustrations out on the administration, not the state Legislature.

"There has kind of been this animosity toward the administration as it is kind of us versus them mentality, as if we've got to fight the administration and tell them not to increase tuition," he said. "I can speak first hand that a lot of administration officials, stemming from Dr. Sorensen all the way down, they are just as concerned about tuition as the other person."

One idea is to organize the

state's college students into one group and go before the Legislature to express the concerns of South Carolina's students as a whole. Patel said this process is already in place in Tennessee.

"I just think it makes sense when you have all the students from Clemson, students from USC, Winthrop, Wofford, College of Charleston; all of them coming before the state Legislature and saying, look, here are the things that students are concerned about," he said.

Ibemere said that students shouldn't have to lobby the Legislature, but that lawmakers should already be taking care of students' concerns.

"The state should have our interests at hand, and I don't think they do," she said. "We shouldn't have to go tell them to listen to us, they should already know."

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