

Getting down to WORKOUT

Every day, as many as 8,000 University students, staff and faculty members kick, jab and sweat their way to fitness at the three campus recreational facilities. Students flock to the facilities because they are inexpensive and located conveniently on campus.

"I think the facilities are good. I come here because it's closest by far," Engineering fourth-year graduate student Vuk Vorich said.

But during the recent Michigan Student Assembly elections, the accessibility of campus student services such as the Central Campus Recreation Building was questioned out of concern that the hours did not accommodate student schedules.

Other students who use the facilities say it's not the hours that concern them but the quality of the equipment they are using to tone and firm their bodies and minds.

"I think the facilities are poor compared to the amount of funding this University receives," RC senior Tony Gardiner said.

Engineering sophomore Andrea Chod said she is outraged by the facilities. "The machines are dirty, rusty, old and gross. I have to force myself to use them," Chod said.

"I think they could be a lot better. They are really crowded, and you have to wait forever to get a machine that you want," Engineering freshman Heather Steen said.

Although students complain about the facilities, members of the Department of Recreational Sports staff say funds and space shortage present quite a problem.

Working out the problems

The University built the Central Campus and North Campus recreational buildings in the early 1970s. RecSports Business Manager

Larry Branch said the University is still paying off the debt on the facilities.

Between the three buildings, the University offers students three swimming pools, badminton courts, indoor jogging tracks, personal dance space, speed bag and heavy bag boxing areas, martial arts space, handball courts, wally-ball courts, ping-pong tables and frisbee playing fields.

The University charges all students \$15 out of their tuition per semester for the facilities, which breaks down to \$5 for daily operations, \$6 for bond redemption and \$4 for maintenance, RecSports Associate Director Debrah Webb said.

RecSports Director Mike Stevenson said about 85 percent of students have used the fitness facilities on campus.

During elections last month, MSA candidates for the Wolverine Party campaigned on a platform calling for 24-hour access to the University libraries, the Michigan Union and the CCRB.

"A 24 hour CCRB is unrealistic," Webb said.

After the buildings close, the facilities are rented to groups, and the later the building closes, the later the rental starts, Webb said.

"People have to be aware of the rental program and that custodians need to be here to clean and get ready for the next day," Webb said.

Besides the logistics of building operations, Webb said it is money that is the biggest hurdle in accommodating students requests.

While students want newer facilities, Webb said the earliest possible time that the University could renovate or add on to the CCRB and NCRB is 2002.

"It is very unlikely, we are tied into the tuition percentage the state is willing to agree to," Branch said.

"There are too many people fighting for the same dollars. We've asked but there is no luck," Webb said.

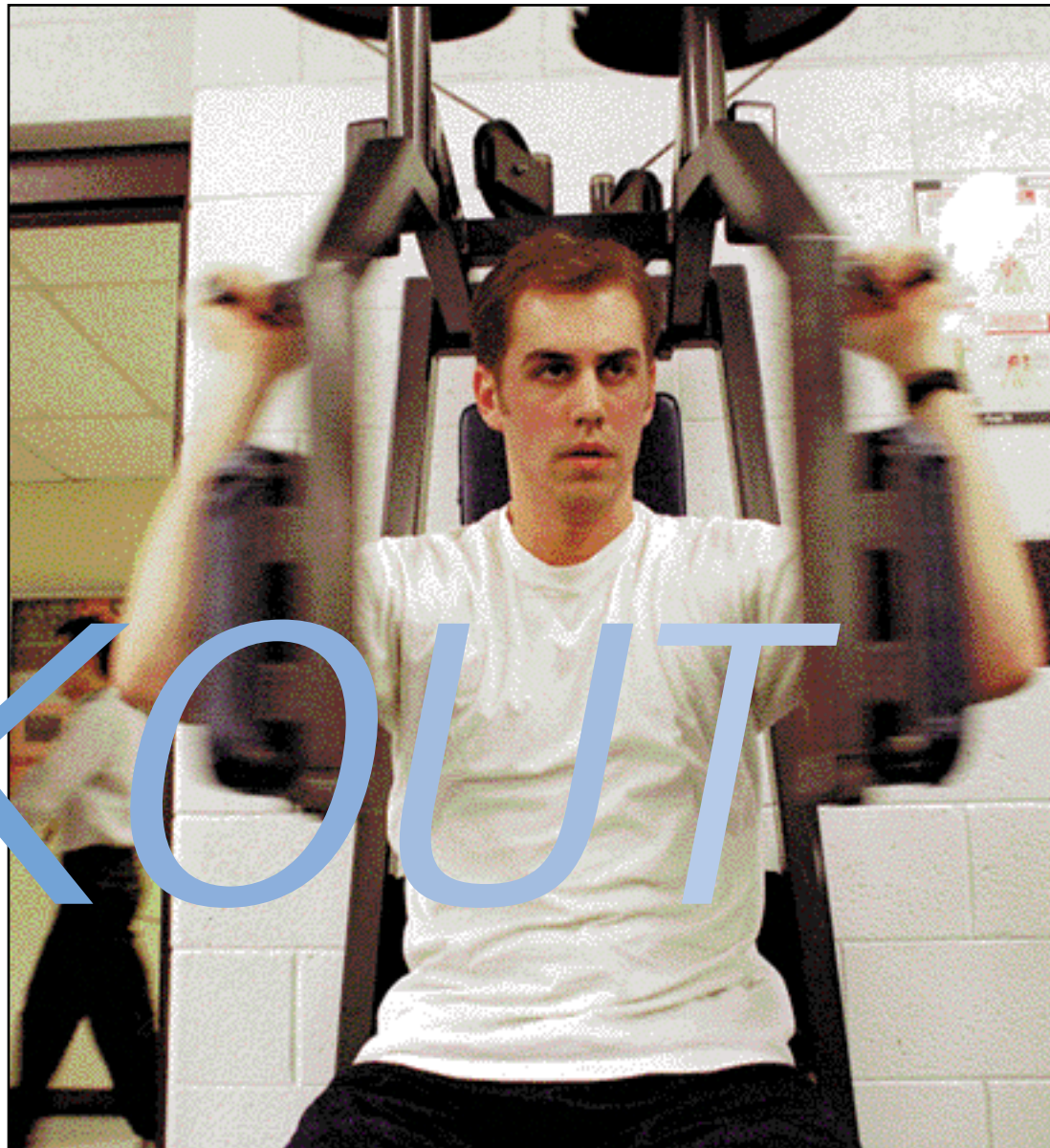
The recent addition of eight treadmills to the CCRB and six to the NCRB set RecSports back \$95,000. New Nautilus machines at the CCRB that were installed two weeks ago replaced Hydrofitness machines that had been in use since the center first opened and put a sizeable \$39,000 dent in the RecSports budget.

"Folks have to realize that \$115,000 is spent on maintenance," Webb said.

Every 10 years, the main gyms need to be sanded down and recoated, which was done to the Intramural Sports Building and the CCRB last year. The NCRB gyms are scheduled to be redone this summer.

Tracks at the CCRB and the NCRB also need regular resurfacing.

A large portion of the RecSports budget also goes toward paying student employees.



Rackham graduate student Mike Bachman works out on a butterfly machine at the Central Campus Recreation Building this week.

Each year the department pays \$587,000 to student employees, who each earn between \$5.50 and \$7.85 per hour.

Outside influences

Due to the University's tight budget concerns, some students say they can only get a good workout off campus.

One on One Athletic Club, located at 2875 Boardwalk Dr. near the Briarwood Mall, said between 20 percent and 25 percent of its members are college students, most of whom attend the University.

"Students work out here because the facilities on campus aren't well maintained and don't have updated equipment," One on One employee Andrea Ste. Marie said.

"Plus we offer a full range of aerobic classes free to members and yoga and pilates — a really broad range — as well as fitness consultants and personal trainers," she said.

An average membership at One on One costs \$50 per month, but some students said they don't mind paying for an off-campus gym membership.

"The facilities are nicer and there's shorter waiting times than the CCRB," said LSA sophomore Jordan Bernstein, who works out at One on One.

Another popular off-campus spot is Bally Total Fitness, located at 615 Briarwood Drive. Bally's Manager Nick Nesheiwat said 30 percent to 35 percent of the club's members are students.

"It is less crowded here, we have state of the art equipment and that is why students usually work out here," Nesheiwat said.

An exercise in patience

Students concerns about the CCRB have been expressed before.

In October 1998, LSA senior Joe Bernstein, who served on MSA at the time, led a committee to improve the CCRB. The group suggested a small increase in tuition to give RecSports more funding.

MSA and LSA Student Government unanimously passed resolutions to improve the facilities.

In an official statement describing the proposal, Bernstein emphasized that University students deserve better.

"On a campus where we are encouraged to be healthy people who exercise regularly, it just doesn't make any sense to have exercise equipment that is in really poor shape. The problem now is getting enough money to make changes — that's what this effort is designed to do. If we can show the administration that students think this is an important issue, I think they will listen," the statement read.

Bernstein said he and the RecSports staff met to discuss student concerns but the staff did not act on the suggestions.

The committee later tried to take their recommendations for a RecSports budget

increase to the University Board of Regents. Bernstein said he believes the administration did not present a proposal to the regents and consequently no improvements were made.

Bernstein said all the University needs to do is change its priorities and reallocate funds.

"Part of our tuition goes to resurfacing sidewalks," he said, "Do students really care? It is not true that they can't increase the budget for RecSports."

Although Bernstein fought hard for changes while he was an MSA member, recently elected MSA Communications Chairman Matt Nolan said, "If somebody brings up this issue of improving RecSports then we'll look at it, but our main focus is on communicating with the other committees to carry out ideas."

Nolan said he plans to speak with Bernstein to find out what exactly was done by he and his committee because "MSA committees don't carry over ideas very well," Nolan said.

Buffing up the machines

RecSports may not immediately follow MSA requests, but department managers said they are able to meet students' desires through input from suggestion forms when money and space allows.

Webb said RecSports managers had several requests for new treadmills. As a result, eight new treadmills were purchased last fall and a racquetball court was closed to accommodate the new machines.

Webb said the staff travels to trade shows and compare notes with other schools to determine what holds up well.

"We try to offer as many alternatives so everyone can find some type of equipment that really fits their exercise needs," Webb said.

"We realize it gets really crowded, but our hands are really kind of tied. Take a look in the rooms and there's nowhere to put new machines without adding additional space," Webb said.

In addition, Webb said, the building's electrical capacity has been reached.

In the meantime, RecSports staff say they are trying to keep the equipment updated and the facilities well maintained.

Last month the CCRB and the NCRB received new lights, which Webb said are the best available.

"They are a lot more efficient and brighter, so it should be much better," she said.

Ventilation in the building, which students often complained about, also has been improved.

"Several years ago we upgraded the air cooling system units in the exercise and weight rooms, which cost a significant amount of money to get up to par, but improved dramatically," Webb said.

RecSports also plans to extend the facilities' hours at the beginning of the fall term. From Thursday through Saturday, the CCRB will remain open one additional hour, until 11 p.m. The IMSB will open two hours earlier Monday through Friday, at 9 a.m., and will stay open one hour later on Thursdays and Fridays, until 11 p.m.

"Adding extra hours is a step in the right direction, but they just don't want to spend the money or find more staff to keep it open longer," Bernstein said.



LSA junior Juliana Khalifeh lifts overhead weights at the Central Campus Recreation Building this week.

"Part of our tuition goes to resurfacing sidewalks. Do students really care? It's not true that they can't increase the budget for RecSports."

— Joe Bernstein
LSA senior



The Central Campus Recreation Building is one of three fitness facilities on campus.

By Jodie Kaufman
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