**Field House on Schedule for March Opening**

**By: Kevin Noreen**

Progress on the new Recreation Center and Field House project is moving steadily along and is on schedule to be open later this spring. The new building houses the highest elevation collegiate indoor track, but it was designed with a wide variety of other uses in mind. Western State Colorado University already claims the highest collegiate pool, which has also been renovated as part of the project, including new locker rooms and the addition of a hot tub.

The twenty-eight million dollar Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design Gold project has been underway for three years including the design process, but the concept has been in the works for over a decade. Janna Hansen is the new Director of Campus Recreation. She will oversee much of the new facility, although there will be some overlap with various athletic programs.

“I am really just excited about the student energy that this space will create,” Hansen said. “Whether you’re just a general student who wants to come play a little pickup basketball, or if you’re a Mountain Sports athlete, or a climber, or club sports, or NCAA, this is just a fun place to play, and hang out, and build community for every student.”

The general contractor is tentatively scheduled to turn over the field house to Western on February 3. Some areas may be available to athletic teams for limited use as staff is trained and final equipment is installed, but the grand opening will be sometime towards the end of March. Hansen said a committee is planning activities to mark the opening, including the possibility of live music.

In addition to the 200 meter track, the Field House features three basketball courts that can also be used for volleyball games, a throwing cage and jumping pit, as well as a batting and golf cage. The current High Altitude Performance Lab and classroom will also be relocating to the new facility. No group seems to be left out; there is also a trampoline and foam pit for the Mountain Sports Team to practice aerials.

Above the track are a series of offices and conference rooms for Recreation Center staff and athletic teams, as well as a press box. The new facility has weight rooms for both the athletics department and the student body, and three fitness rooms to be used for activities such as Zumba, spin classes and yoga.

The Recreation Center also has a 43.5 foot climbing wall that was built by Entre Prises. The climbing wall is the first plywood wall Entre Prises has built anywhere that also features two simulated cracks. These cracks can be used to practice placing traditional climbing gear and to train for the outdoors. The wall has bolted lead climbing as well, and a belay station at the top of the wall to hone technique for multi-pitch routes.

Student input was a major consideration in the construction of the climbing wall, as well as the overall building. Surveys revealed that the hot tub and the foam pit were at the top of the list for what students wanted to see in the new Recreation Center. Students voted in favor of raising student fees to help with the cost of the Field House, and it appears that the efforts have paid off with an impressive building that everyone can benefit from.