Tech Master Plan revised, updated

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The Capital Planning and Space Management Department (CPSM) recently updated Tech’s Campus Master Plan. The Master Plan is a complex document, updated every five to seven years, and acts as a guide for future physical campus development.

“The purpose of a campus master plan is to help us grow smart,” said Leslie Saunders, director of CPSM. As such, the plan’s focus is outlining major goals and locating opportunities rather than specific, definite expansion plans.

“It’s a map, not a prescription, an idea of several different ways to achieve what we want to accomplish instead of one way. A master plan that is a strawticket is a failure,” Saunders said.

The plan outlines several major focus areas for the development of the campus over the next five years. A major focus of the update is the sustainability of the campus, the goal of which is “making sure that the Georgia Tech campus is an ecologically friendly, ecologically responsible part of the Atlanta community,” Saunders said.

One major aspect of the plan is the addition of a vast amount of green space on campus. “We want to create an Eco-Commons, which dedicates about 80 acres of the campus [to green space],” Saunders said.

The Eco-Commons will be used for storm water management, but it will also include walking and biking paths. “[There will also be] places to play soccer, and pickup games of softball, and Ultimate,” said Saunders. “And all the other things that are just fun to do in wide open fields,” Saunders said.

Additional aspects of the plan include improved interaction with the community to gain benefits of a vast amount of green space on campus. “We want to create an Eco-Commons, which dedicates about 80 acres of the campus [to green space],” Saunders said.

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foods will also be available. “You needed to have something hot, fresh for lunch and dinner rather than the typical grab and go, on the run-type items,” Schram said.

The opening of new restaurants has had new implications for sum- mer campus dining, however. “One of the changes is that we’ve opened Pandini’s over Pizza Hut this year,” Schram said.

“I think everyone’s going to be very, very impressed,” Schram said, who said he’s looking forward to hearing student reaction.

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for the school. “Because we are a state institution it is very difficult for us to go out and buy property,” Saunders said. “We want to be able to partner with outsiders who want to...[develop] around campus, to make sure that those developments are beneficial, not only to the developer, but to Georgia Tech as well.”

Since the Master Plan is a long-term project, the construction it outlines often take years to materialize.

“The Material Science and Engineering building...has been planned for since 1997. And it’s only this year that all of the parts, the funding and everything else, [have] fallen into place so [the construction] can actually happen,” Saunders said, citing one example.

Several of the other goals outlined in the plan may take even longer to happen. “Ultimately we want to eliminate Tech Parkway as a street and move the campus boundary...to Marietta street,” Saunders said.

The 2004 update was necessitated by an increase in the number of students attending the Institute. “We have more students than we thought we would...so we have to ac- commodate that,” Saunders said.

The plan was compiled as a result of a series of meetings of a large com- mittee, composed of administration, faculty, and students. CPSM also received input from several external consultants.

“We...hired an outside special- ist to help us with the accessibility issues, and [another] to help us with the sustainability issues,” Saunders said.

Students and faculty polled to date have expressed satisfaction with the Master Plan’s state. “So far the comments that we’re getting from folks are all very, very positive,” "it’s wonderful, don’t change a thing," although we know that isn’t going to be universally true,” Saunders said.

The plan will be presented to the Board of Regents in October. “We’re using this summer as the opportunity to gather input from the campus, and then we will use that to refine and polish,” Saunders said. “What we would ask is that the students...help us develop a master plan that is responsive to the needs of the students by giving us comments.”

To view the complete plan and leave your comments, visit www. space.gatech.edu/masterplan. htm.
The facility has stayed within its projected costs throughout its construction. However, Edwards said that “something had to be cut, but…from the finishing touches, there will be no disappointments.” The building has more than double the amount of space for its fitness center.

Outdoor Recreation Georgia Tech, formerly housed in the O’Keefe Gym, will relocate into the new facility, which boasts a 35-foot climbing wall, compared with a 25-foot wall in the gym. According to Jonathan Hart, director of G.L.T FIT programs, “special attention was given to various populations…we plan on incorporating a ‘pre-condition’ area to lessen the intimidation of being in [the fitness area].” Included with the fitness equipment will be machines that comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act. “Combining the cardiovascular and the machines of equipment, the CRC will encompass 185 various pieces of fitness equipment,” Hart said.

Another highlight of the new facility includes a new leisure pool, comprised of lap lanes, a current channel, a sixteen-person hot tub, and a 184-foot water slide. Next to the leisure pool are two family changing areas that include restroom facilities for parents and their small children. An area is located adjacent to the leisure pool area that will cater to student social events. Student organizations will be invited to use this patio area as well.

Edwards said that “one of the biggest problems at this point in time…is this construction project has been [taking] forever.” During the period of construction in Summer 2003, students had the option of using the recently constructed Georgia State Recreation Center. While some students were impressed with that 101,000 square foot facility, according to Edwards, after the completion of Phase I, “[students] have seen GSU’s real nice facility, and we got into Phase I, and there’s limitations in Phase I.” Edwards is confident that the wait for the new facility is justified, saying “as soon as you get in the front of this building and come in the front door, people will see the benefits.” According to Edwards, many of the design features of the building were a response to a change in the culture of the campus, following the 1996 Olympics. “We’ve got all these dormitories on campus, something that had happened because of the Olympics, so our students are going to be here and we need somewhere for them to recreate,” Edwards said.

Prior to Edwards’ appointment, Campus Recreation’s Intramurals Director Kirk McQueen served as interim director. Edwards has worked as Tech for twelve years in Budgets and Planning, and managed the Aquatic Center for the Olympics. He received his B.S. from the State University of New York in Rockport, and an M.S. in Education from Syracuse University. The new director’s immediate goals are “to see that we can open the front door of this building August 16 and…make a good first impression on the students”. Edwards said he also wants an expanded role of campus recreation at Tech, saying “one of the long term goals…is campus recreation taking a bigger part in student AND professional staff and working with Student Affairs and… the Counseling Center.”

One of the long-term issues that the new facility will face are operational and personnel costs. The fiscal year 2005 budget request submitted by the Campus Recreation Center to the Student Government Association is at record-high levels.

Students have subsidized the construction of the center through a mandatory “S$C II fee” that was instituted in spring semester 1999. Operational and personnel costs of both the new Student Athletic Center facility and the new Campus Recreation Center are paid for in large part through the student activity fee.

Although the athletic center requested $3.1 million from the student activity fee, SGA allocated $1.3 million, at a time that comprised 61 percent of the total allocations. Among the groups that also receive funding from the fee are the Student Center, SGA and student organizations.

Edwards said that operations will not be affected by the shortfall in requested student activity funds from SGA. The facility will attempt to increase its revenue generating activities. In a document provided to the Technique, Edwards said that cost increases for the new athletic center are lower than those at other universities that have expanded their recreation facilities. The sharp increase in fees requested from the student activity fee is attributed to an increase in the number of student and professional staff that will work at the facility, according to budget documents submitted to SGA from fiscal years 2003 to 2005. According to Edwards, the increase in personnel was due to the need to hire additional professional staff, and the need for specially trained lifeguards to patrol the new leisure pool facility.

However, the increase in personnel staff was not unexpected. The Undergraduate House voted in 2001 to create eight new professional staff positions for fiscal year 2004, following a report on staffing requirements.

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David Andersen
JFC chair

from former Director of Campus Recreation Butch Stampfl.

According to Edwards. “When the list of [professional staff] positions were put to the students, the proposal was that 40 percent were going to be funded by the Institute, and the remaining funds funding from the fee were student. The fiscal year 2005 budget request submitted to Student Government attributed some of these staff increases since “additional service desks were needed on the forth floor and more workers…throughout the new building…Aquatics went from lifeguarding one indoor pool to guarding three indoor pools and one leisure pool.”

Edwards also states that the increased student staff will increase the availability of student employment opportunities. Your fees are coming right back around and helping kids get through school.” The increasing funding requests from the CRC have other student government officials questioning whether campus recreation should be funded with the student activity fee.

David Andersen, Joint Finance Committee chair, said “I plan to sit down with Mr. Edwards in the next couple of weeks to discuss with him SGA’s reasons for wanting to investigate a possible split of the current Student Activity Fee.”

The reason that we are investigating a fee split is due to the fact that a fee split would be easier to understand …when we are presenting our budget to the Board of Regents, and allows students to better understand exactly where their student activity fees are going,” he said.

However, there are differing opinions on the purpose of the student activity fee.

Dean of Students Gail DiSabatino sat in on the Edwards interview for this article. She said that the student activity fee “was established for two things, for the Student Center and the Campus Recreation Center.”

“For any other organization that get funded out of the SAF…you could look at that they are taking away what it was initially established for…It takes a lot to run this building and to run the programs”, says DiSabatino.

Despite the increased costs and the prolonged construction wait, students seem optimistic about the new facility.

“I think it’s going to be great…right now it’s really frustrating because the weight room is very small compared to how many people are in there,” said Mike Buonanno, an Aerospace Engineering graduate student.

“The is as good as it looks, it’s worth the wait,” he said.

Celebrations begin on September 29 with the official ribbon cutting. Official events to commemorate the completion of the facility will continue until October 1.