



NEW YORK UNIVERSITY

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MEMORANDUM

To: University Space Priorities Working Group

From: Linda G. Mills, Vice Chancellor for Global Programs and University Life

Date: February 5, 2013

Re: Response to your inquiries regarding Coles Sports and Recreation Center and Non-classroom space for student use.

Questions re: Coles Sports and Recreation Center

Why is the Coles Center critical to the core?

Coles was built in 1981 and at the time was the first and remained for decades the only athletic and recreational facility at NYU. As such it played a critical role in NYU's ascent from a strong regional school with a high proportion of commuter students to a world-class institution with national and global reach. At the core of the university's facilities, the Coles Center helped advance a national recruitment strategy, starting in the 1980's, that helped attract to NYU some of its best students—athletes, as well as students who need and want a sports and recreation center that is centrally located so that they can visit at any time of the day or evening.

Coles is heavily used: about 2,800 students a day visit Coles as well as hundreds of faculty, staff and community members. More than 1,000 NYU faculty members are paying members, joined by 650 administrators and staff. Last year over 9,000 members of the NYU community enrolled in non-credit recreation activity classes. Thousands of NYU students, including graduate students, participate in intramural sports, the majority of which occur in Coles. And 1,250 undergraduates are members of NYU's intercollegiate athletic teams. For all of these users, Coles provides a convenient and necessary location for athletic and recreational needs. In addition, Coles serves as the location for a range of community-building activities such as the NCAA and University Athletic Association championships or local sports events like the SNY television high school basketball tournament. With the leasing of NYU classroom space across the street in 194 Mercer St and added classes in Bobst Library and Kimmel, Coles has also become a convenient space where students can relax or study between classes.

Moreover, the Coles Center is the largest assembly space on campus and contains the only room with the capacity to hold 1,900 people. Whether it be for celebrations like the College of Arts and Science Freshman Convocation and Admitted Students Weekend, NYU "community cares" events like the Relay for Life and the Special Olympics, or institutional emergency responses to

power failures or national tragedies, Coles is the only space of its kind on campus and because it is centrally located, can be a gathering point for these defining or emergency events.

Coles has played an important role in the life of NYU, but after thirty years of continuous operation, the facility is showing stressful signs of its age. And those same thirty years have seen significant changes in the size, interests and expectations of our student body that make a replacement facility a priority. Major systems like pool handling and chlorination, the roof membrane and the gym floor itself will all soon require significant repairs. Coles was designed and built for a different time and much smaller and different NYU population. In 1981, NYU's on-campus student population was less than a third of today's, and the number of varsity teams less than half. Title IX has had an explosive impact on the number of female athletes graduating from high school and coming to college interests in competitive athletics. Finally, the design and layout and location of training and fitness equipment in Coles do not reflect current practices for the most efficient use of space.

The importance of adequate athletic and recreational facilities to student recruitment is underscored in this statement from NYU's Assistant VP of Admissions, Shawn Abbott:

“Prospective students who visit NYU expect that our facilities will be on par with those of our peer and aspiring peer institutions - most notably other elite urban research universities like the University of Pennsylvania, the University of Chicago, Columbia University, and the University of Southern California. In comparison to many of our peer institutions, our athletic and recreational facilities are perceived to be dated and substandard. In fact, two institutions in particular, Boston University and Northeastern University, have constructed state-of-the-art athletic and recreational facilities that essentially cast Coles in a position that starkly pales in comparison.

“In our survey of admitted students (administered every other year), we learn consistently that other than financial aid, the quality of our facilities (athletic and recreation facilities among them) and NYU's perceived lack of ‘campus’ are the most frequent reasons why students admitted to NYU decline our offer of admission.

“While hardly a scientific study, College Prowler, a popular website tool to search for colleges and universities, allows students to grade institutions on everything from faculty to campus safety. In the area of academics, we are graded a solid "A." In the area of athletic and recreational facilities, however, students ranked NYU #1,074 of 1,271 universities. Boston University ranked #47 while Northeastern ranked #287. While many do not see BU and Northeastern as aspiring peer institutions, each year, we lose 100-200 admitted students to these two universities alone.

“A new, state-of-the-art athletics and recreation center would bolster our recruitment efforts for top students in a significant way. A new complex would be a key stop on our campus tours and would be visited by roughly 100,000 families annually. It would provide a venue for our admitted student programming and it would signal to our prospective students and their increasingly price-sensitive parents, that while NYU does not have - nor does it need - a Division I athletic program, our students are physically active, health and wellness is a priority at NYU, and despite not having a campus with traditional boundaries, our students do have an important place on campus that fosters community.”

What plans exist to improve the quality and use of space at the current Coles Center?

Several improvements have been made to the Coles Center over the last year and a half, including:

- Roof repairs
- Replacement tennis courts, running track, batting cages and stretching area
- New cardio and weight room equipment (Equipment has a life of 3 years, and is therefore switched out on a rotating basis)
- Improvements to the locker rooms and the lounge
- Upgraded safety/security camera system

How is the Coles Center used by varsity and club intercollegiate sports, intramurals and recreational courses?

Given that NYU has no athletic fields or outdoor athletic facilities, the Coles Center is the University's primary sports space in the Washington Square core.

- 500 of the 1,250 varsity and club intercollegiate athletes use the Coles Center 25-30 hours each week to practice and compete, meet with their coaches, receive care and treatment for athletic injuries, and receive academic and personal advisement and other services.
- Over 2,600 intramural participants use the Coles facility to compete in activities such as basketball, volleyball, weightlifting, tennis, etc.
- Over 9,000 students, faculty, staff, alumni, and community board members purchase and participate in recreation classes in the Coles Center each year.

NOTE: NYU is a founding member of the University Athletic Association, an intercollegiate league whose members are other high-caliber academic institutions such as Washington University, University of Chicago, Carnegie Mellon, Emory, etc. with whom we compete not only on the playing fields and courts but in admissions and recruitment. The athletic facilities at these schools are superior in quality when compared to those at NYU.

What contingency plans have been made to address the University's athletic and recreational needs in the event of construction on the Coles site?

Several contingency plans are under consideration, including renting fields for athletic teams and securing memberships for NYU students, faculty and staff at various gyms around the city. Daily operational hours of the Palladium, located on East 14th Street, can be expanded to 24 hours per day during the 10 months of the Fall and Spring academic terms.¹

¹ The athletic facility in the below ground space at the Palladium residence hall, opened in 2002, was designed as a complement to Coles, not as a stand-alone complex. It contains excellent weight and cardio equipment and a first-rate natatorium which is used by varsity swimming and diving teams and club water polo. As users will attest, Palladium is frequently crowded even when used in tandem with Coles. It has only one basketball court and no spectator seating (vs. Coles' 5 courts plus a mini gym and stands for spectators), and no tennis, squash or racquetball courts. So it plays a limited role in meeting the needs of intercollegiate or intramural sports, except swimming and diving.

We have done some preliminary work on these plans but we anticipate a more robust effort as we grow closer to the time when we know Coles will be out of operation. As when Kimmel was being built on the site of an existing student center, we will strive to meet the needs of Coles' users as best we can during the interim, in anticipation of enhanced facilities for the future.

If incorporated into the construction plans for Zipper building, how would a 'new' Coles differ from the existing Coles?

A new facility would have many key elements that are necessary to bring a 30-year old gym up to date, including:

- Air-conditioning for the entire facility, including a 5,000 seat "stadium" for athletic and non-athletic events, including Freshman Orientations, the Presidential Welcome, and school-specific graduations
 - It is worth noting that without air-conditioning, air temperatures rose to 97 degrees Fahrenheit in the Center during summer 2012.
 - Every other collegiate sports and recreation facility built in the tri-state area is air-conditioned and this improvement will ensure that the Coles Center meets the standards of prospective students.
- COGEN plant connection
- Varsity basketball and volleyball competition court and seating for 3,000
- Varsity 200-meter indoor track
- Expanded cardio and weight training facilities
- 25-yard, six-lane swimming pool
- Multi-purpose conference/meeting spaces and physical activity spaces with audio visual capacity
- Sport-specific spaces (squash/racquetball courts, yoga/pilates/meditation studio, dance studio, wrestling/martial arts room)
- Additional locker space, expanded team locker rooms and adequate public restroom facilities
- Large gathering space/lounge, with new office space in close proximity

Top prospective students enter colleges and universities with a set of expectations for the institution including first class athletic facilities. A modernized athletic center will help keep NYU competitive relative to our University Athletic Association and Ivy League peers as well as other top academic institutions with whom we compete for students. Since the Coles Center opened, every UAA institution has updated its sports and recreation facilities.

Questions re: Non-classroom space for student use

Why is non-classroom space critical to the core?

Non-classroom space must be located within the core of campus to provide students and faculty with gathering spaces between classes, convenient meeting places for after-class activities, and space for key events, programs, and activities that enrich the student experience and give NYU its unique identity. This type of space at the core provides NYU with a sense of a campus community and an anchor to student life.

Additionally, undergraduate admissions tours are conducted through the core of campus, providing an opportunity to show both academic and non-academic space to prospective students.

What is the current inventory of non-classroom student space at NYU and how does it compare with demand?

Lack of non-classroom space to accommodate the demand for club meetings, activities, and programs is a leading complaint among students. While our goal is to meet every student space request, space limitations often prevent us from accommodating student's preferred meeting time and room size.

The Kimmel Center has 20 rooms of various sizes that are designated as non-classrooms. Of those, 4 are regularly used as classrooms due to high demand. Additional rooms are used as classrooms, occasionally. For non-academic use, the Kimmel Center reports near 100% occupancy at peak times and 75% occupancy at non-peak times (9am-4pm) (EMS stats). The Kimmel Center offers customized room setups and a/v support for each event; the space is usable for a wide range of events and activities, unlike classroom buildings with fixed or near-fixed setups. Most rooms are booked on average 3-4 times a day for different functions.

Lounge space at the Kimmel Center is not booked for events, since there is so little unscheduled lounge space on campus. There are 5 lounges in the Kimmel Center, which are heavily used for quiet study and reading, small group gatherings, spillover dining space, and other uses.

The Global Center for University Life has 4 small lounge areas that can accommodate about 20 students each, while each floor can accommodate several hundred students in classrooms. Naturally, the lounge space fills up quickly and students spill over into the Kimmel Center lounges, creating even more demand for lounge seating.

Due to the low inventory of non-academic space, student organizations are limited to 1 meeting space per week, 4 mid-size room bookings per semester and 1 large event space per semester. Additional bookings are only available by special request, as space allows.

What are the specific needs for non-classroom student space (including study space, student life/programming space, and club life space) that have been expressed by students and their representatives?

Students have expressed a desire to have additional space available to them for their academic and non-academic needs, including:

- **Multi-Purpose Activity Space:** Similar to "Living Room Space"
- **Study Space:** When the library fills up, particularly at midterm and final exam times, study space is in high-demand. To help address the need, the Kimmel Center has offered extended hours, temporary designated 'study rooms' and after-hours access to cafeteria space for study areas.
- **Club/Meeting Space:** Students would like more meeting space available at peak times. Students prefer to meet on weekday evenings, but once meeting rooms are booked, we have to suggest alternate days or times; some groups end up meeting as late as 9pm.

- The Student Senators Council has made a request for increased funds for clubs and organizations nearly every year for the past ten years. While the budget for clubs has increased significantly over the years, that puts even more of a strain to find the space to support the meetings, activities, and programming of the over 400 clubs at NYU.
- **Game Room**

The commuter and off-campus community are particularly affected by space constraints. According to the Commuter Student Council, lack of space to meet and study hampers the ability of commuter students to build community and connect with their peers at NYU.

There are 26,834 commuter students at NYU, including undergraduate and graduate students. At present, these students have special use of one large lounge in Kimmel, administered in partnership with the Operations Office and available for use by all students. The Commuter Student Council recently expressed a desire for better management of the space, which the Operations Office has agreed to, but without an expansion of space, this just means that for more than 26,000 students, NYU can only partially dedicate one room for their programs and not even guarantee exclusive access for commuter lounge and all other purposes. The space will continue to be available to all students and faculty, though only commuter students will be allowed to regularly program activities there. Commuter students have a particular demand for space in the Core given that they are already traveling from home to campus to attend classes and participate in activities.

How has non-classroom student space been incorporated into the Core Plan?

Students expect space in the Core to be accessible to all students, dedicated to both academic and non-academic purposes, and multi-purpose in nature. The Core Plan allows flexibility to add non-classroom space on the superblocks, in a location that is accessible to students who are at the Core for classes, dining, studying at Bobst or other locations, or just need a place to rest in between classes.