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SDSU to study replacing Coughlin-Alumni

Kansas City firm to solicit ideas from administrators, coaching staffs next week.

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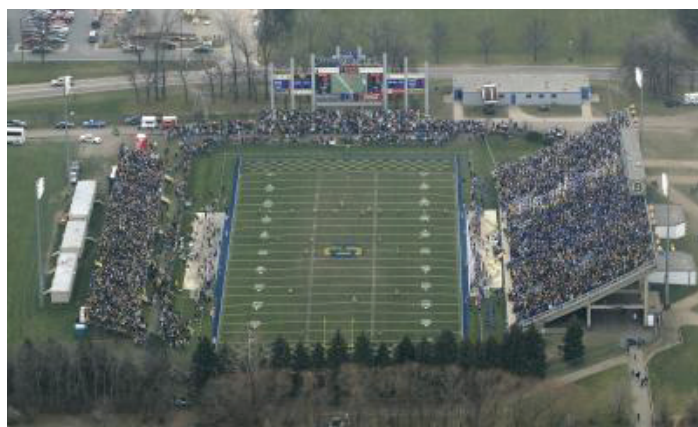
Although far from putting a shovel in the ground, South Dakota State is moving forward on potentially replacing Coughlin-Alumni Stadium.

The school has hired Crawford Architects of Kansas City, Mo., to update SDSU's athletic facilities master plan and generate several detailed options - including size and cost - for a new football stadium, athletic director Justin Sell said. It's the first piece in a feasibility study that will determine if, when and how SDSU can go about renovating Coughlin-Alumni or creating an entirely new facility.

"You can't afford to take a step backward," Sell said. "We have one shot at this thing."

Lead architect David Murphy will be in Brookings on Tuesday and Wednesday to solicit information and ideas from all coaching staffs, athletic administrators, campus personnel and SDSU president David Chicoine. From there, Murphy - an Iowa native who worked with Sell on the \$26.5 million McLeod Center at Northern Iowa earlier this decade - will study the situation and formulate possible plans, creating a comprehensive strategy for upgrading athletic facilities over the next 15 years. The last update to the master plan came in 2004.

Sell expects that the results will be presented to SDSU in December or January. From there, the school can decide whether or not to move forward both in terms of gaining approval from the South Dakota Board of Regents and finding a way to pay for the project. The next step would be to seek input on design particulars from involved parties such as students, the band and media members.



Current aerial view of Coughlin Stadium.

Coughlin-Alumni Stadium is outdated - it opened in 1962, some 40 years before the school moved to the NCAA Division I level - and on most Saturdays undersized. The Jacks are currently averaging 13,150 fans per home game, or about 3,000 more than the number of available seats. "Now's the right time," said Sell, who took office in May. "When we don't have enough seats - by a few thousand - to fit the crowd we currently have, we need to do something. "It hasn't been a very hard message to sell - I get more people coming up to me asking about it or suggesting it than the other way around."

A football stadium is just one piece of the puzzle. Sell said that within the lifespan of the forthcoming facilities master plan, SDSU ideally would create an indoor practice facility, add a second phase to the Dykhouse Center - the \$6-million first phase will open later this fall - and address the future of Frost Arena, among other things.

Every project is interrelated in terms of components and timing. For example, the options for improving Frost Arena will be different if an indoor track is first constructed, therefore eliminating the need for the current indoor track inside the basketball arena.

The football facility could be built in stages, too. The surface could be changed from natural to synthetic grass independent of any seating changes, Sell said. The east grandstand could be completed one summer and the west another.

Such options should be included in the architectural workups. At this point, the possibilities are endless. In fact, the study could show that building a suitable football stadium simply isn't feasible in the near future.

But that doesn't seem likely, given the involvement of upper-level management. Chicoine, Sell and SDSU physical plant director Dean Kattelman all toured the \$19.4 million renovations done to the football stadium at Cal Poly last week.

"It's not like it's the most important thing, but this is a part of his vision," Jacks coach John Stiegelmeier said of Chicoine. "When it comes from the top, you'd think it's not just wasting time. This is real."