



# PLANNING THE 365-DAY VENUE

A white paper from L.R. Kimball

March 2010 ©

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## Planning the 365-Day Venue

The difference between Division I, big-conference universities, and smaller, Division II colleges often is defined in terms of the power of their sports teams, their recruiting prowess and—without a doubt—the quality of their stadiums and arenas. From The Big House, The Swamp and Happy Valley to the O-Dome, Coach K Court and The Phog, Division I sports facilities have attracted fans and fame because of their character and their flexibility. Many are used year-round and have become prestigious centerpieces for campuses.

Division II schools have tended to design facilities to accommodate only a single type of event, such as graduation ceremonies or basketball games. These 3,500- to 5,000-seat buildings, however, can be constructed to be nearly as flexible as those of larger universities and can serve as magnets for students and the community if they are conceived as multi-use centers available for use 365 days a year. This “Venue 365” type of structure can energize the campus and bring new revenue, as well as funding sources, to the school.

Division II facilities constructed prior to 1985 typically incorporate a gym with pull-out bleachers and three basketball courts. While this design provides some adaptability for sports teams, it is not meant to handle concerts, conferences or graduation ceremonies in comfortable surroundings. A Venue 365 building is designed from its initial concept forward to host a wide range of activities, with seating, staging and revenue-producing areas integrated into a highly efficient events center.

Flexibility is crucial because, with a fixed base cost for operations, the less a building is used, the more likely it is to run a deficit. If it can generate revenue all year long with the help of a facility manager, however, the building can more readily pay for itself.

It's important to realize that, in strategizing for a Venue 365 facility, the first step has little to do with cost and everything to do with what is needed in a facility based upon its desired uses – now and in the future – and engaging the right partners to understand what your institution and the surrounding community can sustain.

## HIGHLIGHTS

The building's usage directly drives its design. For example, the seating bowl should take into account all prospective uses. Often the most flexible format is a U-shaped fixed-seating model with mobile seating at one end that allows for seating in the round, and various end zone stage formats.

### *Using a Sports Facility Year-round*

A wide range of events, not limited to sports and graduation ceremonies, can keep a venue operating year-round. With the right design, a single arena could host:

- Basketball games and regional tournaments
- Volleyball playoffs and tournaments
- Graduation events for the university and other nearby schools
- Banquets
- Concerts
- Conferences
- Seminars
- Trade shows
- Weddings
- Private corporate events
- Campaign rallies and town-hall meetings
- Speaker series
- Retail stores

Of these, many owners anticipate the greatest revenue benefit from concerts, but the facility must be designed to meet the specialized requirements of a concert venue. The building's usage directly drives its design. For example, the seating bowl should take into account all prospective uses. Often the most flexible format is a U-shaped fixed-seating model with mobile seating at one end that allows for seating in the round, as well as various end zone stage formats. A 3,000-seat basketball arena can hold some 1,000 additional seats on the floor for other events. Concerts may also require special rigging for lights, speakers and other show infrastructure.

Facilities that expect to play frequent host to speakers, political events or television broadcasts may want to provide for closed-circuit or broadcast-TV equipment. If retail outlets are crucial in the overall revenue plan, the venue may be designed to provide external entrances or sidewalk-facing counters for retail shops to use when the main portions of the facility are closed and inaccessible.

Money from state agencies generally is very limited if the facility lacks an academic component, so classroom or conference space is incorporated in these venues to make them eligible for state matching funds.

## HIGHLIGHTS

Four initial actions for a 365 day Venue:

1. Hire a professional
2. Engage a building manager/promoter
3. Simultaneously work with the firm to conduct a market study
4. Create a master plan for the athletics department

## Planning Considerations

Schools that want to create a Venue 365 facility should undertake four initial actions:

1. Hire a professional, experienced architect and engineering firm to conduct an assessment of existing campus sports facilities to provide an understanding of their condition and capabilities. This evaluation encompasses a checklist of the status of the existing building's infrastructure, rating each building system on a one-to-five scale and estimating costs for renovation. Engineers will determine if the current facility can be renovated to accommodate the school's needs without significant structural changes, if the building is sufficiently flexible to serve all the desired purposes, and whether new construction may be the best alternative.
2. Engage a building manager/promoter before the facility is designed to ensure that plans address all potential operational needs for sporting, banquets, conferences, concerts and other events.
3. Simultaneously, work with the firm to conduct a market study that will evaluate the ability of the marketplace to support a 365-days-a-year building. This study will reveal the degree to which the corporate community is willing to support advertising, club seats, private seats, sponsorships and naming rights and to help determine court seating and ticket pricing

Through a market study, schools in a remote location may learn that they will never be able to draw a sufficient audience for concerts, so they will not need to design expensive rigging or lighting. On the other hand, the study might turn up a strong area demand for a banquet or conference facility, prompting the school to design kitchen facilities into the venue.

4. L.R. Kimball also recommends that, because a Venue 365 building often impacts most of the school's sports, officials should work with their architecture and engineering firm to create a master plan for the athletics department. Such a plan helps determine whether offices and activities should be centralized in the arena or decentralized within other competitive or training facilities. The plan for sports facilities should align closely with the overall objectives of the school, because a new facility can affect everything from traffic patterns on campus to student recruitment and revenue sources. A master plan can also guide planning for each sports facility in a way that best promotes 365-day activities, as well as the integration of classrooms for related studies.

## HIGHLIGHTS

A master plan can address such questions as:

- How will older facilities be used after their functions have been assumed by the new one?
- Does the school need to expand its shuttle bus fleet—or change routing—to accommodate 365-day activities at the new facility?
- What changes in parking requirements will the new facility generate?
- How will vehicle flow to the new building affect the surrounding city's traffic patterns?

Master planning, assessments and comprehensive studies were crucial to L.R. Kimball's design of a Venue 365 facility at California University of Pennsylvania. For the school's 145,000-square-foot Convocation Center, scheduled to open in November 2011, L.R. Kimball provided master planning, planning and programming. The planning segment incorporated:

- Identification of an overall vision for the project
- Macro programming
- A needs assessment
- Site options
- Project planning options
- Cost estimating
- A traffic and pedestrian study
- A market study
- A financial and operations study
- A utility and operational cost study
- A maglev utilization study

L.R. Kimball's planning involved the arena, an ice facility, a conference center, two parking garages and a new campus loop road, all of which were designed to integrate with the established campus master plan.

As a result of the recent study, the proper building program was identified. With 5,000 seats, the convocation center itself will be a new focal point for sporting, graduation, conferences and academic events. The building houses a court used for basketball and volleyball, four concession stands, team locker rooms, a physical therapy facility, training rooms, a state-of-the-art conference center, recruiting/learning offices, a full-service kitchen for banquets and conferences and equipment storage facilities.

### *Programming and Technical Considerations*

Once these planning and assessment steps have been initiated, the school can begin working with its architecture and engineering partner on the design process and programming the building. The overall objective at this stage is to identify what the school needs in a venue, what it currently has and what the dimensions of the gap between these realities may be. Typically, the school must decide between constructing a new building or creating an addition to a current building, moving activities into the new portion upon completion and then renovating the original building. In the latter instance, events and games are able to continue in the facility without impacting teams while construction is under way.

## HIGHLIGHTS

L.R. Kimball helped Indiana University of Pennsylvania make the right seating and revenue-producing decisions for its Kovalchick Convention and Athletic Complex, which was completed in January 2011 and was opened to the public in early March. The Convention and Athletic Complex includes a 5,000-seat convention center for major events, a 650-seat auditorium, and a technology training and conference center. It will be the school's home for commencements, concerts, family shows, trade shows, conferences and sports.

The architect and engineering firm should meet with athletic department officials and the facility manager to ensure the incorporation of adaptable equipment for future activities, focusing on such areas as:

- The planned flow of the building
- The roles of adjacent structures
- The appropriate square footage for back-of-the-house activities such as moving materials and people
- The infrastructure for closed-circuit and broadcasting systems
- Lighting for the anticipated sports usage

One of the most important considerations is the configuration of the seating bowl in horizontal and vertical dimensions. The decision may amount to a horseshoe-shaped fixed seating bowl with a flexible end zone vs. an in-the-round plan with retractable seating.

A related issue centers on how fans will enter the building – either at the street-level grade to then descend into a bowl, or having them ascend to a concourse and then descend to the seating. Sinking the seating bowl into the ground can be complicated by high water tables, mines, waterproofing, excavation and many other issues. The vertical organization strategy must balance fan access to the concourse with sight lines, constructability issues and cost.

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The complex's seating geometry offers optimal sightlines for basketball, as well as an intimate setting and superior view for all types of events. Its seating bowl accommodates 4,000 for basketball and 5,000 for stage concerts and conventions. A single elevated public concourse allows fans to access amenities and spectator seating, with an unobstructed view of the court.

### *Funding the Venue*

The greatest barrier to developing a Venue 365 facility is often funding. This type of arena may cost \$300 to \$350 per square foot, or \$45-65 million in total cost. L.R. Kimball, with architecture, engineering and technology teams deeply experienced in evaluating and designing sports arenas, frequently carries out facility assessments and manages market studies, partnering with a firm that maintains a capital arm that can help clients with fundraising.

Financial support can be energized in the form of private donations, sponsorships, finance bonds and/or opportunities for state matching funds if the school is a state university. L.R. Kimball can create the design concept and fundraising materials required to initiate fundraising efforts. L.R. Kimball also can execute the design construction documents and administrates construction for the Venue 365 facility.

## CONTACT US

For more information on areas to consider and planning steps for campus sports venues, please contact:

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### *360-degree Services from L.R. Kimball*

With a reputation for success and innovation in sports facilities, L.R. Kimball is able to integrate all its expertise in architecture, engineering and communications technology to help colleges and universities realize the full potential of their new sports structures. L.R. Kimball offers insight, expertise and a legacy of targeted results, expertly managed, to help institutions plan and build arenas and stadiums. The 360-degree services from L.R. Kimball are transforming campus planning and expansion to benefit from 365-day venues.

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