

Friday, June 13, 1980

# Regents approve Dome expansion

By Bryan Abas  
of the Tribune

Funding plans for a \$4.5 million project to build an addition to the ASUI-Kibbie Dome and remodel Memorial Gymnasium were approved unanimously by the University of Idaho Board of Regents Thursday, despite a lack of support from students who will foot the bulk of the bill.

Student government president Scott Fehrenbacher told board members that while the proposal has many features attractive to students, he doesn't know whether students favor the project because the semester ended in mid-May and "my constituency is unavailable."

"I have no choice but to . . . request that this project be formally considered only at a time when the students are in full semester session," Fehrenbacher, a senior from Buhl, said. "ASUI cannot offer any support for the project, regardless of any merits, until that time."

Several board members expressed sympathy for Fehrenbacher's request during the meeting on the campus of Lewis-Clark State College, but when they asked UI Presideant Richard Gibb if a delay to September was acceptable, he said no.

"It's very important that we proceed now," Gibb said. "I don't know of any project on any of the campuses that I have been at that has had as much student input as this one."

"If we wait until September, we'll get the same questions we're getting now. Athletic facilities are inherently divisive. I haven't seen one that isn't controversial."

"I would like to get this controversy out of the way so I can turn my attention to academic facility needs."

Gibb noted that UI students have been in on the planning of the project for several months,

and that UI students approved the concept of a Kibbie Dome addition by a 51 to 49 percent margin in 1978.

Gibb maintained that one reason for the need to proceed with the project now is that bond interest rates may reach low levels in August and then begin rising again.

The board's business expert, Boise banker Robert Montgomery, was not impressed. "If your only reason for hurry is the bond market, I can't get excited about it," Montgomery said.

Regent Nels Solberg of Grangeville also expressed some reservations about the need to approve the plan now, but when the vote came, none opposed the request from the UI administrators.

The project will result in a two-story addition built on the east end of the Kibbie Dome. It will include locker and shower rooms, a weight room, offices, a classroom and storage space.

The addition will allow athletic administrative offices to be moved from Memorial Gymnasium. That space will be remodeled into classrooms, locker rooms and handball courts.

A \$75,000 improvement to the outside football practice field is also planned so that spring football practice can be held outside and the football turf in the Kibbie Dome doesn't have to be rolled out.

The funding plans call for \$1 million in donations, although only \$600,000 has been collected to date. Half a million will come from the athletic facilities reserve fund.

The remainder — \$3 million — will be raised through the sale of bonds. The 30-year bonds will be paid back with revenue from a \$17.50 per semester student fee.

The interest payments are expected to cost about \$6.5 million, making the total cost of the project over 30 years \$11 million.

The \$17.50 per semester student fee is cur-

rently assessed to help pay back bonds sold in 1961 to help build the Student Union Building.

In April, UI removed the debt on those bonds by using \$600,000 of the \$1.8 million accumulated in a bond reserve fund.

That means that reserve fund has \$1.2 million remaining. UI is free to use those funds as needed, but UI administrators told the board they have not yet identified the most pressing non-academic building need.

Among the proposals under consideration are an addition to the bookstore, a performing arts center and a new SUB in the center of the campus.

UI officials say they cannot use any funds generated from student fees for academic buildings because that would be tantamount to imposing tuition, something the Idaho constitution forbids.

However, UI did impose a student fee to pay for the construction of the University Classroom Center. Gibb said UI officials are uneasy about the potential illegality of that fee.

In other action, board members approved a UI recommendation to award the broadcast rights for UI football and basketball games to Moscow radio station KRPL.

The only other bidder was KUOI-FM, the student operated radio station at UI. KUOI's bid was about \$50 more than KRPL's bid of \$203, but KRPL also promised UI 10 percent of the revenues generated from advertising sales.

UI officials said they preferred accepting KRPL's bid in part because they have worked with KRPL in the past.

Former KUOI station manager Tom Neff said he would not object to KRPL getting the contract. "We just wanted to get our foot in the door," he said. "We're going to keep submitting bids year after year until we have the superior bid."