

## **UW Oshkosh rededicates revitalized Kolf Feb. 9; free admission for campus, community**

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<http://www.uwosh.edu/today/24833/uw-oshkosh-rededicates-revitalized-kolf-feb-9-free-admission-for-campus-community/>

Forty-one years ago, as the University of Wisconsin Oshkosh celebrated its 1971-72 centennial, athletic, academic and community leaders gathered to dedicate a new building that would quickly become one of the region's most prominent and longest-lasting forums for campus and community celebration and achievement: "Kolf Physical Education and Sports Center."

On Feb. 9, 41 years after its unveiling and shortly after the latest of many phases of reinvestment, the doors to Kolf open to all – at no charge – to encourage the campus and community to help rededicate this unique, UW Oshkosh venue.

UW Oshkosh is providing free admission to a doubleheader of Titans men's and women's basketball on Feb. 9. Afternoon (4 p.m.) and evening (6:30 p.m.) match-ups against UW River Falls will bookend a short rededication ceremony (planned at about 5:45 p.m.). Oshkosh Mayor Burk Tower and state Rep. Gordon Hintz of Oshkosh will join University leaders and alumni in recognizing the tremendous impact Kolf Sports Center has had on the campus, the community and the region over its lifetime.

"This is a venue like no other in the New North," UW Oshkosh Chancellor Richard Wells said. "Our shared reinvestment in the upkeep and upgrade of Kolf Sports Center over the decades, most recently in a renovated main fieldhouse last year, has preserved and enhanced a place where our University, local high schools, dozens of economic development agencies, hundreds of area employers and athletes of all ages and abilities grow, celebrate, compete and achieve. We should all be proud of our support for and use of Kolf over the years."

Since its completion in November 1971, Kolf Sports Center has hosted hundreds of University and area high school commencements and graduation ceremonies and countless annual intramural, conference, NCAA, high school and Special Olympics Wisconsin athletic events. The facility has been a home for military science students' training, a stage for performances by legendary artists and entertainers including Johnny Cash, Bill Cosby and Bob Dylan, a backdrop for visits by political candidates (including a then-Sen. Barack Obama in 2008) and the setting for several workforce-and-economy-propelling career fairs and regional economic summits. And this says nothing of thousands of educations and careers Kolf's many classrooms have helped propel.

Conservatively, it is estimated Kolf has served as the ceremonial and celebratory backdrop for tens of thousands of area graduates over the decades.

From the 2000-01 through the 2011-12 academic years at UW Oshkosh, the bulk of the more than 23,700 graduates from the institution crossed the commencement stage inside Kolf. Oshkosh area high schools have additionally awarded diplomas to thousands more students over the years.

The building was named after Robert M. Kolf, a long-time coach, instructor and athletic director at UW Oshkosh who joined the institution in 1923 after, for a time, attending its teacher training program, returning as an employee and retiring in 1967. One 1970 release chronicling the construction of Kolf Sports Center and announcing its official naming as “Robert M. Kolf Physical Education and Sports Center” acknowledged its namesake’s long career with UW Oshkosh – then Wisconsin State University-Oshkosh. Kolf was described as “a gentleman, a sportsman, a teacher, a Naval officer and a man of honor.”

Rather than replace the venue at a tremendous cost to state taxpayers, UW Oshkosh leaders, with the state’s support, opted to sustainably revitalize it over the years.

Kolf Sports Center is composed of 145,570 gross square feet. Using a conservative estimate of \$200 per square foot for new construction of a similarly sized, comparable facility, UW Oshkosh and the state of Wisconsin would have faced a \$29.1 million price tag on an entirely new sports center. New equipment for that center would have easily pushed the project price beyond \$30 million.

Last fall, UW Oshkosh completed its latest and final round of renovations to Kolf Sports Center, including the installation of a new track and bleachers in the fieldhouse. The hardwood court also was refurbished and painted. The project is the culmination of more than \$4.4 million invested in the building by UW Oshkosh and the state of Wisconsin since 2001. With additional phases of improvements over the previous 20 years, the fieldhouse portion of the facility has been completely renovated and at a far more acceptable cost than that of a brand new facility.

“As stewards of this important public asset and the state’s tax dollar, we made the decision that renovations and upgrades to not only Kolf’s infrastructure but also its athletic features were wiser strategies,” UW Oshkosh Vice Chancellor for Administrative Services Tom Sonnleitner said. “With the building now refurbished based on our phased reinvestment and revitalization, we are confident that Kolf Sports Center will continue to be a quality epicenter of athletic, academic and economic excellence in our region for decades to come.”

The Feb. 9 lineup of Kolf rededication reunions, ceremony and basketball includes:

- A pregame social from 2 to 3:30 p.m. at the Pollock Alumni House. The event will mark the reunion of the 1971-72 men’s basketball team (the first team to play in Kolf Sports Center).
- A short ceremony will commence between the 4 p.m. and 6:30 p.m. men’s and women’s basketball games vs. UW-River Falls (roughly 5:45 p.m. ceremony start).
- University athletic and academic leaders, along with campus and community spectators, will be present to rededicate Kolf Sports Center. Admission to the basketball games is free.

“We are proud of what Kolf Sports Center has come to represent for UW-Oshkosh and the greater Oshkosh community and New North region,” UW Oshkosh Athletic Director Darryl Sims said. “It is the place where hundreds of thousands of students, student-athletes, families, educators, businesses and agencies have come together to compete, to celebrate achievements and to learn and benefit from one another’s talent and success. Our shared reinvestment in this grand facility and the moments and

memories it has harbored during its 41 years deserve spotlight and a round of applause.”

Learn more:

- [PHOTO GALLERY: Kolf Sports Center through the years...](#)