

University of Maryland, College Park and University of Maryland, Baltimore team up to turn Cole Field House into national hub for sports medicine



University of Maryland officials unveiled this rendering of the new Center for Sports Medicine, Health and Human Performance. It will be housed in Cole Field House, the former basketball arena on the College Park campus. The center will bring together researchers and clinicians to study and treat sports injuries. (University of Maryland)



By **Tim Prudente**
The Baltimore Sun

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University officials aim to transform the old Cole Field House into a national hub for sports medicine

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Cole Field House, the storied basketball arena at the [University of Maryland](#), hosted hundreds of games during its half century as home to [Terrapins](#) hoops.

Now it will house a state-of-the-art new center dedicated to cutting-edge research into concussions and other sports injuries.

Officials from the University of Maryland, College Park and the [University of Maryland, Baltimore](#) unveiled plans Wednesday for the new Center for Sports Medicine, Health and Human Performance. The center will combine research into traumatic brain injury and other maladies with treatment of student athletes and the public.

With researchers exploring neuroscience, biomechanics and genomics, officials say, Cole Field House will become a national hub for the study and treatment of sports injuries.

"Bringing the research scientists and the clinical scientists together under one roof is really good news for the patients," said College Park biology Professor Elizabeth Quinlan, co-director of the center. "The new findings that are coming out of the research can be translated very quickly to the patient."

Quinlan said the center will serve families from Prince George's County and beyond.

"If you live within a certain radius," she said, "your primary care physician might send you down to Cole because we have the best orthopedic clinic and the best neuroimaging."

It's the latest in a trend of centers that bring together researchers who study injuries with physicians who treat them, said Dr. Robert Cantu, professor of neurosurgery at Boston University School of Medicine.

Cantu has advised the National Football League on brain injuries.

"You're really in a very unique situation where you're not only providing state-of-the-art care, but you're actually seeing if it's making a difference," he said. "That's why these marriages between the clinical end of things and the research university can be so perfect."

The center will be part of the \$155 million transformation of Cole Field House into a football and academic complex. Under Armour founder and CEO Kevin Plank, a former Maryland football player, has pledged \$25 million to the project. Other funding is coming from donations, the university and the state.

Officials have say the first phase of the complex, an indoor practice facility, will open in late spring.

The sports medicine center could open in 2018.

The state has pledged an initial \$3 million in research funding. Researchers are planning to study ways in which traumatic brain injuries affect the body far from the head. A skull fracture can cause shifts in the populations of microorganisms in the gut, for example. And someone who suffers a concussion between the ages 35 and 40 has an elevated chance of experiencing symptoms such as emotional changes three months after the injury.

"We want to focus on those populations and understand the aging brain — not aged, but aging," said University of Maryland School of Medicine trauma professor Dr. Alan Faden, co-director of the center.

Quinlan said student athletes and researchers both will benefit from the work.

"The fact that we're going to be housed in the same building gives these clinicians and scientists access to the athletes and the athletes access to the clinicians," she said. "The athletes are going to be at the cutting edge of therapies."

More than 2.5 million emergency room visits, hospitalizations and deaths each year are associated with traumatic brain injury, officials said.

"Bringing together clinicians and scientists from the state's two biggest public research universities under one roof creates connections that will contribute to breakthroughs in human health," said Wallace Loh, president of the University of Maryland, College Park.

Jay Perman, president of the University of Maryland, Baltimore, said the \$3 million in research funding "will lead to million-dollar, multidisciplinary grants in critical areas of neuroscience and traumatic brain injury."

The center is the latest in a series of joint projects between the two universities. They announced plans last month to establish a national security academy, in part to help lure new FBI headquarters to Maryland.

The University of Maryland, Baltimore is home to professional schools for medicine, dentistry, nursing, pharmacy, law and social work. College Park, the state's flagship university, offers a broad range of undergraduate and graduate programs.

The two institutions have shared resources and programs through MPower, a collaboration agreement approved in 2012. The [General Assembly](#) passed legislation this year aimed at strengthening their partnership.

Baltimore Sun Reporter Jeff Barker contributed to this article.

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