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Memo between Robert Fagin and Johnny Randall: Proposed Campus Golf Course/Golf Learning Center

Robert F. Fagin

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MEMORANDUM

TO: Johnny Randall and the Department of Natural Sciences Faculty
FROM: Robert F. Fagin
SUBJECT: Proposed Campus Golf Course/Golf Learning Center

Thank you for your February 13 memorandum regarding the proposed UNF Golf Learning Center. I am writing at this time to address some of your concerns and to offer additional information for your consideration.

As you know, the University is considering seriously the construction of a state-of-the-art golf learning center on the southeastern corner of our campus. The facility would occupy approximately 35 acres of land. The reasons for building this center are as follows:

1. It would support the University’s academic mission both as an excellent facility to teach UNF students the game of golf through classes offered by the Department of Physical Education and as the laboratory for the proposed Management Program in the College of Business Administration which will have a golf training emphasis. (The College of Business Administration program would offer students an opportunity to earn a bachelor’s degree in Business Administration with emphasis in Golf Management while requiring an internship in the field of golf.)

2. It would offer the UNF community a recreational facility that is reasonably priced and extremely accessible. The UNF Golf Learning Center, with its three holes and adjacent practice facilities, would be unique to Florida’s First Coast Region.

3. To provide the best possible training facility for the NCAA Division I UNF men’s golf program. The past, present and future success of the Osprey golf program affords our University invaluable exposure and media coverage on the local, state, and national levels.

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The golf program currently practices at the TPC at Sawgrass, playing the 18-hole Valley Course on a regular basis and practicing on the TPC's public driving range and chipping/putting greens. While the TPC is a great facility, its distance from the campus makes it less desirable than an on-campus facility.

Furthermore, the key component of the learning center for the UNF golf team to train on is the proposed short game area located adjacent to the driving range. This area, modeled after the TPC’s private short game area (available to PGA Tour Members only), would offer the varsity golfers a unique setting to enhance their competitive games. No other university in the state of Florida has access to this type of world class practice facility. This fact would afford the UNF golf coach, John Brooks, the opportunity to successfully recruit excellent golfers from the state of Florida and to field nationally competitive teams on a regular basis.

From an operational perspective, the UNF Golf Learning Center would exist autonomously under the direction of the Athletic Director. Revenues generated from the use of the facility as well as corporate grants would offset all operating expenses including maintenance of the facility. A separate grounds crew would be hired.

The three-hole golf learning center would not exist in direct competition with the numerous area courses reference in your memorandum. That would be illogical. Instead our facility would offer a unique affordable alternative to the golfing enthusiasts that was neither cost nor time prohibitive. We anticipate the average person would spend less than two hours per session at our facility at the cost of $10 - $15. A normal 18-hole round of golf in the Jacksonville area takes four to five hours and can cost as much as $50 - $75. Furthermore, many of the people interested in using our facility would be beginning golfers unable to play regulation 18-hole courses. Faculty and students would be able to learn and practice the game of golf at an affordable rate, reduced from that of the general public.

In addition, the project would be constructed and maintained in an environmentally sensitive manner consistent with the University campus. It is our absolute intention for this facility to serve as a model in facing the environmentally sensitive issues that all golf courses face. Coach Brooks has contacted the United States Golf Association (USGA) in an attempt to solicit their assistance with our facility.

The USGA has invested over $10 million in the past few years on turf grass and environmental research programs. The USGA has also been the primary supporter of the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary for Golf Courses, which is now in place at more then 1,900 courses. They have also worked in conjunction with the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation to form a program called Wildlife Links, the game’s first comprehensive examination of its relationship with wildlife and their habitat. UNF looks forward to joining these USGA programs in the future.
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It is my sincere hope that this information is helpful to you and your colleagues. Please feel free to call on me or golf coach John Brooks to further discuss this matter at anytime.

RFF/bge

c:  David Kline
    Richard Gropper
    John Brooks