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# Badger Bold exceeds goal to fundraise badger bucks

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Student Reporter

The Amarillo College Foundation’s “Badger Bold” fundraising campaign has received \$35 million to date as it enters the third year of the 6-year campaign.

In 2019, a feasibility study was conducted by a consultant for the AC Foundation to determine what goals would be set for the fundraiser.

“The consultant went out and talked to the community members about things going on at AC and their perception of AC in the community,” Peyton Sidwell, the development director of the AC Foundation, said. “The campaign was built off of this feasibility study done by our office and also based on the results of the 2019 Bond.”

The \$89.2 million bond that Sidwell refers to is Amarillo College Proposition A, which passed in May 2019 with a 52% vote in favor of the bond.

“Originally, the bond was for \$120 million, but based on the perception of the community, the feasibility study said, ‘go to the voters with \$89 million’. That left a gap,” Sidwell said. “That’s how the conversation around having a fundraising campaign started.”

The fundraising campaign, which began in September 2020, has evolved. The goal, which was originally set at \$30 million, was increased to \$45 million after a \$15 million donation from philanthropist MacKenzie Scott.

The money raised will fund various projects around Amarillo College, over half going back to students. “We have a \$24 million goal for

student experience, \$3 million for faculty and staff enrichment and \$18 million for capital enrichment,” Sidwell said.

Faculty development has made a noticeable impact on Trena Rider, program coordinator for early childhood education.

“They listen to our voice about what we need,” Rider said. “The last class I took was about helping the underprepared student. It was immediate things we could change in our classes that were small, but so helpful. I’m about to take a course about supporting students that are English language learners. I cannot wait. Our staff development program is amazing and with the funding, that will continue to increase.”

One of the most noticeable changes implemented by the “Badger Bold” campaign is the return of intercollegiate sports at AC for the first time since 1989.

As the former intramural specialist at AC, Rider is no stranger to the sports and coaching world. She is excited to see the return of competitive sports at AC.

“There is a vibe that happens on a campus with sports. I see our athletes walking around wearing their Badger blue and representing the College. I think it will increase a common language among students. There’s a power in that, our students walking around campus with a common interest,” Rider said.

In October 2022, Andy Marshall, President and CEO of FirstBank Southwest, donated a \$3 million gift on behalf of the bank. The donation will go to the renovation of former Carter Fitness Center, which

will is now called the FirstBank Southwest Center.

“We’re very excited about this gift,” Marshall said in a press release in October. “It’s the largest gift we’ve ever given at any level, anywhere and we put a lot of thought into it. What we ultimately concluded is that Amarillo College and are community are thoroughly intertwined, particularly through the College’s commitment to workforce training. We’re delighted to support athletics at the College and to be at the forefront of everything AC is doing to positively impact the future of our region.”

The overwhelming excitement and success of the campaign is bittersweet for some faculty members, however. The fundraising campaign originally included renovations and updates to the Experimental Theatre and Concert Hall, but those projects have been postponed indefinitely.

“The Concert Hall itself is still a great acoustical space, but there are things that need to be addressed,” said Department Chair for Music and Theatre, Camille Nies. “We have lost seating capacity because our chairs are breaking, and we can’t get them replaced. Monty Downs, the technical director, who also runs our facilities, has been piecing together parts from old seats.”

The Concert Hall is used for AC student performances and Creative Mind Lectures, but also hosts events for other musicians in the area, including Chamber Music Amarillo, the Master Chorale with the Amarillo Symphony and the Harrington String Quartet.

“Our biggest concern right

now is our piano storage. Part of the plan had been to give us an area that is climate-controlled for our performance pianos. With the fluctuations in temperature and humidity here in the Panhandle, it can wreak havoc.”

“I think we have a great space and make excellent use of the facilities we have, but there are things we could improve on,” said Diego Lopez, a theatre major who graduated AC last semester. “Our dressing room is the size of a closet, so you can imagine with a cast of 10 men and 10 women, it can be challenging. I think our actors would be more comfortable having a bigger space.”

“I hope the funding won’t be withheld indefinitely,” Kyle Roberson, a theatre major, said.

In addition to the issues with seating and proper protection of their instruments, the department was looking forward to updates to lighting, replacement of an HVAC system that interferes with acoustics and updates to recording equipment—for the purpose of live streaming events.

“Our students are doing excellent work here and we want to be able to showcase them,” said Nies.

Students are encouraged to contact the AC Foundation to learn more about this fundraiser and to share their stories with the Foundation.

“We want to share your stories with members of the Amarillo community and beyond to illustrate the incredible things happening at the College,” Sidwell said. “Students are the fuel to our fire; the most important thing we can do is to tell AC’s story.”

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