

USU: New Moab campus will be built

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Years after a multi-million-dollar donation for a new USU-Moab campus fell through, Utah State University officials say recent discussions with stakeholders in Moab and Grand County will make the project a reality.

USU President Noelle Cockett, Moab Mayor Dave Sakrison and Grand County Council Chairwoman Jaylyn Hawks all signed a memorandum of understanding earlier this month laying out conditions the three entities must abide by to move the project forward.

“It’s definitive; we are moving forward,” Cockett said.

The MOU comes years after the university announced a \$15 million donation to facilitate a new USU-Moab campus. But Cockett said the money — pledged by a prominent family in Moab — never materialized, since it was contingent on a business deal that never came through.

Hawks said the pace of developments with the project “have not been fast enough for me.”

“I would like to have seen it built already,” she said.

Sakrison said big projects like a new campus take time, but things are moving forward with the agreement.

“This is a major step; you’ve got all of the major players on the same page,” he said. “I think we have a common vision now and we can move forward.”

According to the MOU, USU has agreed put up \$5 million of the new \$10 million campus through the sale of the current Moab campus, according to

the MOU. The other half of the funds will come through community donations.

“I said, ‘You know what? We need a building on the ground,’” Cockett said. “So let’s talk about what money we have and move forward with that. It’s very, very doable for a \$10 million building.”

Sakrison also acknowledged city and the county officials would help with private fundraising efforts.

“You know, \$5 million is a lot of money, and, yeah, it’s going to take some work,” he said. “But, you know, we put together a \$30 million hospital seven, eight years ago. ... We’re committed to getting this done and I’m confident we can see it through.”

Officials with Moab and Grand County have agreed to invest in road and utility infrastructure toward a new USU-Moab campus.

To that end, Hawks mentioned a community impact board fund that would help pay for such things, since there’s only dirt road out where the future USU-Moab campus is set to be located right now.

“It’s very critical,” she said. “We don’t have to start completely over trying to find the money to build the infrastructure to the campus.”

The current USU-Moab campus, located at 125 W. 200 South, consists of two buildings with classroom and lab space, housing 120 students and 20 faculty. The campus offers bachelors, masters and Ph.D. programs.

Sakrison said the buildings that USU-Moab currently occupies used to be other things, including a lumber yard, police station and city hall.

“The building’s been there for 30 years. It’s in disrepair,” he said.

According to a 2012 campus master plan, currently on the USU website, the

future USU-Moab campus would be located on 40 acres of land 3 miles from the center of town. Long term, USU-Moab is envisioned as a multi-building campus housing classrooms, a student union and retail with over 1,000 parking stalls.

“I think a new campus would not only facilitate economic development and economic diversity within the community, it would be a hallmark for the community as well,” Sakrison said.

Lianna Etchberger, executive director of USU-Moab, talked about the importance of having a new campus.

“When you move yourself into a nice new shiny building, that’s always a positive thing,” she said. “I think it’s also really good for the community to have a nice new building because I think it’s symbolic that they value they education and that they support it.”

For now, however, plans are focused on at least one building, Etchberger said.

“The president really wants the support moving forward with this project,” she said. “And so her plan is to have a building, even if it’s a maybe a smaller building just to get going ... and not have to ask the Legislature for the full ask because that takes a long time.”