Anderson University is in the midst of its largest capital campaign, a $15.2 million push to build a new student center in what is now the outfield of the softball field.

The 80,000-square-foot building will be the biggest on the campus.

The fundraising effort has already drawn $11 million and approximately $3.7 million more is needed to qualify for a $500,000 matching grant from a national private group based in Atlanta, said R. Dean Woods, vice president for institutional advancement.

“Our library (fundraising) campaign was around $8.2 million or $8.3 million; this is not quite double but close,” he said. “It was a challenge to get to $11 million so far. It will take broad support to get this goal.”

The building is expected to begin construction in late March or early April and take about 18 months to build. It will be named the G. Ross Anderson Student Center, in honor of the long-serving federal district court judge.

“He is one of our most notable Andersonians. He has been and continues to be close to the university and helpful and supportive in many, many ways,” Woods said.

The student center will include a banquet hall for up to 400 people, a theater/auditorium for 400 people, workout rooms, student services, a counseling center, a bookstore and open spaces.

The center will be behind the Abney Athletic Center where the softball field now lies.

A replacement softball field is being built at the nearby Anderson University Athletic Campus, the former county fairgrounds, and the construction will not affect any of the school’s games.
Woods said that for a growing university locked into its current location near downtown Anderson, buying the athletic fields gave a lot of breathing room.

“Had we not been able to make that acquisition that would have hampered us,” he said.

In addition to the athletic fields, the university has nearby locations including the Undergraduate Cancer Research Center on Fant Street, the Duke Energy building on Bleckley Street and Murray Avenue for the university’s criminal justice program and the downtown Anderson Chiquola building to be used for business and art programs.

“We’re growing, reaching out and I think that’s a positive thing,” Woods said. “We should have enough acreage on our primary campus and on our peripheral pieces.”

He said the university would continue to keep greenery on campus and moving athletic fields to the athletic center gives enough space to accommodate the growing population of on-campus students along with adult learners and graduate students.

“This will be a new place for our graduate students, adult students and our on-campus students to hang out,” Woods said. “We’ve had the need for some time and it will serve us well.”

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