

## **IMPROVEMENTS AT RAM STADIUM PROSPECTUS**

In its present condition, Ram Stadium is not capable of supporting any other activities beyond varsity football. The sod at the Stadium is vulnerable to even modest variations in weather conditions. Drainage continues to be a serious problem, and whenever it rains in the latter half of a week in which a home game is scheduled, the damage to the grass surface is extensive.

Last fall, in the interim between hosting playoff games, the University even went to the extraordinary step of contracting for a helicopter to hover just above ground-level at the stadium for approximately three hours to help dry the field.

The installation of an artificial surface field accomplishes three important objectives for the University:

- Artificial surface will provide a consistent, safe and reliable surface for the football team. Regardless of weather conditions, the field will be game-ready and will be an even more attractive venue for NCAA playoff competitions.
- Artificial surface will allow the University to expand its athletics program. Immediately following the completion of an artificial surface at Ram Stadium, the University would begin the process of establishing a women's lacrosse team at Shepherd. Our collections of "Equity Athletics Funds," at current levels, would be the basis for funding this new team's operational costs. This would result in a considerable improvement in the University's athletics equity compliance.
- Artificial surface would allow Ram Stadium to become viable for a limited number of additional university activities where the large outdoor venue is needed. At present the stadium is generally treated as unusable to eliminate the risk of damage to the natural grass surface.

The Atlas Track and Tennis Company is an approved distributor of FieldTurf<sup>®</sup> which is the same product which was installed at Mountaineer Field in summer 2007. It is also the surface used at Marshall, Fairmont, and Glenville. The Shepherd coaching staff is convinced that this is a substantially superior product. Atlas established a discounted pricing contract with the Pennsylvania Higher Education System, and Shepherd is able to participate in that contract on a no-bid basis.

If the University begins this work immediately after the last home football game, it is expected that all work will be completed by Atlas prior to the mid-April date for the scrimmage at the conclusion of spring football. The continuing success of the football team requires the

University to anticipate potentially using the field through and including December 8, which would result in a start date of December 10. The progression of work would be dependent upon weather conditions.

Atlas would provide a “turnkey” installation, involving their removal of topsoil, additional excavations, improvements to drainage, and complete installation. The University would also purchase equipment from Atlas for the upkeep of the artificial surface.

After Atlas completes its work in the installation of the artificial surface, the University staff envisions adding a limited number of additional stadium improvements, including wall and fence padding, to enhance athlete safety.

The estimated project budget will be as follows:

Stadium Turf, base installation:	\$789,000
Misc. field expenses and equipment:	\$ 60,000
Contingency:	<u>\$ 75,000</u>
TOTAL	\$924,000

The financing of the project blends private support and strategic application of institutional funds. A select number of football supporters have been identified who desire to give support to a field turf project in amounts which would not be likely to become available to the University in a general campaign for contributions. The amount raised will exceed \$100,000. The remaining expense will be borne by drawing down accumulated reserves in the athletics funds and then financing the balance over several years in a lease-purchase contract. The annual cost of this financing will be covered by the operations funds of the athletics department.

The following resolution is recommended for adoption by the Board:

**RESOLVED,** That the Shepherd University Board of Governors approves the project and project budget of \$924,000 for the Ram Stadium Improvements as presented in the agenda book, and directs the President to proceed with management of the project.