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Football Q&A  
Stewart  
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Dr. Douglas Searcy, president of Barton College, attended a Student Government Association sponsored question and answer session on Feb. 7, 2018, about the new football program coming to the college.

Searcy explained the process of how the big decision was made and remarked on how the college was looking for ways to boost involvement and enrollment. A feasibility study was then conducted for two separate possible athletic developments.

An indoor track and football program were the two programs that were studied. A survey was then sent out to students and faculty about the possibility of a football program, to which about 100 faculty and 250 students responded.

A presentation was then given to the Board of Trustees for the college and a decision was made.

“It’s an advantage to our mission,” Searcy said, addressing an eclectic audience. Searcy explained how the program will open doors to those who may not have attended college if it were not for a program such as the one being created.

One hundred individuals are estimated to come attend the college for football alone, creating an immediate boost in revenue base for the college. “Offering collegiate football is not a negative impact on the financial status of the college, it’s a benefit,” Searcy said.

Searcy explained how the business model for the program included reinvestments in certain facilities on the campus, for academic programs, the hiring of new faculty members, giving raises to existing faculty and other improvements for the forward progress of the college’s finances. The alumni and community are also believed to benefit from Barton football.

“This is just one more tool to engage the community,” said Searcy. Searcy also stressed the concept of “Barton first” when discussing the process of coming to the decision.

Students and alumni asked an array of questions about the new project, including the expenses of the project, how tuition will be affected and even about security measures for the new turf field stadium to host the team.

Relating to the business side, Searcy explained that the project would cost \$3 million to \$5.5 million with an estimated return on investment after expenses of about \$600,000 to \$1.3 million per year. Tuition for the college is also not expected to increase or decrease “because of football,” he said.

Searcy said his efforts from the tuition standpoint are to keep decreasing the percentage of increase each year. Searcy reassured students that tuition will not increase proportionally to accommodate football.

The president also wanted students and faculty to realize that Division I and Division II football are not the same.

Searcy made sure to mention other projects that were on the horizon for the college and hoped that everyone who walked away from the session knew that it wasn’t just about football. “And because we’re making this choice, we’re making efforts to increase everybody’s opportunities, not just one sport,” he said.

Four other future academic and co-curricular projects were among the hopeful plans that could be boosted by the football program's revenue.

It’s not necessarily about football,” Searcy said, “It’s about the campus, strengthening our campus community, who we are, [and] our opportunities.”

The inaugural year for the football team has not yet been determined. However, sports like soccer and men's and women's lacrosse should be able to use the new turf field within the next year.

President Searcy said whenever the athletic director says that the school is prepared and ready to go, that would be the time.