Former Wolf Pack star and current NBA Charlotte Hornets point guard Ramon Sessions has donated $1 million towards the development of a basketball practice facility on the University of Nevada, Reno campus.

The Ramon Sessions Basketball Performance Center will be housed in what is currently Lombardi Recreation Center, just south of Mackay Stadium. With the E. L. Wiegand Fitness Center set to open early in 2017, Lombardi will be renovated and converted into this new state-of-the-art facility. Construction is expected to begin in late winter and completed by August of 2017.

“For me, giving back to the University means a lot,” said Sessions, who is in his 10th season in the NBA and first year back in Charlotte with the Hornets after a previous stint with the Bobcats. He returns to Reno annually to put on a summer clinic for area children.

“This was always a second home for me, a place that gave me a chance when a lot of schools didn’t. Coming up as a college kid, we didn’t always have access to a gym. For me, with 10 years in the NBA, I’m blessed to give back to my second home. I’m excited about it. I know the coaches are excited about it. And once this gets going, I know the community will be excited about it,” Sessions said.

Sessions played for the Wolf Pack from 2004–07, leading the team to three straight Western Athletic Conference championships and three NCAA Tournament appearances. He was selected in the second round of the 2007 NBA Draft by the Milwaukee Bucks and has played for seven NBA teams over his 10-year career.

In addition to the dedicated space for basketball, the project will service all student-athletes at Nevada when the Wolf Pack’s strength and conditioning program moves to a much larger footprint within the building. Additionally, locker room space will be developed in the building for other Wolf Pack teams. The swimming pool and dive tank will remain in place for the swimming and diving teams, which came off a Mountain West championship this year.

“This project is game-changing for the Wolf Pack and will have a positive impact on the lives of thousands of students for years to come. On behalf of the athletics department and the University, I want to thank Ramon for this historic gift to his alma mater,” said athletics director Doug Knuth. “The University of Nevada provides a tremendous opportunity for achievement in all facets of life. Ramon seized his opportunity at Nevada and we’re incredibly proud of all that he’s achieved, on and off the court.”

The Ramon Sessions Basketball Performance Center is the culmination of a unique collaboration between University administration, intercollegiate athletics and the community. With the arrival of the E. L. Wiegand Fitness Center, University President Marc Johnson, Vice President for Administration and Finance Ron Zurek and Knuth worked closely together on maximizing the use of existing facilities which would have a dramatic impact on our programs’ competitiveness, at a fraction of the cost. Once the Lombardi was identified as a basketball practice facility, athletics was then able to engage the community and share the vision.

“We thank Ramon Sessions for this truly transformative gift,” said University President Marc Johnson. “Never before in the history of the University has a former student-athlete made such a significant and program-chang-
ing commitment. His donation will allow Wolf Pack athletics to better serve all of our student-athletes for generations to come. Since leaving campus in 2007 to pursue his dreams, Ramon has represented the University and the northern Nevada community with great dignity and class. We are so proud of Ramon and grateful for his generosity, and the generosity of the other key donors in our community, that have made the Ramon Sessions Basketball Performance Center a reality.”

The $1 million donation is the largest ever given to the Nevada athletics department by one of its alumni. It is the lead gift on a project that will come in around $2 million, with nearly a dozen donors also supporting it.

“We are extremely humbled and honored by Ramon’s gift,” said men’s coach Eric Musselman. “His generosity will not only serve our current student-athletes as they aspire towards their dreams, but pave the way for years and years of championship sustainability here at Nevada. This gift speaks volumes, not only to Ramon’s commitment to current and future student-athletes, but to his own incredibly positive experience here at Nevada. We wish Ramon the absolute best as he prepares for his upcoming NBA season with the Charlotte Hornets.”

The facility will provide year-round court space for both Wolf Pack teams. The project calls for a new gym, floor, lights and scoreboard, with eight baskets in the court area. The men’s and women’s teams will also have new locker room space in the building.

“I know that Wolf Pack fans are as excited as my team is for this facility and all of the improvements for our basketball programs at Nevada,” said women’s coach Jane Albright. “We saw a significant upgrade to our locker room in the offseason, and Lawlor has a fantastic new floor and a state of the art scoreboard coming in. This is a great time for the basketball programs at Nevada.”

The Ramon Sessions Basketball Performance Center is the latest in a string of facility improvements at Nevada. The Wolf Pack just ushered in an $11.5 million renovation at Mackay Stadium and a separate project brought new video boards to Mackay and Lawlor, and a new sound system at the football stadium.

The Pack also saw new facilities come on board for the tennis and track programs, with six new on-campus tennis courts and a new throws facility on the eastern edge of campus, and a sparkling new silver and blue track circles Chris Ault Field at Mackay Stadium. The projects came on the heels of new FieldTurf installation at Wolf Pack Park, locker room upgrades for women’s soccer, track and field, cross country, football and both basketball programs, as well as an enhanced indoor golf training center.

To learn more about supporting the Lombardi Recreation Center renovations, contact Assistant Athletic Director, Development, Zack Madonick ’11 at (775) 682-6977 or mmadonick@unr.edu.

University Libraries launched a new digital collection, “Wolf Pack Athletics: A Visual History,” in conjunction with Homecoming activities this fall. The new website, nevadawolfpack.com/digital, is an homage to Nevada athletics, full of photos, videos, sound clips and interactive maps to give viewers a sense of its long and distinguished history. The site covers all University sports, from the first teams that were formed in the late 19th-century to contemporary teams and individual athletes.

The online collection was curated by Special Collections, University Archives and Nevada Wolf Pack Media Services. Viewers get a glimpse of the deep history of the Wolf Pack, including athletes and coaches, teams, rivalries and the fans who all contribute to the complete athletic experience at the University of Nevada, Reno.

“We really wanted to tell a vibrant, visual story of men’s and women’s athletics here at the University,” said Amy Hunsaker, digital initiatives librarian. “The digital images used in the website were entrusted to the library by the University’s athletics department for preservation and safekeeping.”