BIRMINGHAM, Ala. - Legacy Community Federal Credit Union has announced the largest-ever sponsorship advancing University of Alabama at Birmingham Athletics, a 20-year $4.2 million naming rights agreement that will support construction of the UAB Football Operations Center.

Blazer IMG Sports Marketing and Legacy Community Federal Credit Union entered into the sponsorship on behalf of UAB. As a result, Legacy has become the official credit union of UAB, and Blazer Football will conduct practice activities at Legacy Pavilion, a game-changing development for the program.

The University of Alabama System Board of Trustees expedited approval of the project's expanded scope and design made possible by the sponsorship, and authorized UAB to execute construction contracts. As a result, UAB is expected to break ground this summer on a Football Operations Center not-to-exceed $22.5 million that will include a building with office space, meeting and film rooms, athletic training facilities, locker rooms, and a weight room. The complex will also include practice fields, one of which will be covered by an open-air pavilion.

Head football coach Bill Clark expects the new facilities to be fully functional by the time his team returns to competition as a full Division I FBS and Conference USA participant in the fall of 2017.

"The impact this generous sponsorship has already had and will have on our program cannot be overstated," Clark said. "It allowed us to expand the scope of the project to build the facility we need, and it will greatly accelerate our competitiveness on the field and on the recruiting trail. We will be proud to practice every day under the Legacy name, which will serve as a reminder that we are fighting for a community that is behind us."

Legacy was founded in 1955 by a group of UAB employees to serve the faculty, staff and students of UAB, as well as the surrounding community, and the credit union has been a supporter of UAB and UAB Athletics for decades.

"While this most recent sponsorship will produce an immediate impact for UAB Football, it is really just the next logical extension of the longstanding relationship between Legacy and UAB," said Legacy President and CEO Joe McGee. "Since UAB had the vision to charter us, and is the largest employer and most dynamic economic driver in the state, we believe an investment in UAB will yield returns for Legacy members and for the entire community."

UAB Director of Athletics Mark Ingram says this -- the largest sponsorship in UAB Athletics history -- is another indicator that building momentum shows no signs of slowing.

"It is a very positive sign to receive unprecedented levels of support from those who know you best," Ingram said. "It has been an energizing process working with Coach Clark, the UAB Athletics Foundation, our many donors, IMG, and our Board and administration in making the Football Operations Center a reality. The Blazer family is grateful for Legacy's generous sponsorship and the confidence in our future it demonstrates. I thank Legacy and recognize IMG for its important role in making this historic agreement possible."

Blazer IMG Sports Marketing General Manager Mason Ellenberger and the IMG College team worked with Legacy on behalf of UAB to facilitate the sponsorship.

"With the longstanding partnership Blazer IMG Sports Marketing has had with both UAB and Legacy, this collaborative effort and historic sponsorship will make what has already been a long and fruitful relationship stronger," Ellenberger said. "It will also allow even more positive opportunities for Legacy, UAB and the City of Birmingham for many years to come. We continue to be excited and energized with the opportunities we have to contribute to the unprecedented success UAB Football and UAB Athletics are realizing, and we are honored to work with everyone invested in the bright future of this great institution."

UAB President Ray L. Watts and McGee recognize this investment as one not only in UAB Football and Athletics, but also in community development, neighborhood revitalization and employee financial services.
"Legacy has a longstanding history of promoting projects of broad and positive influence, and we are proud that Legacy is the official credit union of UAB," Watts said. "Legacy is a loyal partner that has demonstrated a commitment to the growth and betterment of the communities we both serve. I commend Mark Ingram, his staff, and IMG in connecting Legacy with a project that is important for the community they passionately support."

Legacy, a federally chartered community credit union, has more than $420 million in assets and serves the seven-county Birmingham metropolitan area through eight local branches and a nationwide network of shared credit union facilities. Legacy is committed to being a service organization where members desire to fulfill their financial needs and employees desire to build a career.

UAB Athletics and Blazer IMG Sports Marketing are planning a community celebration on campus that will be announced soon to formally recognize Legacy's significant partnership and sponsorship.