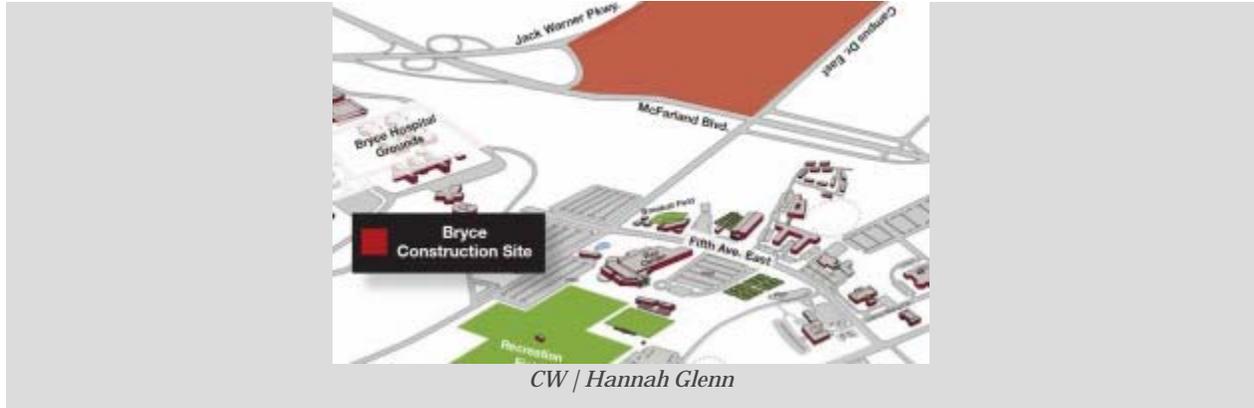


# CRIMSON WHITE

## Recreation to expand onto Bryce

IN [CAMPUS](#), [NEWS](#), [TOP NEWS](#) / BY [JASON FROST](#) / ON FEBRUARY 13, 2014 AT 12:00 AM /



*CW | Hannah Glenn*

A chain-link fence currently separates the grounds of Bryce Hospital from The University of Alabama, but after the Board of Trustees approved a number of additions to the 2012 Master Plan last December, students might soon see a different kind of obstacle.

George Brown, executive director of University Recreation, said the addition of 26 acres purchased from the Alabama Department of Mental Health is expected to allow for the creation of a ropes course, running trails and other outdoor recreation areas.

The land from ADMH was purchased primarily to support drainage infrastructure, but it will also allow students a place to relax.

Since the new land overlaps with a larger wooded property across from MacFarland Boulevard, the now 60-acre spot is currently being zoned to be used for outdoor recreation.

**(See also “[Bryce property possibilities slowly being realized](#)”)**

“We are in talks with local division construction companies about building a ropes course on the site,” Field Coordinator Steven Mercado said.

Brown, who is in charge of the project, said the ropes course, like all additions to the site, will be designed to create a group atmosphere and will feature both a high rope 30 to 40 feet in the air and a low rope closer to the ground.

“High elements involve platforms and climbing, things that take you up in the air,” Brown said. “And you typically see, in a low element, six to 12 different obstacles on the ground. They’re more group-based. You problem solve, with

no degree of challenge in terms of height. As you go to the higher elements, it's more challenging. There's harnesses and ropes, but also the elements of risk and fear. In a perfect world, you'll have groups going through both, but you're in a safe environment at all times."

Since the region is primarily wetland, much of the new construction will have to be planned around unusable parts of the marsh.

"One of the most intriguing parts of this land is that it has water, but not necessarily the kind you want," Brown said.

Despite the obstacles to construction, Brown hopes to add bike trails, rubberized walking trails, paved bicycle pathways and other amenities to the land once a planning company has evaluated the site.

**(See also "Outdoor Rec hidden gem on campus")**

"One suggestion we've been asked to entertain is to develop some camping areas," Brown said. "Part of our Outdoor Rec is very involved in teaching individuals how to appreciate natural habitats for camping. This provides us an invaluable resource to practice and train people on everything from campsite preparation, backpack preparation, Leave No Trace, environmental low-impact training. I mean, there's a whole lot things you can do when you're camping."

The new recreation area is expected to open in 2015. It is located a short walk down Campus Drive from the University Recreation Center.

The site will also allow for the construction of a UAPD radio tower. University Planner Dan Wolfe said construction is still on schedule for the entire Master Plan, including the outdoor recreation area.

"It's got some heavy terrain on it, but it's a terrific piece of land," Wolfe said. "The vision is to keep it as natural as possible, rebuild the lake, and make it a place where students can recreate. Students can rent a tent, or canoe in the lake ... it's a place to spend a weekend."

**(See also "Venture outside campus, explore city of Tuscaloosa")**

*Updated on Feb. 13 at 8:15 p.m. to remove a sentence that incorrectly stated that the new outdoor recreation center would be used by ADMH patients.*